060 David DePoe

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

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: The date is the 29th of May, 2012, and I'm at 1 Major Street with David DePoe because he has a very special story about his grandfather in this neighbourhood from a long time ago.

Respondent: Okay.

Interviewer: So David, I'm handing it over to you, please.

Respondent: Okay. So my grandfather came in the middle of October. His family was originally from Hungary, and they **[0:00:30]** migrated to the United States. There's an interesting story behind that, which is that his father was a minor, a coach driver in the court in Austria, and he took off with a minor princess and stole one of the Emperor's coaches and a couple of his best horses, and they fled across Europe.

Interviewer: What year was that approximately?

Respondent: That would have been sometime in the **[0:01:00]** 1860s or '70s, I'm not sure exactly. This is from my grandfather. So they got to New York State and he wanted to become a farmer. He was apparently from a rural background and knew how to work with horses, so they ended up in upper New York State, and my grandfather was the youngest of four boys. He was born in 1882 and **[0:01:30]** when he – and the way it worked is the oldest, you know, was entitled to inherit the farm, and maybe the younger one a part of it, or something like that. It was a dairy farm that had Holstein cattle. And so my grandfather realizing that, and having an education sort of in the dairy field, ended up moving to Saskatoon. And **[0:02:00]** he was quite a forward-thinking man, and he actually met my grandmother, whose name was Marie Smith, and she never changed her name.

Interviewer: Whoa.

Respondent: She was Scottish, and her name was Marie Smith, and she was a suffragette and a Temperance woman. SO he started a dairy called the Saskatoon Pure Milk Dairy, which was the first dairy in western Canada that – **[0:02:30]** as far as I know, that pasteurized milk. He brought in pasteurization, and he also gave a decent price to the farmers because he knew what their life was like. And became a prominent citizen in Saskatoon. He sponsored bowling leagues, and softball leagues, and so on , and so forth, and well just before my – his oldest daughter, my mother, was born in **[0:03:00]** 1916, and then there were three daughters, it was very interesting that my grandfather, whatever children he had, I'm going to send my children to university.

Interviewer: They were so forward-thinking, both of your grandparents.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. So you know, my mother was part of, you know, not only the Temperance League, but she also – you know, had an interest in the vote for women and so on. So anyhow, subsequently **[0:03:30]** he moved the family to Winnipeg because he was asked to run the largest dairy in Manitoba, and so – but then when it came time for my – his daughters to go, three sisters, to go to university, they had to go to a place where there was a university. So they moved to Whitby, Ontario, and then he…

Interviewer: So when would that have been approximately?

Respondent: That would have been in the '30s during the Depression, the early '30s.

Interviewer: Thank you. Yeah.

Respondent: And so **[0:04:00]** they moved to Whitby, Ontario and lived in a big house, and you know, when I was a child I was taken out to Whitby to visit all these aunts, and uncles, and relatives, and so on, and so forth. And he got into – he couldn't start a new dairy in the Depression. That was not in the cards, so he started to work for a dairy company that distributed refrigeration equipment, and my mother went to Whitby **[0:04:30]** in a rural school, which was sort of

preparation for being a teacher. But when it was time for her to go to university, they moved to north Toronto. 53 Briar Hill Avenue, which was a large house, which had a third floor apartment, which they rented out in order to make ends meet. And it still was the Depression. And so my mother started at the University of Toronto and they gave her a **[0:05:00]** packed lunch and a nickel to take the streetcar down Yonge Street.

Interviewer: So she went to university, but it was done on a shoestring.

