

052 Bobby Whyte**[0:00:00]**

Interviewer: Okay. I am in the home of Colleen and Bobby Whyte.

Respondent 1: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: The address is 135 Major, and I want to say to both of you thank you very much for agreeing to have a conversation with me about our neighbourhood.

Respondent 2: You're welcome.

Respondent 1: Absolutely.

Interviewer: And Bobby, you were born in 1947 in this house.

Respondent 1: I wasn't born in this house, but I was born in '47 in Toronto. 1947 in Toronto, right?

Interviewer: Okay. So then you moved here in **[0:00:30]** 1958, '58, '59.

Respondent 1: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: So you were in elementary school at that time.

Respondent 1: Yeah, absolutely.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you have any idea why your family chose to move here?

Respondent 1: When I think back to the time with my mom when we lived on Christie Street, by Christie Pits, and my mom had mentioned the fact that she was going to move, thinking of moving to **[0:01:00]** Major Street and buying a home, right? I was excited about having a home, but not leaving where I was. I was pretty, as a kid, I was pretty happy. You know, Christie Pits and the whole nine yards, right?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: It was a pretty good time, right?

Interviewer: It's a fabulous park.

Respondent 1: But no, we left there and my mom – I came with my mom, and my mom bought the house here. My mom worked at Dupont and Spadina at that time. It was a power store, and [0:01:30] now I think it's a Loblaw's or a No Frills or something, but it was right at – I believe now it's a wine store.

Interviewer: Okay. I know that place.

Respondent 1: And that used to be a supermarket. That's where my mom worked, so she would take the Spadina bus up to Dupont, and it was easy for her, right? I just think that my mom liked the area. She liked the people that were here at that time, and...

Interviewer: [0:02:00] And did you make the adjustment because you had – you must have been about grade six by that time.

Respondent 1: It took – as far as an adjustment period, I really stayed – I'm being honest with you, I didn't hang around here. I went to school at Essex, which was up by Christie Pits, and I finished my public school at Essex, and I went to Central Tech from there.

Interviewer: Oh boy. That was pretty [0:02:30] convenient. [Laughs]

Respondent 1: Okay? That was a pretty easy adjustment. Those days back, what I can remember was at that time there was no football field there. It was – there was two rows of homes in there. That was just like – there was houses on each, where the football field is now, right? And you could actually – there was a road that would drive right up to the front of Central Tech at [0:03:00] that time. I remember there used to be stores at Harbord and Bathurst at the corner there. We'd go eat there as kids, and there was laneways where we all hung around after school and stuff like that, right?

Interviewer: So I didn't know that. So they tore down homes to make that big Central Tech.

Respondent 1: The whole block of homes.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 1: There were homes on Bathurst.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent 1: Then there was a laneway, and then there was more homes facing Central Tech, [0:03:30] and then there was a road, and the road would come off of – you could drive up right to the front of the steps at Central Tech, right?

Interviewer: Well I think that whole green fields and sports centre is quite fabulous, but there must have been a lot of people very upset at that time.

Respondent 1: Well there were a lot of homes there. That was all homes. On both sides.

Interviewer: I didn't know that.

Respondent 1: Really?

Interviewer: All these people I've spoken to and nobody talked about that.

Respondent 1: Wow. Yeah. That's a – I can remember that.

Interviewer: Yeah. But that's really when you made your home right here because then you became friends with the people. [0:04:00] More local people, I suppose.

Respondent 1: The kids, okay, my mother was tough with me, okay? Because she didn't want me to get into trouble because it was easy to get into trouble. I mean it didn't matter what age you were, she was just afraid of me getting in with the wrong crowd, right? And when I was growing up, the people that I hung around with basically – there was some people from [0:04:30] – original from Christie Pits that I played baseball with when I was a younger kid. I still went there

and played. Did a lot of activities there. There was people down here that I knew. We didn't go to school together. We went – some of them went to Essex or King Edward. I went to Essex and some of them went to Palmerston, and some of the girls went to the Catholic school, and I think it's Loretto.

Interviewer: Oh right.

Respondent 1: Loretto?

Interviewer: Loretto.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Whatever. Yeah.

Respondent 1: So [0:05:00] basically we all hung around, but we all went to different schools sort of thing, right? In the evening, that was a different story. We didn't play in the laneways, we didn't play in the front. I went to Central Tech, we went around the front of the stairs there because that was kind of like a meeting place.

Interviewer: So by that time, you were in high school, Central Tech.

Respondent 1: I was about fifteen. About fifteen years old.

Interviewer: So Central Tech really became the hub of your life [0:05:30] then. You went to school there, and as you said, that's where you hung around also.

Respondent 1: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. There was no pool, there was no arts centre. When I was going to school, that big white building where they do all the arts and crafts or whatever it is, the pottery or all that kind of stuff, that was just being built when I was in school. Basically, our three main meeting places were Central Tech in the evening because it was [0:06:00] close. We used to go on Wednesday and Friday. There was – at the church there on Bathurst. They had the dance on a Wednesday night, they had a dance on a Friday night, and it didn't matter where you were, everybody would meet them. Okay? And you would play volleyball or do stuff, and then later on

in the evening they would have dances and stuff like that, right? Basically. And I was very active in sports, so I wasn't, you know – we were all over the city, so to speak, right? [0:06:30] But as hanging around, yeah. Central Tech was a pretty normal spot, or the odd time we would go out to the top of the street where the gas station is here at Tino's. Sunday nights was always a big night up there because...

Interviewer: Was that a gas station at that time?

Respondent 1: Yes, it was, right?

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent 1: Right beside the gas station there's a big, big house and there was a black family that lived there, and every Sunday night they would sing.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 1: Right? The brothers and [0:07:00] sisters would all harmonize and stuff like this.

Interviewer: Oh my. Do you know their names?

Respondent 1: I just – you know, I'd be lying if I would say something, but there was about eight or nine in the family and they would all harmonize and sing, and whatever. It was kind of neat, eh, because they were really good. No kidding. They could really sing, eh?

Interviewer: So lots of people from the neighbourhood would just come and hang around...

Respondent 1: I wouldn't say lots of people, but I would say some – if they knew you, you were welcome. If they didn't know you, [0:07:30] actually they would be cautious, but at the same time it was just – they would sit outside by the fence in the backyards, and they would sing, right? And the families on the street – up the street there was the Shepherd family that was composed – I think there were six girls in that family.

Interviewer: Oh. [Laughs] No sons at all?

Respondent 1: Not that I can remember, right? Then there was Lorraine and Sharon Hait, lived across the [0:08:00] street. They grew up in here. They were here before me. Sandra Perry lived off Harbord Street by the bakery there, and we all kind of hung around a little bit as it was, right? But basically we would know each other, we would do things together, but we all had our own things. We didn't – you know, I was involved in sports, and baseball, and hockey, and stuff, you know, Wednesday and Friday and Sundays were – we would meet at Central Tech and [0:08:30] just kind of hang around sort of thing, right?

Respondent 2: IT was pretty ethnic-run though, wasn't it? Like there was certain spots that you weren't allowed to go into?

Interviewer: Let me just introduce, for the sake of the tape – this is Colleen, Bobby's wife...

Respondent 2: Hello.

Interviewer: ...who is sitting with us and participating.

Respondent 2: And learning.

Interviewer: Right. But please, continue. I welcome what you have to say.

Respondent 2: Just I remember him talking about it and him having to protect himself if he went into another area, like St. Alban's.

Respondent 1: I remember when I was [0:09:00] growing up there was St. Alban's Boys' Club was on Albany Street, just north of the park on Barton Street, and then they – I spent a lot of time there, and then they went from there and they built an actual building at Vermont Park where there's a pool and a community centre.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: I opened that community centre. I was one of the people that was involved with showing people around when they built that. As a kid, they did [0:09:30] – they did a movie. There was a project that somebody put together and they made a movie. It was called "Bridge on the River Kwai," and we were all dressed up like army people and stuff like that. And I went and I couldn't believe it. I went there about – last year or the year before, and I said to my wife, "Come on, I want to show you something if it's still there," and sure enough we looked, and there was the picture when we were kids making that movie, [0:10:00] dressed in army – and standing in the river and stuff like this. So yeah, there was a lot of – Vermont was an area that – Dupont and Bathurst area where I hung around. I'm not going to lie. It was – there was gangs and there was different areas where you had to be careful. Christie Pits, there was a lot of fights and stuff like that. If you were caught, say, if I was to go [0:10:30] from this is where I am now and hang around Christie Pits, then I was out of my area.