Respondent: She went to Victoria College, where she became friends with people like Northrop Frye and so on. So – and one thread that ran through my family was music, and my mother took – she got the Royal Conservatory, you know, **[0:05:30]** convocations in piano at the highest level and a certificate, and she studied English in university English literature, language and literature, as they called it. And she was involved in, you know, putting on Gilbert and Sullivan, and then all kinds of things at Victoria College. There's some interesting photographs of those things. And all of her stuff actually has been donated to the archives at **[0:06:00]** – all the programs that she kept. She kept everything, my mother. And so subsequently, the younger daughter, Betty, also went to Victoria College, and so did the youngest daughter, Gwen. And my grandparents put them – even though they didn't have a lot of money, and the third floor – and my mother **[0:06:30]** graduated, and found a teaching job in Brockville, Ontario teaching English and Music at Brockville High School, and so, you know, on the train to Brockville from Toronto and found a place to stay. Met my father there at an officer's, you know, inviting, you know, all the local single women to a dance. So when they got married, she had to stop teaching. Only spinsters **[0:07:00]** were allowed to teach back then. Spinsters. So my grandfather, having moved to Toronto, needed to start a business, and he – right after the War in the late '40s, I think '47 or so, he'd been selling this refrigeration equipment, but he decided to start his own business, so he found a building. The address being 107A Robert Street in the laneway **[0:07:30]** between Robert and Major Street. And he called his company Milk Case Repairs. And of course, the dairy, which was first Silverwoods and then Borden, so I think on the Spadina Circle, I think…

Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Respondent: …he repaired their milk cases for them. And you know, I remember going down there, you know, when I was a child. He also at the same time – he continued to sell that refrigeration equipment. **[0:08:00]** I think he was, you know, he was really busy, but he was a wonderful and warm human being and he used to take me in his big, old car around southern Ontario to sell this equipment to dairies in southern Ontario in the summertime when I was on my summer holidays. And you know, he'd probably put me up on a stool in the dairy and I could get a milkshake or an ice cream or whatever I wanted, so he was a wonderful, warm man and one of the best things I – **[0:08:30]** one of the most outstanding things I could remember about him were his hands. He had huge strong hands and really thick fingers because he had to milk cows by hand when he was growing up on his dairy farm, right? And he had the strongest hands I can ever – I could ever see.

Interviewer: And so milk made you feel very safe.

Respondent: Oh for sure. You know, I would sit on his lap…

Interviewer: What was his name, please?

Respondent: Archie Mihalko.

Interviewer: How do you spell Mihalko?

Respondent: M-I- **[0:09:00]** H-A-L-K-O.

Interviewer: Okay. All right.

Respondent: Archie. Yeah. And so he – so anyway, he started this business there and kept up the other, and he finally dropped selling the – the company he worked for kind of didn't keep up with the – on the leading edge of refrigeration equipment, and so he just dropped that and kept his company. And **[0:09:30]** I've looked it up in the archives and first it didn't have a name listed, and then it was called Milk Case Repairs, and obviously it was for the nearby dairy, and so on, in the circle.

Interviewer: So what is it that – exactly what was his business please?

Respondent: Well milk cases back then had metal frames with wooden slats in the sides. And so what happens is they'd throw them and crash them around, and they'd get broken, and his company repaired them. Not only for **[0:10:00]** that dairy, but I think with other dairies that were in sort of downtown Toronto in that era. Well you know, the milk bottles that you got in your milk box, in the winter where it froze, and the cream, you know, came – rose at the top and all of that stuff. So anyway, that was his business for quite a few years.

Interviewer: So he – but that started in 1947.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: So when you say quite a few **[0:10:30]** years, do you have any idea? Were you talking about ten years, twelve?

Respondent: It was there for about seven years and then he moved it up – and we're vague about this. We – some of us think it was up along Caledonia Road, and I think it was absolutely the end of Rogers Road where it meets Weston Road, so anyway. But…

Interviewer: It was that end of the city.

Respondent: You know, I haven't looked it up yet to that point in time. And I don't know **[0:11:00]** why he left that building here. Maybe he'd outgrown it. It's not a very big place. You know, now people live in it, right? That's behind 107 Robert Street.

Interviewer: And do you think you have any pictures at all of Milk Case Repairs Company?

Respondent: I don't. Unless – well here's where I would have to look. **[0:11:30]** My mother kept scrapbooks and my sister has them in her basement, and I would have to look through my mother's picture albums because she's kept everything. And so I would have to go into my sister's basement and get those picture albums and look for them, and we have photographs of him and my grandmother, who

died unfortunately in 1952 when I was eight. I have really good memories of her, but you know, **[0:12:00]** she had a heart attack one day in her kitchen when she was making one of her many pies. Anyway, so – and my grandfather, I think, developed some sort of dementia, Alzheimer's or something like that, right around – sometime in the mid-'50s because I can remember him coming out and visiting the farm, and **[0:12:30]** he was asleep with my brother, Eric, who is the next oldest boy in the family. No – yeah, to me. And my father could remember him waking up in the morning and saying he had to go and milk the cows. You know?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: So – and I remember that finally they had to put him into some home, you know, as I recall. It was an awful place, and you know, I went to see him before he died and he was just lying in a bed and **[0:13:00]** breathing heavily, and not really recognizing us and stuff.

Interviewer: Not this man that you remembered who used to take you…

Respondent: No, no, no…

Interviewer: …and he was working with these big, safe hands.

Respondent: He was the most wonderful, kind, nurturing, and supportive man. You know? And that's the way he was. And by about '57, '58 he was really suffering. He died in '59, so you know. Anyway.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that **[0:13:30]** you remember about that address or about the inside of the building?

Respondent: Yeah, I do. There was a jumbled pile of broken milk crates, and he had workmen in there, you know, dressed in, like, over long – you know, big overalls. And they were ripping them apart with tools and they had all kinds of slats of wood that they'd cut. They had, I think, a **[0:14:00]** band saw and they'd cut this – it was hardwood they used, and they would cut them, and then they had a rivet, riveting machine that would rivet these – they'd drill little holes, and they'd rivet the wooden slats back into the, I think, aluminum frames. They could have been steel. Probably steel frames of these milk case

repairs, and they had these work benches, and they just bammed away at doing this stuff. And he had a couple of, **[0:14:30]** you know, a riveting machine, and a couple of saws, and it was a noisy, rackety place.

Interviewer: I'll bet.

Respondent: And yeah. And you know, and again he had a very good relationship with his workers, you know, because he was just kind and decent to them. So yeah, and that – and I hadn't actually remembered where it was until my aunt told me that he had a – **[0:15:00]** he had his first Toronto factory down near Brunswick Avenue somewhere, and it didn't turn out to be Brunswick, it turned out to be between Robert and Harbord with an address that was on Robert Street, so he would have been taking them back over to the dairy, so that's sort of my grandfather.

Interviewer: And that's a long time ago in this neighbourhood.

Respondent: It is.

Interviewer: Is there anybody else who **[0:15:30]** might have some memories, more memories about this business?

Respondent: Well I'm the oldest, so I mean I've the most memories because probably, you know, I was the first grandson, so in some ways I was privileged to be – spend the most time with him. And yeah, so you know, I was in their big, old house over on Briar Hill quite a bit, you know, **[0:16:00]** and every – you know. I have some tiny little photographs of birthday parties and things that they had. They used to have these tiny little black and white…

Interviewer: Yeah. Black and white. Shiny black and white. Well if you could possibly get any pictures…

Respondent: I will.

Interviewer: …from the inside or the outside because it would be interesting for me to take pictures of 107A outside now…

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: …and then if you could get even one picture.

Respondent: And I will also look in the archives because, you know, they had – **[0:16:30]** they're – I mean who was the photography on this neighbourhood? I forget. There was a famous photographer who took pictures of Toronto and who lived in this neighbourhood, and I can't remember his name now. But I will look in three different places and see what I can find.

Interviewer: Well I really – the history committee of Harbord Village Residents' Association would really appreciate that because this – we're having fun doing this project, but we're **[0:17:00]** serious about it.

Respondent: Yeah. Oh yeah. Absolutely.

Interviewer: And a lot of people are enjoying it.

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. And of course, you dropped this piece of paper in my lap at Harbord – at our AGM…

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: …and I called you back because I thought this is a little gem that we have.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. It's just – you know, this man who was really progressive in his day, you know, I mean I don't know how he got there. I think it probably had something, a lot to do with my grandmother, **[0:17:30]** and kind of waking him up to the fact that women had rights. But on the other hand, my aunt told me – my aunt's kind of into some dementia now, but you know, I asked her a lot of questions. She said it was more him than her as she remembers it driving the idea that these young women, these daughters, would go to university. And whatever he had to do to get them there, he would. **[0:18:00]** So they all…

Interviewer: So she was a suffragette and your mother was – it sounds as if that was a whole family of smart, progressive people. That's the impression.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. It was. And you know, the legacy continues, you know. I mean I've been, you know, a union negotiator and an activist forever, you know? Thanks to my father **[0:18:30]** giving me knowledge about what was going on in the world, I got to go and see Martin Luther King's speech in Washington, and I came back – I had to tell my mother I was going to my friend's cottage. And I took a bus ride from Ottawa to – my father was the sort of anchor on CBC broadcasts, and sort of the most respected television – he was kind of like the Walter Cronkite of Canada **[0:19:00]** or something like that.