Interviewer: So they didn't like you? Were they kind of territorial? Is that what you're saying?

Respondent 1: They're territorial. Yeah. And bottom line was there was – at that time, there was a lot of Italians and a lot of different people that were there, yeah, but there was a lot of – you could get into fights big time.

Interviewer: So that's why your mother was concerned.

Respondent 1: Mm-hm. Yeah.

Interviewer: She was right to be concerned. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Absolutely, right? But I was very lucky to the point where [0:11:00] through sports I made friends with the good and the bad.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: Okay? And I was able to walk where other people couldn't walk without having a problem, or I was accepted for what I was, right?

Interviewer: Yeah. I guess being an athlete, a tall athlete would have helped.

Respondent 1: No, I did a lot of fighting too. [Laughter] I'm not going to argue about that. My mother – many times I come home, my mother would give me shit for fighting, like she wouldn't know, right? [Laughter] But basically the neighbourhood was [0:11:30] really good. I can remember as a kid on Spadina on the roundabout there, there used to be an ice cream place over there. We could go for ice cream or milkshakes. I remember the horses going up to the water trough, the big tubs.

Interviewer: Where was that?

Respondent 1: That was – the trough – the water stations for the horses that I can remember – if you think of the Scott Mission on...

Respondent 2: [0:12:00] Spadina.

Respondent 1: ...on Spadina just north of College, just as you go around the corner, that was a watering hole. The horses would go and water there and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Okay. So that – so you moved to this area around '58.

Respondent 1: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: So '58 and in the '60s that was still there, you're saying.

Respondent 1: Oh yes. Yes. You know, people – you know, that's where stuff went where – horses – [0:12:30] I mean it sounds weird today, but to see a horse and a wagon or to see somebody on a horse, or to see a policeman on a horse was no big deal. Today, I get excited. This summer I'd seen two horses come down Major Street and they went down Brunswick Street.

Interviewer: You mean with police sitting on them?

Respondent 1: Yeah. Police. Police.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

- Respondent 1:** And that was so neat to see those guys going through the neighbourhood, which was huge, right?
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. But at that time you're saying it was a normal occurrence.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. There was a – [0:13:00] that's where the water was kept for horses or for anybody else, or animals, or anybody that wanted a drink. You could go there, right?
- Interviewer:** Okay. So the water trough was at College and Spadina.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Just north of College, and it was like a big tub. I remember it being as a big metal tub with water in it. That's what it was, right?
- Interviewer:** Do you have any idea where the horses were kept at night? Or were they off?
- Respondent 1:** I remember there was a police station [0:13:30] on Markham Street, Markham and London I think – it's just by Honest Ed's there, north of Bloor, and that was a police station. And I remember as a kid that the horses used to go down the wooden ramp into the police station there. Now it's – I believe it's used for the hospital, for the ambulance and stuff like that. Whatever, those EMS people. That's a location for them now. But at one time, that was a police station [0:14:00] that everybody used.
- Interviewer:** When we think of changes that have occurred, because you mentioned several really big changes such as Central Tech, homes, and streets, and lanes, and all that, and they're all gone. And then horses.
- Respondent 1:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Are there any global, other changes that come to mind when you think of changes?
- Respondent 1:** Oh god.

- Interviewer:** Or Colleen, if you remember anything that Bobby has talked about.
- Respondent 2:** In this area, eh?
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. Really, I would like pretty much to stick to [0:14:30] this area, Harbord Village.
- Respondent 1:** The Market area was really good. If the people knew you and...
- Respondent 2:** Kensington you're...
- Respondent 1:** Kensington Market. If the Kensington Market people knew you, and you were part of the neighbourhood, you could go down there and have no money and do your shopping, and it wasn't a big deal.
- Interviewer:** So what would they do? They would write it on a little piece of paper or something like that?
- Respondent 1:** I [0:15:00] never – all I know is if I went down there, my mom sent me down there to get some vegetables, or get some bread, or get some eggs or whatever, and I didn't have enough money, the guy would say, "Don't worry about it, Bobby. I'll see you later," sort of thing, right? Or I'd come home and tell my mother. She said, "You spend the money, or did you give it to the guys?" "No, I give the guy what you had," right? And my mom was very funny about that. She would go down and pay him and stuff.
- Interviewer:** Immediately.
- Respondent 1:** [0:15:30] Yeah.
- Interviewer:** She didn't want to owe any money.
- Respondent 2:** That's his mom.
- Respondent 1:** I really think that...
- Interviewer:** But what you're saying is they trusted you, and there was a feeling of familiarity.

- Respondent 2:** That's right.
- Interviewer:** You'll come back. You're good for the money.
- Respondent 1:** You were part of the neighbourhood. I think it...
- Respondent 2:** And that's what I remember from out west. I'd come from a small town in Winnipeg, and we did – our grocery store did allow you to do that, and I thought wow, it's a nice town, but as he says, it's just like a small town. It's not the big Toronto. It's just like a small town.
- Respondent 1:** I [0:16:00] think – what I think of when I was a kid, I used to hate it but the Jewish bakery was there, and beside the Jewish bakery was a fish market, and every Friday, the big truck would come. It was like a water tank truck, but it was full of fish.
- Interviewer:** Whoa.
- Respondent 1:** And they would take the fish out of the water tank and take it right into the fishery place, right? And sometimes they would drop the fish on the sidewalk or on the road or whatever, and they just picked it up and fired it in the door. [Laughter] [0:16:30] Just like you would see down east. I mean, they would pull fish out of the water and some would bounce in the boat and some would be in the net, right? But I just didn't like the smell. It bothered me a lot, okay?
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** But as far as the neighbourhood goes...
- Interviewer:** That's a very colourful story. [Laughter] Isn't that a wonderful...
- Respondent 1:** That's a fact. That's a fact.
- Interviewer:** Oh, I have no doubt about it, but it's wonderful.
- Respondent 1:** And now it's a high-end restaurant on the corner, and if people would sit there and they had no idea [0:17:00] in the years past that that was a fish market at one time, right?

Interviewer: Well since you're talking about the fish market and you mentioned the bakery, and you're close between Harbord and College, but closer to Harbord, what else was happening on Harbord that you might remember?

Respondent 1: Harbord Street?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: There was a pizza place. A lot of people don't realize...

Interviewer: Where was that?

Respondent 1: That was over by Robert Street. I think the Poretti?

Interviewer: Poretta's.

Respondent 1: Poretta's?

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent 1: They ran the pizza place there. [0:17:30] Do you know the Poretas?

Interviewer: Mario.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Mario ran the restaurant.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, right, yeah.

Respondent 1: I know the family. Joey. I know the – and I think they were there. The place where, I think, Hutoshi has a salon...

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent 1: ...now. And there's a place that's called Charlie's, and then the salon's in the back. That used to be Kromer Radio.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 1: Okay, Kromer Radio moved from there and now they're on Bathurst Street [0:18:00] in a big building, but that's where Kromer was original and they did all the radios. Outside on the side there, you pull your car up and they put the – install your radio and stuff like this. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, right?

Interviewer: So that's a long time ago.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Because I used to work at the Toronto Western a long time ago, and Kromer was already there, so you're talking about a long time ago.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Put a time – if I was to put a year on it, I couldn't to be honest with you, but if you phoned Kromer [0:18:30] and asked them when they moved from Robert and Harbord, they'd probably let you know. But that's where they were established, right?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: What else? The pizza place. The Poretta's were mixed up on that – if you wanted a slice of pizza, it wasn't a big deal here. Go and eat. They were Italian and they would look after you, right?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: If you showed respect to the neighbourhood, if – one of the biggest things I find [0:19:00] today that bothers me a lot is the graffiti in the neighbourhood. The things that people are doing to people's property. When I was brought up, I was told to respect elders. I was told to respect people's property. I was told not to bring trouble home, and today it's a different situation. And I think [0:19:30] as far as, I won't say policing the neighbourhood or I won't say – I'm saying as far as the neighbours looking after the neighbourhood,

you couldn't come to a better area. They clean the streets, they help each other out. If there's a problem, they're there for you. If there's families that have been established in this neighbourhood for a long, long time, and if something happens, yeah. If it's a baby, it's a [0:20:00] good thing. If it's a death, it's a bad thing.

Interviewer: But you're saying people are there for each other.