Interviewer: In what years would that…

Respondent: Well he got his job in Ottawa in 1960 and we moved to Ottawa then. And you know, him and houses – we bought a house that the basement flooded every spring because there was a [laughs] stream running underneath it.

Interviewer: Oh. You said he wasn't great with houses and cars.

Respondent: A house in a subdivision down along the Riverside Drive sort of. I don't know, south of Mooney's Bay **[0:19:30]** in Ottawa. I don't know if you know Ottawa, but…

Interviewer: I don't.

Respondent: Oh, we had to put, like, two by fours on the basement floor so we could keep our feet dry when we got out of the bed and walked downstairs in the spring. And you know, some bulb would burn out, and it was – anyway. Never mind. And he bought, like – I mean when we were living on the farm, here's someone who has six kids. He bought a Morris Minor convertible.

Interviewer: Oh. [Laughter]

Respondent: And he'd come home and he'd – **[0:20:00]** and he'd leave the top down in the rain, and so we'd go out for a Sunday drive, all crammed in this tiny little car and my mother with a baby in her lap, and you know, me with the youngest other one in my lap, and our feet would be in water. So I went out one day with a brace and bit to the four front and back sort of wells in the floor, and I took a brace and bit and drilled holes in them so that the water would drain **[0:20:30]** out of them and we wouldn't get our feet soaking wet [laughs] riding in that car. And the next car he bought was a taxi. You know, I remember holes drilled in the dash where they took the meter out of it, and they gave it a quick paint job, and the paint started to flake off right away in this car, and it was blue – sort of light blue, and it looked like a shiny new car, except it had probably a hundred thousand miles on it or something. [Laughs]

Interviewer: **[0:21:00]** Now most of the people that I'm interviewing have been here for forty years or more, but you've been here now for thirty years, I think.

Respondent: No. Just twenty-two since 1989.

Interviewer: Oh okay. Okay.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Could you just briefly, because you haven't been here for forty – in the twenty-two years that you've been here, are there any outstanding changes that you feel have occurred in our neighbourhood?

Respondent: Well obviously the tearing down of Doctor's Hospital and the building of Kensington Gardens **[0:21:30]** is the biggest. I mean I was heavily involved in negotiations with the Residents' Association about making that place appropriate to the neighbour in terms of height and design and all kind of stuff. I mean people are kind of happy that that ten-storey ugly tower got torn down, but…

Interviewer: That tower was the hospital.

Respondent: Yeah. Doctor's Hospital. It was here when we moved here, and what was in the mid-'90s when **[0:22:00]** they amalgamated it with Western and decided to, you know, I guess that was the Harris health plan, so-called. And – which always meant cutting and cutting some more, and being a teacher I know that very well. And so I was kind of the tough negotiator with Brian Macfarlane . I mean I was there **[0:22:30]** with Gus and a whole bunch of other people, and so forth, but…

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. So you wanted to make sure it wasn't going to be another tall structure. Is that what you're…

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah. And we also kind of hoped it would get turned into housing appropriate to the neighbourhood, but they had a – there's a thing, a legal concept called "As-of right," and they had the right because it had been a medical facility to build something similar.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And when they decided to – we could. Probably one of **[0:23:00]** the municipal board, but I had done really a lot of research, and we had a nice legal brief on Karl Jaffrey, but we didn't have the money. It would have cost us ten thousand dollars, and we didn't have ten thousand dollars. So I happened to sing in a choir, a unique choir that rehearses on Cecil Street called the Common Thread Community Chorus, and in the same section, bass section, was the chief architect who **[0:23:30]** was designing the building, so you know, I had many conversations with him and we became friends, and he listened. So they lowered that building and put a lot of the offices and services into the basement, and sort of dug, you know, windows so the basement had light.