Respondent 1: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Interviewer: There's a sense of neighbourhood, community.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: I assume that it's mainly who you usually get to know are the people that you're closest with. I find Major Street to have a very tight community and a strong feeling of cohesion and really caring about each other.

Respondent 1: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Anybody that I've met on Major Street, this is ours.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: In a very positive way.

Respondent 1: Okay. When you say [0:20:30] that about the people, what I've heard in the back laneway when the kids are playing, okay – I was just – god, I said to my wife, I was sitting at the back and working on my car, and there's about five or six houses north of me, there were some kids playing and there's another bunch of kids that are between – I would say between, say, six and eleven that play just down here. [0:21:00] And there's about five or six of them, and they said, "This is our laneway."

Interviewer: Oh. [Laughs]

Respondent 1: Right?

Respondent 2: Territorial.

Respondent 1: This is our laneway, right? And then I heard that, I kind of laughed when I heard it, but no, it's a fact. Every day they come home from school, they're out in the back and they're playing, and they're playing hockey, and soccer, football, whatever, but...

Interviewer: But they're using the lane a lot, you're saying.

Respondent 1: A hundred percent. Hundred percent.

Respondent 2: Not the front street. I don't see kids at the front because...

Interviewer: The lane.

Respondent 2: ...of the cars, but the back.

Respondent 1: Very few, very few people [0:21:30] play in the streets. I know when my grandson comes we're out the back all the time. He's only four, but I have to play with him because he's just too little to play with the bigger guys, right?

Interviewer: Well I have a grandson. I mean I have a number of grandchildren, but one of them lives in Toronto and he's twelve, and we play in the back lane too. We play Frisbee, and badminton, and baseball in the back lane. Yeah.

Respondent 2: Was there graffiti years ago too when you were...

Respondent 1: I don't remember a lot of graffiti.

Respondent 2: Don't remember any graffiti, eh?

Respondent 1: I don't remember a lot of graffiti. I really don't.

Respondent 2: [0:22:00] That was the tagging just starting.

- Respondent 1:** I've learned how to play catch out the back. I mean, I would play catch with one of my friends out there. If one of the guys would come and visit me, I would say to one of the guys, one of the guys I played ball with if he had trouble catching a ball and throwing, "Come down to the house and we can play catch out in the back," and we would go out the back and throw the ball back and forth, and nobody – you know, the odd car would come down. In those days, there wasn't many cars, right?
- Interviewer:** Oh, really?
- Respondent 1:** [0:22:30] It was pretty good, right?
- Interviewer:** So there were fewer cars also.
- Respondent 1:** Well to interrupt your playing time, that's for sure, right?
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Right? But as far as the neighbourhood, I'm just trying to think. No...
- Interviewer:** Let me stay with back lanes for a minute. So you're saying you played in the back lanes, and kids are still doing it now.
- Respondent 1:** Absolutely. Absolutely.
- Interviewer:** Did you use the back lanes for anything else?
- Respondent 1:** Washing my car, I washed my car out the back.
- Respondent 2:** [0:23:00] Was there any dances or anything? Any music?
- Respondent 1:** No, no.
- Interviewer:** For walking from one place to another, did you stick to the sidewalks or did you go through the back lanes sometime?
- Respondent 1:** We always used the laneways. Always.

- Interviewer:** Really?
- Respondent 1:** I think more people use the laneways than you do the front because it's easier, it's well lit, it's paved.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Was it paved when you were a child?
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Okay. Because some were semi-paved or just hardened mud.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** But yours was paved.
- Respondent 1:** But no, [0:23:30] even to this day, we go out the back and we go out to Metro and we do our shopping and we come in the back, and sometimes people don't know whether you're home or you're not home because you just don't go to the front of the house, right?
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. So the back lane has been and continues to be an important....
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. A lot of bicycle riders.
- Interviewer:** ...passage for you. Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** A lot of bike riders.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** My wife, she walks in the morning, and they use the laneways when they go to different places. If it's garbage day, rather than walk down the street with all the garbage [0:24:00] cans out, they go – they use the back alleys so they don't have to...
- Interviewer:** It's the smell.
- Respondent 1:** No, it doesn't. It's not in the way.

Respondent 2: Well summer it's not as...

Respondent 1: Right?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: But yeah, so we use the back lanes a lot.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: I'm just trying to think now what was on Harbord when – I know there was Kromer, there was Poretta's Pizza. The bakery was always there. I mean I can remember my mother fighting with Goldie. Goldie was the – **[0:24:30]** she was the – there was a Jewish family that still runs it, right? And she would mix the old bagels in with the new bagels, right? And my mother would go up and fight like hell with her because the bagels were old. [Laughter] I'm just kind of thinking now, right?

Interviewer: Oh, that's a good story. [Laughs]

Respondent 2: You sure you want to put that? [Laughs]

Interviewer: It's in there.

Respondent 2: It's in there.

Interviewer: It's in there. But it's fabulous.

Respondent 1: But basically no. As far as myself, I mean I just – **[0:25:00]** I was involved in sports quite a bit. A lot of the sports was at Christie Pits. I think hanging around Christie Pits, not getting away from the neighbourhood, but we would skate at Christie Pits in the winter. In the wintertime we'd skate at Christie Pits on the outdoor ponds, and when we were involved with our other friends, we would go down to Dundas and Bathurst, which **[0:25:30]** was – what's the name of the park at Dundas and Bathurst now? It's – oh man.

Interviewer: I know the park that you mean.

Respondent 1: There's a big rink there. Down by McDonald's, there's a hockey rink there and whatever.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Alexandra Park, okay?

Interviewer: So let me come back to this neighbourhood. When you moved in here with your mother, was it just the two of you? Or were there any other people living in this...

Respondent 1: Well my mom and dad at the time were separated, okay? And it was my mom and I that lived here, okay? And...

Interviewer: But did you have [0:26:00] any tenants? Anybody else? Or was it the two of you, that was it?

Respondent 1: No. There was just one floor in this house.

Interviewer: Oh, of course.

Respondent 1: Yes. This was – all there was in this house was...

Interviewer: So are you adjacent to Gus?

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh, I didn't...

Respondent 2: He's right that.

Interviewer: ...connect that. Okay, because I know that Gus also added. Okay. So...

Respondent 1: See, if you look here, there's no other level, right?

Interviewer: Right. Right. Okay.

Respondent 1: That picture's old, by the way.

- Interviewer:** Sure. Okay. But of course, because when I've spoken [0:26:30] to other people, if there was another floor, they might have another seven people up there. But here you had one floor.
- Respondent 1:** One floor. This was the bedroom for my mom, that was the kitchen.
- Interviewer:** Right. And your bedroom?
- Respondent 1:** The bedroom's at the very front. Where you came through the door there was a hallway, okay, and there was my bedroom, a bathroom that was maybe – wasn't very big, but enough for – the bathroom was as big as a bathtub, eh Colleen?
- Respondent 2:** The tub this way, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** The bathtub was this [0:27:00] way, and that's how wide that – there was a bathtub, and beside the bathtub there was a toilet, and I don't think it was – I don't know, four feet wide or whatever the length of a bathtub. That was the bathroom, right? And then there was a living room in the kitchen. So there was a bedroom, kitchen, a living room, which is very small, and just a couch, and a chair, and a TV, and then the bathroom, and my room.
- Interviewer:** Oh, so these places were seriously tiny.
- Respondent 2:** Tiny.
- Interviewer:** [0:27:30] Both you and Gus did the same thing and made it...
- Respondent 2:** We had to keep the front because it's over a hundred years old. In fact, all of these houses in the house have a heritage – safe.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** So we couldn't, we didn't touch as far as tearing down anything at the front. That had to remain the same, even when we did the stucco. And even if you were at the front, you still can't see the back part, the second floor because the ceiling was – there's ten-foot ceilings there, and the front [0:28:00] is still – looks exactly the

same. You don't see it. Basically, I guess, we were in the attic where we built our second floor there.

Interviewer: Well I'm glad that they have that law because some people would really like to do major changes, so I think it keeps the character of the neighbourhood.

Respondent 2: Right. Right. And they picked them out pretty good down the street.

Respondent 1: I think the city is – Gus would – I had a conversation with Gus at one time, and I think it's good. I had a hard time when I was building here, which was okay, and I think that [0:28:30] anybody that comes into the neighbourhood that has an older home or has a home, I think that there should be – this is a beautiful street. Absolutely. With the trees hanging down and the old homes, and just the area itself, I think it's well-spoken to the neighbourhood that they want to try and keep it as original as possible, and for somebody to come in and build [0:29:00] a three-storey home that looks like a rocket ship or something, that's not what this neighbourhood is about.

Respondent 2: In fact, they would stop it.

Respondent 1: Go ahead, go ahead.

Respondent 2: No, because I was going to say there was a survey that goes around any time you want to renovate. There's a survey that the street has to okay. Say, okay, "We're going to build this, we'll put an application in to have this renovation done," and you know it's...

Respondent 1: The neighbours can stop you from building.

Respondent 2: Yeah, they can.

Respondent 1: If you were [0:29:30] next door to me, and I didn't like what you were doing, then I would say, "No, I'm opposed. I don't want this done." The restaurant...

Respondent 2: We can't block anybody's view.

- Respondent 1:** The restaurants that are on the corner, they have to apply for seating on the street.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So they're protecting it. Protecting the beauty and the charm.
- Respondent 1:** The beauty. Not so much that – okay, Eleanor. If you lived across from the – if you go to the top of the street and there's a restaurant there with an outside patio, [0:30:00] okay? Now if you lived right across the street, and that's a business, and these people had – every night there's people eating, serving, talking, music, loud, that's – you know, that's a problem.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Well I lived south of Poretta's, which is now Messis...
- Respondent 1:** Okay.
- Interviewer:** ...and now I live south of Boulevard Café, and I know that noise. I know that noise, yes.
- Respondent 1:** So I mean it's – there is a neighbourhood watch and a neighbourhood protection, and there's bylaws, which is, [0:30:30] I think every neighbourhood should have, right?
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Which are all well, right?
- Interviewer:** You want to protect what's good.
- Respondent 2:** What did it used to be? It used to be more Portuguese in this area. I think Rose was – Rose would know more about that.
- Respondent 1:** South of us, south of Ulster was predominately Jewish.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 1:** It was on the east side. The big homes were – where the hospital is now, there were all large homes, and that was all Jewish. All Jewish for the longest – the neighbourhood consisted of Jewish [0:31:00] and Portuguese. That's what it was.

- Interviewer:** When you moved in here.
- Respondent 1:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Right. And what have the changes been since you were here? I've been here a long time. How many years is it that you were here? '58?
- Respondent 1:** We lived here what now?
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. We just...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Fifteen years did some renovation, but...
- Respondent 2:** Came in around fifteen years ago. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** I was here since I was, like, thirteen, eh? What were the changes? I would think that the **[0:31:30]** – that used to be a hospital at one time down there, and it was torn down and it was made into a...
- Interviewer:** So first there were large homes, you're saying.
- Respondent 1:** Mm-hm. Wait a minute. I'm wrong.
- Interviewer:** Okay. Okay.
- Respondent 1:** There was a hospital...
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Doctors Hospital.
- Respondent 1:** Doctors Hospital on Brunswick, and it came onto the other side of Major. North – on the north part of the street, as you come up the street, there was large homes and they were all – that was all predominately Jewish people that lived **[0:32:00]** in those places. And what they did, they ripped the hospital down and they ripped down the homes, and they put in the...

- Interviewer:** The nursing home. Kensington.
- Respondent 1:** Kensington.
- Respondent 2:** Yes, Kensington. That's right.
- Respondent 1:** The nursing home. The nursing home replaced the hospital, and most of the homes that were there were owned by Jewish people, Jewish families, right?
- Respondent 2:** Wasn't that vacant for quite a while?
- Respondent 1:** Long time.
- Respondent 2:** Quite a few years now. We don't know exactly why, whether there was some insurance problem. I don't know if it was fire there, or what caused [0:32:30] it, but there was a delay. There was many, many years. There was just the ghost home just sitting there.
- Respondent 1:** All boarded up. They might have been opposed to the hospital building and ripping down the homes at that time. I wasn't too sure, but they were empty for a long time, right?
- Interviewer:** So you're saying that part south of Ulster was predominately Jewish, and then Colleen, you have Portuguese...
- Respondent 1:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** So how has that changed in terms of [0:33:00] ethnic groups and racial groups?
- Respondent 1:** I really think that when I was a kid, I was lucky enough that I went to the Jewish Y at Bloor and Spadina, and I spent some time there, but the Jewish – I don't know how to say this properly, but as far as the Jewish people went, they really stuck to themselves. They really – they didn't let too many outsiders in because [0:33:30] that's just the way they were brought up. I mean there was nothing wrong with the way they were doing things, but that was their area.
- Interviewer:** That's how they lived at that time.

Respondent 1: That's how they lived, and they stayed to themselves sort of thing, and...

Interviewer: So you weren't welcome.

Respondent 1: I was lucky enough because I knew a few of them, right?

Respondent 2: Through sports again.

Respondent 1: Sports. Through sports and stuff.

Respondent 2: They played ball hockey.

Respondent 1: But at the same token, the [0:34:00] – I guess they were very family-oriented, and if you were – yeah, if you weren't Jewish, it was a hard time to be accepted, okay?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: If you were a friend, okay, even as a friend, there were certain times where you just – you couldn't go there because of their certain faith, the things that they did, right? They practiced their own religion, their own faith, and they brought up their families the way they thought they should be brought up, right? And you know, that's what I – as far as that end of it goes, that was okay. I mean, [0:34:30] I was really lucky to the point where I was able to associate with everybody. Like I told you in the beginning, the good and the bad, right?

Interviewer: Yeah. And that you could fight when you had to. [Laughs]

Respondent 1: Yes.

Interviewer: Tell me. But you said you went to the – it was called the YMHA at the time, or YMCA.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: YMHA. But you did some activities there?

Respondent 1: Yeah, I played floor hockey up there with a couple of Jewish friends that I met, and there was a couple of guys in the neighbourhood. Dale Ford, [0:35:00] he originally was there, and the McDougalls would go up there, so these were different people from around the area. We would all go there on a Sunday or Sunday morning and we used the gym, and we could run upstairs, and that's the old place, right?

Interviewer: Right. Did you have to join to do that? Were you a member?

Respondent 1: Again, we were brought there to play, to use the gym. We played floor hockey in the gym, okay?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: And if you were good, yeah, [0:35:30] they wanted you. There's no two ways about that, right? And once you're accepted, again, once you're accepted by somebody in the neighbourhood, you're okay. You're fine.

Interviewer: So that was another place for sports for you.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. You were really quite an athlete obviously.

Respondent 1: Had a bit of fun, yeah. I had good times and bad times, but for sure, right? [Laughter] Hm?

Interviewer: Yeah. What about languages in the neighbourhood?

Respondent 1: Language? Language was – [0:36:00] everybody spoke English around me. Didn't matter whether you were Italian, Portuguese, Jewish, or whatever. We were there for our friendships; we weren't there for the religions or the language, right? That was never a problem, right?

Interviewer: Earlier on you mentioned something, and I want to come back to it. The issue of dating. You talked about dances, you went to dances

at Central Tech. Could you talk about dating? What it was [0:36:30] like in the '50s and '60s in this neighbourhood.

Respondent 1: In this neighbourhood? Yeah, they were good times. You didn't need a car, okay, because everything was close. Everybody would seem to congregate. Two main places for people to hang around were the Catholic Church on Bathurst Street on Saturdays, or on Fridays [0:37:00] or Saturdays they would have – it was all Catholic now, okay? That was a Catholic dance and we always would go to the United Church there on Wednesday and Fridays, and they would have activity and then they'd have a dance later on, eh? And that was a mixture of black and white and Italians. Not too many Jewish guys, but it was that, and I remember going to [0:37:30] up to St. Peter's Church and they would have – they had the dance there. There was people there we knew, right?

Interviewer: Where is St. Peter's Church?

Respondent 1: It's across from the subway station at Bloor and Bathurst. The big church.

Interviewer: Okay. Got it. Thank you.