Interviewer: So much more to the satisfaction of the neighbourhood.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. Like, you know, the reference – sort of gable references in the same colour of red brick that most of the houses were made of, and **[0:24:00]** the roof, roofline the same height, which was important to have it be the scale of the neighbourhood, you know? And sort of those faux sidewalks that go in there. I don't know, just, you know, at least architectural references to residential.

And so yeah, that was an intense, intense period of time because Brian Macfarlane was not very well regarded by the people in this neighbourhood. You know, he really wasn't the **[0:24:30]** – people really didn't like him. He was not a nice man and so that was my immersion in the Harbord – well Sussex-Ulster.

Interviewer: Yeah. That's what it was.

Respondent: Harbord Village.

Interviewer: But you worked hard for that at that time. You were intensely involved.

Respondent: Hours, and hours, and hours. I saw a couple of notebooks of all the meetings we went to up on the top of 340 College in the boardroom and stuff, and you know, heavily, **[0:25:00]** heavily disputed ideas were passed back and forth across the table and stuff. It was intense from time to time.

Interviewer: Well thank you. Thank you on behalf of all of us.

Respondent: No, I was used to that because I – in my life as a teacher, I – after two years of teaching I got laid off and I had to go and teach out in Peel region, so – and I became the chief negotiator on behalf of the Peel teachers. SO I was used to hours **[0:25:30]** and hours of tough negotiating, so I didn't have any trouble staying tough and reasonable, and looking someone in the eye across the table and saying, you know, really what you're thinking about is unacceptable to us as residents, and we have to really think about the fact that you're building this thing in a residential neighbourhood, and it has to be appropriate. You know? Etcetera. You know? [Laughs]

Interviewer: Yeah. You know, that fighting kept our neighbourhood **[0:26:00]** what we like it to be without high-rises, and structures that are going to be sticking our craw.

Respondent: Yeah, I know.

Interviewer: Any other – so that's really a wonderful response. Any other comments about changes in this neighbourhood?

Respondent: Well a lot of people have bought in in the sort of Portuguese-ish character is leaving to a certain extent. You know, people who are Portuguese families **[0:26:30]** are not as prominent here as they were before. There's still some.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: You know, but the women are aging, as you can see, but they're still there. Just up the street here by the laneway, you know Albert and so on who lives there. Yes, it's his mother, you know, and so on. What else? I think the rooming houses have remained as rooming houses. Now **[0:27:00]** this house used to be a student rooming house when we bought it, and so we've transformed it since we bought it. I mean this used to be a bedroom.

Interviewer: The one we're sitting in now.

Respondent: Where we're sitting. Yeah. And if you look very carefully at that wall behind you, you can see that there was a wall there that got taken out. It's been, you know, filled in and covered, but I did that, you know? And repaired the ceiling, and you know, all that. So this was a bedroom. **[0:27:30]** This tiny little space here was a bedroom, and then there's a washroom there that has a shower in it being shared by everyone who lives on this floor, and the basement was a contained apartment. It still has a stovetop and cupboards down there. I mean, you know, it's a laundry for us now, but it was a kitchen down there. And it's carpeted, you know? And so it was **[0:28:00]** divided into three rooms on this floor and an upstairs one-bedroom apartment and a basement apartment when we bought it in 1989.

Interviewer: And you reconstructed it into a one-family dwelling. Is that what you did?

Respondent: Yeah. And that – the reconstruction only started last summer, you know? We had – there was – where the staircase is there, there was a **[0:28:30]** wall and a door with a lock on it. And…

Interviewer: So you lived in it that way for many years.

Respondent: We lived in on this floor and…

Interviewer: For twenty years.

Respondent: …the basement. Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Wow.

Respondent: And so it's what we had to do. When you come out of a divorce you're poor.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Especially the woman, gets a poorer bet. We both ended up poor, so you know. And this house – I mean it was really – I met Sue just after she sold another house and bought this one, **[0:29:00]** and so it turned out that between the offer and the closing date the market crashed and the house lost thirty thousand dollars, boom.

Interviewer: How much?

Respondent: Thirty.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: And so, you know, just in terms of that we had to…

Interviewer: So you rented out.