Respondent 1: Okay? I'm sorry.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: And I remember going there one night, and I had to meet some people, but they were already inside the church, right? And you had to be Catholic. If you weren't Catholic, you weren't allowed in the church. That was the rule, right? So I remember [0:38:00] walking down to the hall where the dance was and just my luck, the priest said, "Oh." He says, "Oh," I saw him and he says, "I've never seen you before." And I said, "Oh, it's okay, Father." I said, "You know, I just come here every now and again." And he says, "Are you Catholic?" And I say, "Oh yeah, I'm Catholic," right? "Oh," he says, "You're Catholic." He says, "Can you say the rosary for me?" [Laughter] And I says, "No, Father. I can't." [Laughter] "Oh my god," he says. He says, [0:38:30] "Okay." He says, "What's your name again?" I says, "Bobby Whyte," and he says, "You know, you have

to be Catholic to be here," "But I'm just here to see my friends and I'm going to leave," right? That was just one of the things that I can tell you that happened to me as a kid up there. As far as the United Church goes...

Interviewer: That's a delightful story. [Laughs]

Respondent 2: Yes. I'm hearing stuff too. It's kind of neat.

Respondent 1: Right?

Interviewer: So they really wanted only Catholic [0:39:00] people. And the United Church, what about that?

Respondent 1: That was pretty wide open. That was – the music at that time was in the '60s and was like – the music was really huge at that time for dancing. It was rhythm and blues, and pop music, and like Motown from Detroit and stuff like that. One of the things where we got into trouble was Honest Ed's [0:39:30] had a dance marathon at Honest Ed's, and it was a marathon where you just had to dance until you dropped, and that's what it was, eh? So we didn't go to school on Friday, and we were all trying to stay as long as we could, dancing at this Honest Ed's, and just – like I just – that had just come into my head now, like, because I can't remember why, but I know it was a dance marathon and I know that Honest Ed's held it, and it was [0:40:00] outside, and the music was playing.

Interviewer: And you would have been what? Fifteen or something like that?

Respondent 1: I was about fifteen or sixteen at the time.

Interviewer: How many – how long did you dance?

Respondent 1: We went for, oh god – I went for just the one day because I had to be home. My mother would just give me shit about when I'm coming home, right? But there was a – Kelly was a black guy that I know, a friend of mine, and he hung in there for three days dancing, right?

Interviewer: He never slept?

- Respondent 1:** No. Just three days, he just...
- Interviewer:** And you danced for a whole day?
- Respondent 1:** [0:40:30] Yeah. Yeah. And they were good times because everybody would come and watch, people knew, and stuff like that. You know, it was a lot of good times, right?
- Interviewer:** But even at fifteen I think your legs would have been pretty sore after.
- Respondent 1:** We had a lot of fun. A lot of fun. You don't feel nothing when you're young, right?
- Respondent 2:** You kind of hold onto each other, right? [Laughs]
- Respondent 1:** That's it, right? And there was Chubby Checker and the Twist, and...
- Respondent 2:** Did they supply food or any drinks, I guess?
- Respondent 1:** I can't remember at the time, right? I really can't, right?
- Interviewer:** And was there any individual dating? Or did [0:41:00] everybody do everything as a group?
- Respondent 1:** I think there was some people that would be going with other girls that were going steady sort of thing, but we moved as a group. It didn't matter if you were going with somebody or not sort of thing. We just went as a group sort of thing because we all hung around, right? But yeah, everybody had their likes and dislikes and stuff like that, and to get away from the neighbourhood we graduated from – as we got older, we went from our [0:41:30] neighbourhood, and we ended up going to the Village on Avenue Road because that's where all the clubs were. And at sixteen, and seventeen, and eighteen years old, that's where all the big bands were playing live at night, and they had all the dances, and...

- Interviewer:** Yeah. So it sounds as if dancing and good music were a very important part of your dating.
- Respondent 1:** I can honestly tell you that the church on Bathurst Street that was called High C, that was one of the strong points for the neighbourhood.
- Interviewer:** [0:42:00] Now which church is that?
- Respondent 1:** That's the United Church right on – I think it's the United Church right at the...
- Interviewer:** Bathurst south of Bloor?
- Respondent 1:** It's just south of Bloor, right by the...
- Respondent 2:** It's a theatre now.
- Respondent 1:** It's a theatre now.
- Respondent 2:** It says theatre-something on it.
- Respondent 1:** That's where they have all the shows in the theatres now.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Oh okay. Thank you. I needed that, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah? And that's – downstairs is where they had all the dances and stuff, and you had to pay your twenty-five cents to get in and go down and do it, but you weren't allowed to fight. You weren't allowed to. [0:42:30] If you fought or something, fighting and drinking you couldn't do it. You had to leave.
- Interviewer:** Did they have alcohol?
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. You know, we had our own beer, and we had our – later on.
- Interviewer:** But they watched over and to make sure you stayed in control.
- Respondent 1:** No, they had no idea what we had, right?

- Respondent 2:** Oh, so they didn't serve alcohol.
- Respondent 1:** No. There was no serving of alcohol, but we had our own.
- Respondent 2:** Right.
- Interviewer:** But if you got into a fight, you were out.
- Respondent 1:** Oh, you couldn't. They didn't want you there.
- Interviewer:** Okay. So in that respect they kept control.
- Respondent 1:** It was really good. I mean the people – you know, I mean [0:43:00] there was some – yeah. It would get heated sometimes, but at the same token it's a case of – you know, if you wanted to be around there, then you had to watch your P's and Q's for sure.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm. You mentioned that – Colleen, you said that when you first came here, it was hard for you. The maze of streets. Do you remember when that came in? Before that, the streets were...
- Respondent 1:** It used to be straight from here. You could go right from Harbord right down to College at one time, right?
- Respondent 2:** At Bloor to [0:43:30] College.
- Respondent 1:** Bloor to College. It was a straight shot all the way down, right?
- Interviewer:** What was it like? What do you recall about that? Problems? Or did you never think about that?
- Respondent 1:** To be honest with you, I just didn't understand. I was so used to the neighbourhood, the way it was, and I wasn't one for change, right? And they did it, and you just have to go with the flow sort of thing, right? The people would moan and groan or bitch about it, but at the same token, it was good for the neighbourhood, right?
- Interviewer:** Well, I guess it really did slow down...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.

Interviewer: ...people racing [0:44:00] from Bloor to College. Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: There was a lot of traffic. People trying to get right across.

Interviewer: You talked about that black family and that beautiful music and you would hang around there. You also said the lanes were very important. You hung out there, you played there, you socialized there. What about front porches in your recollection? And sidewalks.

Respondent 1: At the front of the house, I can remember there's a Portuguese family across the street. [0:44:30] Their kids, that's what – in the summertime, they would sit on the verandahs and on the porches, and the kids would play hide-and-go-seek and hide behind the cars, and hide in between the houses. I wasn't one – the odd time I would sit out with my mom out the front or whatever. Or we just had our own spots, and Central Tech was the place to be sort of thing, right?

Interviewer: So maybe it was more the – maybe it was the immigrants, [0:45:00] the Portuguese who sat out on the front porches more.

Respondent 1: I think a lot...

Respondent 2: I think now that's the way it is, definitely.

Respondent 1: Yeah. I think a lot of people sat out front because they were neighbours and there was no air conditioning. And it was a nice, cool night, everybody would sit out the front and you would just – you would socialize. I remember a quick story. We were playing baseball and we went to Manassas, Virginia for a world championship, [0:45:30] and I looked at the news and Toronto was blacked out, completely blacked out. There was a power failure. What was that? Maybe eight years ago?

Respondent 2: Oh, that was just recently, yeah.

Interviewer: Oh, I remember that.

Respondent 1: No, I'm just saying, right? And my son was still here at the time, right? When the power went out – now this is eight years ago – all the people that had meat in the fridges...

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Respondent 1: Right? They were barbecuing, they were eating, everybody was on the street drinking, [0:46:00] sitting, and eating, and with candles, and having a good time, so a major power outage didn't stop the neighbourhood from just going on and have...

Respondent 2: It actually brought everybody...

Respondent 1: It brought everybody together, and they had a really good time.

Interviewer: So that turned out to be a positive experience as far as that goes.

Respondent 1: Always. Always. It always. The neighbourhood always – this is one good thing about Major Street, and always will be. No matter who you are, or where you are, when something happens, there will be people there to help you. There will [0:46:30] be people there to...

Respondent 2: To tell you you're doing wrong too, which is fine. [Laughter]

Respondent 1: Right or wrong, if there was a death in the family, it was felt from one end of the street to the other because it was a loss. It was...

Interviewer: What a beautiful thing, this sense of belonging.

Respondent 1: Absolutely.

Interviewer: And it's like an extended family in that – yeah.

Respondent 2: It's that small-town feeling.

Respondent 1: My grandson is four.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent 1: My wife and I, we can walk up [0:47:00] the street with him and everybody knows him. He could go out the front door and go up the street, and he'd be in so much trouble so quick because people would just go – they know him. They go to him right away, right? And that's never going to change, I don't think. I really don't think that is ever going to change, right? And that's a good thing.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Well that's because Bob's quite – he's quite open with – he's very – he is very – he knows all the neighbours. He's very much [0:47:30] out there, and very much, "Hello, how are you? Can I help you with anything?" And I'm not used to that. I can sit in the back and read my book and stuff. But no. And everyone knows him. Little kids will come out. "That's Bobby's house. That's Bobby's house."

Respondent 1: Yeah, that's a fact.

Respondent 2: He is – one fellow said he should have been the Mayor of Major Street. [Laughter]

Respondent 1: But I mean that's – I mean if you live in the neighbourhood, you must feel warmth, you must feel the love, you must feel the – [0:48:00] at any time, there's no – whether you're Portuguese, Canadian, Italian, Jewish, whatever nationality you are, if you live here, you're welcome here. You're a part of the neighbourhood, and I don't know if I'm – what I know. That's a fact, right? So you could have your disagreements and you could have your, you know, your positive and negatives about different things, and then the bottom line is everybody's going to pull together. Everybody.

Respondent 2: And I see a lot of the older people living, and their families staying [0:48:30] there, so it's passed down to generations.

Respondent 1: It's turning over.

Respondent 2: The houses are passed down to generations because, well for one thing, nobody wants to leave because they can never get back in because of the cost. So I mean, so there's a lot, two generations maybe, probably two at the most maybe, I guess. Two or three

generations in the same house that they've lived. You know, renovated a bit, but...

Respondent 1: I can remember when I was a kid growing here and there was a Ukrainian lady that lived next door where Gus was, and she would **[0:49:00]** always, always be cooking cabbage, and you could smell it, and...

Interviewer: Cabbage doesn't smell good when it's cooking. [Laughs]

Respondent 1: No, no. And I can remember the lady and she had the old white dress on from head to tail, very European, and I always argued with her. She would never throw the ball back over the fence if it went there, right? And every chance I'd get, I would always put the hose on her if I could. [Laughter]

Respondent 2: He was just as bad.

Respondent 1: Right? Yeah. My mother said, "Bobby, did you **[0:49:30]** do this?" "Yeah, Ma. I did. That's right." [Laughter] "Why did you do this?" "Because she never gives us our balls back," right?

Interviewer: Oh, so she was kind of mean.

Respondent 2: She still spoke Polish. She didn't speak very good English. She...

Respondent 1: Yeah. Very European.

Respondent 2: ...lived in squalor.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: They found out when Gus moved in, he could probably tell you, that the house was – it was just falling apart. She'd live in her own, like, I don't think excrement, but you know...

Interviewer: Pretty close to that.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

- Interviewer:** Oh really?
- Respondent 2:** And they'd put – she put **[0:50:00]** newspapers, you know, to stuff the holes in the wall and stuff like that, and it was...
- Interviewer:** So he did a huge job.
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Full of cockroaches and yeah. My mom had – my mother-in-law had a hard time keeping the cockroaches over there.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, of course. Of course. Oh, that must have been very unpleasant for your family, for you and your mother.
- Respondent 2:** And then she ended up dying there, and they found her two days, three days later?
- Interviewer:** And then Gus bought this place that was in horrific condition.
- Respondent 2:** Oh yeah. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Eww.
- Respondent 1:** **[0:50:30]** Fixed it up pretty good.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Fixed it up.
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah. I've been there a number of times.
- Respondent 2:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** And he did this – like he...
- Respondent 1:** He was the one – well my wife and I, we...

Respondent 2: Did a lot of demolition ourselves.

Respondent 1: We did it all, but we pretty much told Gus what we wanted to do here, right?

Interviewer: So your mother – and it was when your mother died that you had to decide whether you were going to come and...

Respondent 1: Yeah. Originally we lived in King City, okay? And my wife didn't want to leave King City. [0:51:00] The city was one thing, but at the same token I said to her, you know what? King City was a part of her life that was a good time. My son was young, he was growing up, and basically the decision was, I said to her, we thought about it and I said, "Jeez, you know, if you come down here, you know, you're working, you can take the streetcar, the hospitals are close, and there's going to be a time in our life when we're going to retire and we don't – we can walk to [0:51:30] wherever we want to go. We don't have to worry about stuff." And I'm really glad that A, I was able to keep up the Whyte name on the street, and B, be a part of the neighbourhood, right? And it's kind of neat because there is...

Respondent 2: You're a big part of the neighbourhood.

Respondent 1: ...there is a lot of people that are just – one thing about it, they're there and they don't need a lot of attention. They don't need to make a big thing out of something. They're already a part of the neighbourhood, so they just – everybody was [0:52:00] just themselves, and they go about their own business, right?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: It's a big family, it really is, right?

Interviewer: Oh, it's lovely. What a way to describe it. Beautiful.

Respondent 1: Well you know, if you talk about the fish and chip place that's at Harbord Street by the laneway there, we'll phone those people up and they always ask about my son. They always – I'll phone up and I'll say, "Jeez, you know what?" I'll say to my wife, "You feel like fish

and chips? Let's split on a fish and chip," right? And she'll phone up and say, "Oh, give me one [0:52:30] fish and chip for Bobby." They don't ask for money, they don't say whatever. She'll just say, "Bobby" on the phone and just go up and go get the fish and chips. Not too many places you can do that, right?

Respondent 2: Well we pay for it, but...

Respondent 1: We pay for it, but I'm just saying it's just that – once they know you, right, it's pretty neat.

Respondent 2: Give you a little extra, a little here, "Take this, take this."

Interviewer: A few extra chips, or yeah. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Used to go to Momo's and have – and Momo's is across from Hutoshi's there, and I remember one day, "Bobby," he says, "You don't come and have lunch here no more." I says, [0:53:00] "Well, come on." I says, "I went there. The last time we were there," I says, "we ate and there was – there was just fish and chips and a little bit of salad." "What?" "Yeah." So the next time we went there, the salad was up to here, the chips were falling off the plate, right?

Interviewer: That's at Momo's your saying.

Respondent 1: Momo's.

Interviewer: Have you tasted their carrot cake?

Respondent 1: Oh yeah. We've been there a lot, right?

Interviewer: It's a killer carrot cake.

Respondent 2: Yeah. I like the soups as well.

Interviewer: His wife is fabulous. Yeah, yeah. The lentil soup.

Respondent 1: [0:53:30] They're super people. They really are.

- Respondent 2:** Was Momo's there when you were growing up? Was it called Momo's?
- Respondent 1:** No.
- Interviewer:** No. Momo's has only been there for maybe fifteen years or so.
- Respondent 1:** No, no, no. I forget what that was before that, right?
- Interviewer:** Yeah. I don't even know if there was a restaurant there.
- Respondent 1:** There was apartments there, I think.
- Interviewer:** When I was living on Robert Street, they sent a petition around, or a questionnaire, "Would you mind having this?" So I think it was the apartments and he made it into a restaurant. Yeah. I think he bought the building and slowly has been bringing it out.
- Respondent 1:** He's a great guy. Super guy.
- Respondent 2:** Mohammad.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Mohammad.
- Interviewer:** [0:54:00] Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Great guy.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. Boy, you have some fabulous stories.
- Respondent 1:** Well you asked me, you know. There's some I can't tell you, that's for sure, right? [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** After the tape? Sometimes you hear people say after the tape, "Is the tape still on?"
- Respondent 1:** Okay.
- Interviewer:** [Laughs] Garbage collection? Do you have any recollections about that?

- Respondent 1:** No. Basically it was – [0:54:30] no. It was...
- Interviewer:** Okay.
- Respondent 1:** There was no recycling at that time. It was everything in the one bag, right?
- Respondent 2:** You just put it out front and then the garbage...
- Respondent 1:** Just put it out front, and they would come and get it, right?
- Respondent 2:** Once a week, you think?
- Respondent 1:** I can't remember now to be honest with you, right?
- Interviewer:** What about animals? Did people have house pets? Did you?
- Respondent 1:** My mom always had two dogs. My mom's – if you were to walk in this neighbourhood and say, "Mickey," not "Mickey Whyte," just say, "Mickey," they would know my mom instantly. Okay? My mom was very prominent in this neighbourhood. [0:55:00] She always had two dogs, always. Animals were – didn't matter if you had dogs, cats, or whatever. It wasn't a big deal, right?
- Interviewer:** Did other families have animals? Not too many? What?
- Respondent 1:** I know my mom had animals quite a bit, and you know what? If there was dogs in the neighbourhood or cats or whatever, people never bothered. They never – you know, it was never a big deal, right?
- Interviewer:** There were probably no leash laws a long time ago.
- Respondent 1:** [0:55:30] Probably, but...
- Interviewer:** But the animals were not a problem on the street there.
- Respondent 1:** No. My mom used to, you know – I never thought it was a problem, for sure, right?