Respondent: …eat it. Yeah. And also rent it out. Well and also she would – didn't have enough money, so she had a second mortgage too at a high interest rate. And after **[0:29:30]** about five years, I probably went and said, "You know what, you've made all your money better from the interest all ready, and so here's what I'm going to do. We're going to buy you out, or else we're going to quick claim on the mortgage and you can sue us." Like I said, I was a negotiator. "And so because you've made more than the value of the mortgage back in the interest, and so I think you just need to let it go now." **[0:30:00]** You know?

Interviewer: And he did.

Respondent: He did. Yeah, he did. He agreed.

Interviewer: So now the whole house is yours.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Finally.

Respondent: Now we signed these docs.

Interviewer: You waited a long time for that.

Respondent: We had a – yeah. And we had a – so then we just had the other mortgage to pay off and, you know, a year-and-a-half ago it disappear, a year-and-a-half ago in September we – now…

Interviewer: That must have… well and as you pointed out to me, you have a little oasis **[0:30:30]** behind here.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: You've made it very pretty.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Well is there anything else that you might want to talk about about our neighbourhood?

Respondent: You know what? I love this neighbourhood. I think we have one of the most active and progressive neighbourhood associations in the city. You know, I love that we've done this tree project.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: I love that we're doing this history project. I think it's – you know, I think, you know, the bulk **[0:31:00]** purchase of furnaces and solar

panels and all that green project, including the trees really conceptually, and I think thanks to Tim Grant…

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: …I think we've – you know, I mean I dare say we probably have one of the most, or if not the most active neighbourhood associations in the city.

Interviewer: I think so.

Respondent: And it's filled with a whole lot of people with a whole lot of interest who **[0:31:30]** want to take care of the place, you know, and make it better. And I think we have. You know? I mean I feel really a part of it, you know, and I mean we've had to do a lot of negotiations with Judy Perly over the Free Times Café to keep the noise down.

Interviewer: Has that worked?

Respondent: That wall is their back door.

Interviewer: Oh you're right against Free Times.

Respondent: Yeah, that's right.

Interviewer: So when they have musicians playing that's right here?

Respondent: At eleven o'clock they have to close the back door **[0:32:00]** and she'll have to turn the air conditioning on. But she bought the house at 3 Major Street.

Interviewer: You were talking to me about closing the back door and closing on the air conditioning.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Free Times.

Respondent: Yeah. And because we got to know Judy and we were friendly with her, and quite often that's our default place to go, [laughs] you know, we're too busy to cook, they have good food, right?

Interviewer: They do.

Respondent: **[0:32:30]** And so we just developed a relationship with her, you know? And I mean Judy is a progressive-minded person herself, you know, and she doesn't want to make trouble for her neighbours. And I mean she's even, for example, got – printed up a whole bunch of these big buttons that say, "Stop Ford." [Laughs]

Interviewer: So she's political too.

Respondent: Yeah. She's political too. And she's from the Perly family, you know, that made the Perly…

Interviewer: Perly's Maps.

Respondent: …Maps.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: And her **[0:33:00]** brother – what's his name? Gary was a real political sort of Canadian nationals radical in the '70s. He's sort of a socialist nationalist and he had an organization called the **[indiscernible 0:33:16]** Liberation Front or something like that, you know? And so, I don't know. There's a lot of history of Jewish communists in this city, and I suspects that's where her – the tradition **[0:33:30]** of her family came out of, you know? I mean the people who organized the government, worker's unions on Spadina were mostly members of the Canadian Communist Party, and good on them because they managed to – even though, you know, starting in the '40s and the '50s there was all the **[indiscernible 0:33:48]** and McCarthy's, I mean thanks to them really we have, you know, workers' rights in this country to a great extent.

Interviewer: Well of course it's something that you **[0:34:00]** and Sue, your wife, share with Judy, the union and making…

Respondent: Yeah, kind of. You know? And you know, the place is home to folk music, and that has a tradition too of sort of social progressiveness of some kind, you know? So I don't know. I mean – and you know, I do a little bit of singing myself, you know?

Interviewer: You said you're in a choir still?

Respondent: I was in the choir – not now. I've taken leave from it because – actually I took **[0:34:30]** a leave from it to sort of do more politics. I like to get involved with, you know, the stock that cuts thing against Ford and, you know, the cuts to city programming, and all these – you know, recreation programming and stuff closing, and arraigning some community centres and all that stuff that he was trying to do, and the war on bicycles, and all these awful things that **[0:35:00]** he stands for. So I've actually devoted a lot of time to that in the last couple of years.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well there's a lot of good work that we can do as volunteers in our city and in our community.