- Interviewer:** Well then you would have known if it was a problem it would have come to your attention.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. You talked about the stores on Harbord.
- Respondent 1:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Do you have any memory of the stores on either College or Bloor Street?
- Respondent 1:** There used to be stores here. There was a house across the street by the laneway. That was a store. The house...
- Respondent 2:** [0:56:00] On Major? Major?
- Respondent 1:** On Major, yeah. There was the house right on the corner of Ulster, that corner lot with the fence. That was a store.
- Interviewer:** And what kind of stores were there?
- Respondent 1:** It was just a convenience – just a convenience store. You would get candies and stuff as a kid, I remember, right? And bread and milk. You know, just like your normal – your Max store sort of thing, but it was more down earth, eh?
- Interviewer:** So there were several of them scattered around from what you're saying.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Shoemaker, shoemaker's store was down the street. There was that.
- Interviewer:** Down the street on Major?
- Respondent 1:** On Major. The shoemaker was where the – [0:56:30] where the Italians are. You know the old Italian guys?
- Interviewer:** But is...

Respondent 1: It used to be a shoemaking store. You would go in to get your shoes done or whatever, right?

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Respondent 1: The other shoemaker store that I can remember was at Brunswick and – what's the street that goes this way? The one above...

Interviewer: Sussex?

Respondent 1: Sussex? No. Sussex is...

Interviewer: Okay. Above Harbord?

Respondent 1: Above there's Harbord and then you go up one street. Yeah, Sussex, [0:57:00] I guess, right? That one, that used to be a shoemaker right by the Jewish synagogue. There's a Jewish church there, right, that's down there. It's just up the street. That used to be...

Interviewer: There's a synagogue on Brunswick just north of Harbord. That's still there.

Respondent 1: Still there. So now, you go over to Major Street, that's' where the shoemaker...

Interviewer: So there were two shoemakers around. Uh-huh.

Respondent 1: Yeah. I can remember the guy – the knife-sharpening guy would walk down the street and ring the bell, and you go out and get whatever you wanted sharpened and stuff [0:57:30] like that, right?

Respondent 2: They still come down. I have heard in the van. I have heard him.

Respondent 1: The bell.

Respondent 2: The bell.

Interviewer: I wonder if people use him.

Respondent 1: Oh yeah. For sure. Lawnmowers, clippers. Yeah, they'll all use it, right? I'm just trying to think of something different in the neighbourhood that was kind of unique.

Interviewer: Let me ask you about – we talked about lanes.

Respondent 1: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: But what about right behind the homes, whether there were – if there was a patch of grass or something. **[0:58:00]** Did people use – like you say you used – that you're happy to sit out – Colleen said – in back and read. But as you were growing up, Bobby, were there gardens, vegetables, fruit, people using the backs?

Respondent 1: No, because we had the Market.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. So it was not necessary to grow.

Respondent 1: No. If you wanted something, you would always go down to Kensington. If you ever wanted bread, vegetables, meat, eggs, whatever you want, it was just walk down the street and it was there.

Interviewer: So a lot of people used the Market a lot.

Respondent 1: A hundred percent.

Interviewer: Okay. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Right?

Interviewer: **[0:58:30]** Do you use it at all now?

Respondent 1: We use it – we don't use it. I'm very – I favour the St. Lawrence market...

Interviewer: Oh, I like it.

- Respondent 1:** ...a lot because it's the best market in the world, as far as I'm concerned, okay?
- Interviewer:** You know what it did? It just won some award.
- Respondent 2:** That's exactly what it won, for best market.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** And I'm thinking whoa.
- Respondent 1:** No.
- Respondent 2:** I was surprised.
- Respondent 1:** The Kensington Market – it's changed quite a bit, **[0:59:00]** right? But I just feel like it's – there's no difference really. It's just a matter of what you want to do. As far as the shopping for us, we'll go down to Chinatown now because it's cheaper to shop on Chinatown than it is in Kensington, on Spadina, yeah. Right? It's a – you know, talking about price-wise, we're lucky because we have Kensington, we have Chinatown, we have the St. Lawrence, right?
- Interviewer:** **[0:59:30]** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** And it's hard to compete, right? It's hard to beat those places, especially when you know the people. If you know the people that are there...
- Respondent 2:** It's hard to beat Chinatown. They've got the...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. The prices are really good.
- Respondent 2:** ...prices. And the produce is good. They make sure the produce is good too, you know?
- Interviewer:** But Kensington Market is not necessarily inexpensive.
- Respondent 2:** Inexpensive, no.

- Respondent 1:** No, no.
- Respondent 2:** [Laughs] No, it's comparable to probably a store.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** But you can get almost half-price Chinatown.
- Interviewer:** Well that's good to know. Thank you.
- Respondent 1:** [1:00:00] I can remember – I would think the police station on London Street at Markham there, I can remember that. I can remember – Honest Ed's in this neighbourhood was huge. Honest Ed would – people would flock there. He would do different things. He would have entertainers there, he would bring – he would do all kinds of different things for the neighbourhood.
- Respondent 2:** Christmas, the...
- Interviewer:** The special. The...
- Respondent 2:** Turkeys.
- Interviewer:** ...turkey special.
- Respondent 2:** The turkey and the fruitcakes.
- Interviewer:** [1:00:30] Lined up early.
- Respondent 2:** Oh yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. So it's just a case of – there is landmarks around this neighbourhood, the Central Tech. I mean if you think of this neighbourhood off of Major, you've got Central Tech, you've got Harbord Collegiate, you got Central Commerce, you get Christie Pits, you've got all the public schools that are around. All the main churches that are in this neighbourhood, the different religions can practice.

- Interviewer:** What about – what [1:01:00] about the university? It's effect on our neighbourhood?
- Respondent 1:** I remember my mother having a conversation saying that she was terrified that when the university got as far as Spadina, okay, I really believed the stumbling block for the university was there's a big church that's right across the street there, and I think they wanted to really expand as much as they could at one time.
[1:01:30] And if I remember correctly, I remember my mom saying that, you know, it's good that – it's good to have education, it's good to have all the different things around you, but this is her neighbourhood.
- Interviewer:** Wow.
- Respondent 1:** And she didn't want people selling their homes. She was a believer in education, but she was always very strong about her neighbourhood. And don't forget, I mean, if you think of the university, how [1:02:00] the library's gone up, the big – the pool's gone there. I can't remember what was there, but there must have been – had to be homes there.
- Interviewer:** But your mother felt that they were encroaching on our neighbourhood, and that – but they wouldn't take the church away, so the church was protected, is that what she felt?
- Respondent 1:** She was always so scared that the university would spread this way.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** It still wants to. If you ever talk to Mary next door, she'll tell you some stories. We go for a walk fairly early in the morning and she's saying the U of T still wants to [1:02:30] try – is trying to buy up land here.
- Interviewer:** But your mother sensed it. She...
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah.

- Interviewer:** She was right. She was right.
- Respondent 1:** She was very strong about that.
- Interviewer:** Well she – but she was right on target. She's right.
- Respondent 1:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** But she felt that they wouldn't bully the church or push the church around, so the church was good – it's good that we have it on our side.
- Respondent 1:** Well, see, it was good that in that location because I think if you look across the street, there's a big Olympic pool in that building and that's the university and that's the gym and stuff, so. That's one thing I did remember about my mom. She'd [1:03:00] say, "Bobby, I don't want those people to come. It's going to stop at Spadina. That's where I think I'd like them to stop," and they're not coming over this way, and...
- Interviewer:** Well somebody did say to me that the U of T is a bully and that they would try to – and you had said that you and Mary had talked about it.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** They're still trying to buy up land.
- Respondent 1:** I've got news for you. They can be the bigger bullies they want, right? Whatever.
- Respondent 2:** Well they got the money too. They can offer.
- Respondent 1:** They just fight in their hands to...
- Interviewer:** Yeah, well our – the [1:03:30] residents' association will protect us as much as we can.

- Respondent 2:** That's right.
- Respondent 1:** Although I can't foresee that happening.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Could you imagine that ever happening in this neighbourhood?
- Interviewer:** Well it would certainly change our neighbourhood. Not for the better.
- Respondent 1:** No.
- Respondent 2:** These would all be probably student residences. Like they would build high-rises. They just completely take this and build all high-rises.
- Interviewer:** Oh, we would lose what we have, which we all love so much.
- Respondent 1:** One thing that sticks in my head, and I said to my wife for the longest of times, we used to walk up the laneway [1:04:00] to go to Dominion, now it's Metro, and there was two little houses by the Jewish Y. I don't know if you remember. The Jewish Y is here, and there was two old houses that were there.
- Interviewer:** Very nice-looking houses.
- Respondent 1:** They ripped those houses down and they built up those big monstrous condos or whatever they are, and I said to my – "I can't believe that they're going," and look what they built. They built...
- Interviewer:** Gone. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Gone.
- Interviewer:** I do remember those places.
- Respondent 1:** You do? Okay.
- Interviewer:** They had a lot of beauty, a lot of character.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: [1:04:30] Oh yeah.

Respondent 1: It's amazing, but that's just time and change, right?

Respondent 2: That was in the last ten to fifteen years.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: But no, I mean I'm thankful for – I'm thankful that we're in the neighbourhood. We couldn't be in a safer place, we could not be in a more family-oriented place, and we could not be in a place where everybody would love to come and live because it is a very, very special area.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Big time.

Interviewer: [1:05:00] Oh boy, do I agree with you. Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yeah. And I think the Harbord Village has really – because they have, on Ulster, they have the fairs, the different fairs that go on at the different parks, and that's all the HV, you know? And how they bring the community together. It's amazing. It's just I love – I just, oh, I get so excited being here.

Respondent 1: You should talk to some of the people and see if they've got old photographs of Central [1:05:30] Tech when there was homes there. You'd be surprised. Somebody's got them. Somebody must have them.

Respondent 2: Must have them, yeah.

Interviewer: Well I'm just beginning. It's new that I'm bringing my camera, and if you'll allow me to, I'll take a picture of you. But also beginning to

take pictures of pictures, as we agreed. I'm not taking anything away.

Respondent 2: Right.

Interviewer: But just to begin to have some collection of this because it's our neighbourhood as it's changed, and that change I think was fine. I'm sure it was [1:06:00] very painful for people to have their houses ripped away, but it's nice to have that green and be able to use it. Yes.

Respondent 1: It would be interesting if you talked to people and see if they remember what Central Tech was like before the football field. You'd be surprised, right?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Do you have any feelings about Rochdale and its impact on this neighbourhood? Right now I think it's [1:06:30] nothing, but...

Respondent 2: Yes.

Interviewer: ...in the past.

Respondent 1: In the past, yeah, it was all hippie stuff, I think. I can remember where there was one year where somebody had jumped from there and they killed themselves, right? You're talking Rochdale. Was at St. George and Bloor, right?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: Remember that monument, where that thinker was.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah. I'm pretty sure I remember. Like somebody – they said they were on drugs or they did something, and they jumped out of there, but I remember the police were going to go in there and clean everybody [1:07:00] out, and they were going to do all kinds of things, but you know, Rochdale was Rochdale. I mean that was just part of the time sort of thing, right? People – different – I was old-school. I mean you mind your own business, okay, and you wouldn't get into trouble, right? I mean, I was only there once, I

think, in that complex, right? And to be in there with just hippie people. That's all it was, right?

Interviewer: Yeah. They were. [1:07:30] They were, yeah.

Respondent 1: Is that – was that what you've been told? Or is that what you remember?

Respondent 2: I think it was more drugs. They were selling drugs there. It was more – walk through the hall and you could smell it, and it was like a – that's what I'd heard when I came in the '70s.

Respondent 1: But I mean that was...

Interviewer: So you were never upset about it. That was just...

Respondent 1: Absolutely.

Interviewer: ...a time. Yeah.

Respondent 1: That's just a different time in the neighbourhood, right?

Interviewer: Yeah. Well let me say to both of you this has been a delight. I mean you were – your descriptions, I can picture these things.

Respondent 1: Really?

Interviewer: Just [1:08:00] absolutely wonderful stories, and I think, Colleen, you learned some stories that you hadn't heard before.

Respondent 2: Absolutely I did. Sure.

Interviewer: When you knew that I was coming, you didn't know what I was going to ask about, but I'm talking about what it was like and the changes that have occurred. Is there anything that either of you can think of right now that we haven't talked about, and including since you've been here, or you visited your mother-in-law those years? Anything that we haven't talked about?

Respondent 1: [1:08:30] What we haven't talked about.

Interviewer: Maybe we've covered it all.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: I think basically you've got – you know.

Respondent 2: But the sense of community was – years ago, when you were growing up, as strong as it is now...

Respondent 1: I think the community is – the area that we live in now is stronger and better. I think [1:09:00] through the people that live in this – lawyers, and doctors, and all the different people that are a part of this neighbourhood, if there's a legal issue brought up, I think that it's dealt with. And the years past, I don't think that was never – like you couldn't be bullied, or you couldn't be stepped on, or you couldn't be pushed aside. [1:09:30] I think today the people are very knowledgeable of the laws, they're very knowledgeable of people's properties. They're very knowledgeable of the neighbourhood. You've got to pay – the taxes are high for what you pay for your education, your hospital, the road service, the garbage, the police, the ambulance. All those things have got [1:10:00] – they've expanded. I don't know – I can – the biggest change that I could probably think of would be the subway wasn't there. It was the streetcars. You used to go up Christie Street and turn around by – they would turn around right at Dupont and Christie. There was a loop there, and they would come back down, and the Weston Bakery, Christie's Bakery was up there. Everybody used to go to the bakery up there, right? So as far as – I just think [1:10:30] the neighbourhood's changing with the times, and they're not old-school. They respect the way people did things in the past, and as the present goes on...

Interviewer: That's important, respecting the past.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm. Respecting the past.

Respondent 1: Everybody is very on-board. If you have an idea that's going to improve the neighbourhood, if you have an idea that's going to

make somebody's life a little bit easier, yeah, it will get done. It may take a bit of [1:11:00] time, but people have power.

Interviewer: But you know, it's a pleasure for me to hear this because people often like to think about the good old days, and how it's not nearly as good as it used to be, and that's not your impression.

Respondent 1: I still...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: I'll tell you a quick story. I had knee surgery last year, and the doctor said to me, "Bobby, get your leg as strong as you can." I hadn't skated in maybe thirty years. [1:11:30] I hadn't skated at Christie Pits in over forty years, maybe longer, and I would go there in the morning and skate at the rink.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: Right? And I remember the guy that was inside there that was looking after the rink he says, "Oh, there's no hockey today." Right? And I said, "I'm the only one here." I said, "The only reason I've got the stick is I want to keep my balance," right? And he says, "Oh, it's okay, Bobby. Go ahead and skate." And once they [1:12:00] get to know you, and some of the kids would come up and we would talk and do something or whatever, and whoa, "How do you like skating here?" I said, "Oh, I love it." I says, "You know, when I was a kid here, I used to skate over there. You see that little old house at Christie Pits at the bottom?" He says, "Yeah," "That's where we used to skate, right on the outdoors." "Bobby," he says, "wasn't it cold?" And I says, "No, we changed our skates in the snow, and the old guy there would put – in a barrel he put wood in the barrel and light it up, and [1:12:30] that's how we keep warm because it was burning down there." And you never forget the past, but you can always look at the present.

Interviewer: Yeah. And you've done that so – both of you – in such a friendly way, and so clearly, and so eloquently.

Respondent 2: We're always lucky because we...

Respondent 1: We were lucky.

Respondent 2: ...the area speaks for itself, put it that way.

Interviewer: But you speak well for the area.

Respondent 2: [Laughs] Okay.

Interviewer: So Colleen and Bobby, I just want to say thank you very much. It's [1:13:00] been such a pleasure for me.

Respondent 2: Very. And sorry about this morning, but he had a cancellation. They called and he was able to go, so.

Interviewer: Well I'm glad you're feeling better.

Respondent 1: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Well enough for us to...

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: ...have a conversation.

[01:13:10]

[End of recording]