Respondent: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: You know that you've done it and I'm doing it.

Respondent: Yeah. And I mean I just think to make – I mean make this city work, there needs to be cultural groups, political groups, environmental groups, neighbourhood building groups, you know? I **[0:35:30]** mean to have a city building vision, I mean learning to be transit advocacy groups, you know, there need to be all kind of people who advocate for making this city a more liveable place to live. And you know, and I am quite happy to take my place in that panoply of, you know, people. I mean back in '89 I was one of the founding members of the task force to bring back **[0:36:00]** the Don. And I founded something called the Teacher's Environment Network at the Toronto Board, the Toronto District School Board.

Interviewer: So that's all part of a large part – that's your community work.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you've been active in it, and you talked about what you did with Doctor's Hospital.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. So you know, it just – I mean whatever falls to hang from me, you know, I'm way back in the '70s, I dropped out of university to join the '60s [laughter] and **[0:36:30]** I went back in '69 and got involved in student politics. And also because of my, you know, sort of history of having seen Martin Luther King, and when I was in U of T, the first time around I was part of Toronto Friends of SNICC, which was – it's the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. The university students organized registering black voters in the American senate.

Interviewer: I remember that.

Respondent: Yeah. **[0:37:00]** I went down there with my friend, Paul Saltzman, who's a son of the iconic weatherman by the name of…

Interviewer: Oh, I remember him. I remember Percy Saltzman.

Respondent: Yeah. Anyway, he's Percy's son. So we both had something in common. We had famous people as fathers, you know? Anyway, we went down to Mississippi and he got thrown in jail, and I escaped getting killed. I was driving down a rural road **[0:37:30]** with a black student from Boston University, and we had these voter registration things, and all of a sudden this pickup truck pulled up beside us and…

Interviewer: With rednecks?

Respondent: …I looked over and there was a shotgun poking out of the window. I jammed on my brakes. The shotgun went off and they missed us because they had kept going, right? I turned the truck around, right around the back way and floored it, and **[0:38:00]** we drove straight back to Atlanta where – which was the same **[indiscernible 0:38:06]** and we said, "We're sorry, first of all. I think a black man and a white man in a truck is probably not a good idea. And second, we're completely scared out of our minds." You know, I mean I'm twenty years old and I'm like flipping out. Anyway, **[0:38:30]** but we had this support organization here and we filled

Convocation Hall with fundraising concerts and things like that, you know?

Interviewer: So you've been an activist for many years.

Respondent: Yeah. And so it was, you know – you know, and I got asks by the ANC rep in Toronto to – I went to him and said – in the mid-'80s – what can we do about apartheid? And he said…

Interviewer: You know what? I'm going to have to – I'm going to turn this off and we'll continue to talk about that, okay?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: But I just want to ask – just ask one **[0:39:00]** more question, and that is what made you move to this neighbourhood? And then we'll talk about the other…

Respondent: Really, you know what? Sue had bought a house that she could afford. That's really, really – on a very pragmatic level, she could live in part of it and rent out the rest.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: Single mom with a child, and just needed to do that.

Interviewer: So you moved here because she had this place.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: But you've never looked back. [Laughs]

Respondent: Mm-mm.

Interviewer: Clearly.

Respondent: Mm.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent: We love living here.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: It's a great place **[0:39:30]** to live.

Interviewer: Well I'm going to turn this off, and we can continue to talk about that because I lived in the States during some of those years…

Respondent: Did you?

Interviewer: …experienced them too.

Respondent: Sure.

Interviewer: But I want to say thank you very much for all this interesting, valuable information.

Respondent: Well it's fun. You know, I just – this is just what I've been doing for a long time, you know? I'm in – I think – I don't know. For me, I just have this sense of you make – you need to make a contribution to **[0:40:00]** wherever you are from whoever you are, you know?

Interviewer: And you do. Well, of course as I said before, we were at the AGM and you heard Richard speak, and before I knew it I had this piece of paper in my hand because you had something to add, so thank you…

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: …very, very much.

Respondent: Yes. It's fun.

[00:40:18]

[End of recording]