

VN810062 Rachel & Jack Brass

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

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: Today is the 20th of June, 2012. I'm sitting at my kitchen table with Rachel and Jack Brass, who have been married for forty-one years, met each other at fifteen years old. What I would like to start with is first to say thank you very much for coming and for being willing to share your history of being in this neighbourhood. I'd like you to both start by telling me [0:00:30] where you lived, and the years that you lived there, please.

Respondent 1: I lived at 38 Borden Street from my birth in 1947 until the family moved to north Toronto in 1956, October 22nd.

Interviewer: Oh, you remember the exact date.

Respondent 1: I remember the hour.

Interviewer: [Laughs] Okay. And Rachel?

Respondent 2: My name is Rachel Brass. I lived at 181A Major Street from 1953 [0:01:00] until 1962 when we moved to 411 Markham Street for two-and-a-half years, until about 1965.

Interviewer: So when you first moved you didn't go very far from this neighbourhood.

Respondent 2: No. No. Stayed in the neighbourhood.

Interviewer: Right. Do you know – I mean you were very young when your families chose to live here. Do you have any idea why they chose to come to this neighbourhood?

Respondent 1: It was well before I was born. I know my father [0:01:30] through looking through some records lived at 40 Borden Street. I don't

know how long, and I don't know when he bought 38, but it must have been very early on when the house was relatively new.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. So you don't know. They never talked about why they chose to be here.

Respondent 1: No. No. It was a Jewish neighbourhood.

Interviewer: Well that's a big one.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Were your parents immigrants?

Respondent 1: **[0:02:00]** Both my parents were immigrants.

Interviewer: Okay. So they would come where they had landsman.

Respondent 1: Well my father was only about seven years old, so.

Interviewer: So his family chose to be here.

Respondent 1: No. They actually lived down in Cabbagetown. And also before that, in the ward. They were impoverished, so. And my father was an orphan at age 18.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 1: With three younger brothers. Two younger brothers, excuse me. So he had a very difficult early part of his life.

Interviewer: **[0:02:30]** So when you talk about impoverished with no parents to take care of that. Right.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: But he's the one who eventually bought the house on Borden.

Respondent 1: Right. He was – he must have been in his late twenties when he bought the house.

- Interviewer:** Do you know who lived in that house at that time?
- Respondent 1:** No.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. And your father bought it with tenants and [0:03:00] did he move in shortly after that?
- Respondent 1:** I don't know.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent 1:** I don't know who – at one time I thought he was the original owner, but I'm not sure about that.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 1:** He might have been the original owner that rented it out in order to be able to afford it and then be able to move in at a later date. I know they lived on Euclid Avenue with my mother's parents, and I think that was up until about 1940, 1941. It might have been 1941 [0:03:30] because I think my sister lived out on Euclid, and she was born in '41.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm. And Rachel, what's your family story? Do you have any idea?
- Respondent 2:** Not really. My parents are survivors of the Holocaust, and they first came here, lived on Kensington Avenue, 5 Kensington, in a deplorable housing, renting a flat from a crazy landlady from what I understand, who screamed all the time at me. And it was just an unbearable situation. [0:04:00] So they scraped up whatever money they had and bought this place. And later on, I kind of understood why when I went back to Poland to see where my father came from, the Harbord streetcar ran just near our house because we were very close to the corner, and when I went back to my father's place, which was demolished, but I saw he had also a Tramley streetcar running right in front of his – right near his house, so it was the same type of setting, and then I think another [0:04:30] attraction was also, as he said, the Jewish area. There

was the bakery there, there was the Harbord Fish Market, and Kensington Market was not far. My father was there every single week with lots of – he loved to shop. And it was just a vibrant, lovely area. Also butcher shops, so you can get whatever you wanted. They loved to go up to Bloor Street for a promenade every Saturday. We would walk with our nice clothes and just walk. I have lovely memories of that.

Interviewer: So that was family outing.

Respondent 2: That was [0:05:00] a family outing, and I think that resembled what – especially what my father lived in, the area he lived in, and I think my mother said that she used to also do promenades with her parents on the weekends, so I think all of those things combined, they loved the area.

Interviewer: So it was familiar, which made it feel right.

Respondent 2: Right.

Interviewer: And they were moving into a neighbourhood where there were other Jewish families, which gave them a feeling of we belong, and – well people often like to be – [0:05:30] especially when you're an immigrant – like to be with people that you have something in common with. Yeah.

Respondent 1: And there was a number of Holocaust families that had already moved in.

Respondent 2: Oh yeah.

Respondent 1: Relatives and stuff like that, so.

Respondent 2: Yeah. They knew some people. But they stayed on most of that generation, or that ilk, moved out in the mid-'50s or late '50s up north, in quotation marks. And my father always rebelled against that. That wasn't for him. And [0:06:00] finally when we did move up north in 1965, he was never happy because he had a – well he had a car on Markham Street, but he had to drive everywhere, and it was just a different kind of lifestyle.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Suburbia. It was just never for him, so. It all comes together later on. Now I understand why they chose that place, and of course they had most of it rented out to support – that's another issue.

Interviewer: Okay. That's exactly where I wanted to go for both. Okay. [0:06:30] So they – when you were living there...

Respondent 2: Yes.

Interviewer: ...you lived there. How many members are there in your family when you were a child?

Respondent 2: Well I was the only child for seven years because my sister was born seven years later, so it was just the three of us mostly, and then my sister, so four of us. She was born in '56. So we had – let me see how many rooms we had. We had just – especially before my sister came, [0:07:00] maybe two or three rooms. That was it. We had what is now the dining room, that was my parents' bedroom. It was a lovely room. We had the kitchen, and there was a beautiful breakfast nook. That was our table and chairs, and there was a little bed there for me, kind of a pullout couch. That's where I slept.

Interviewer: So you lived in a small space. You and your parents...

Respondent 2: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: ...lived in a really small space.

Respondent 2: We did.

Interviewer: On the first floor, the main floor.

Respondent 2: Yes. Yes. Everything else was rented out to pay the mortgage.

Interviewer: [0:07:30] Do you have any recollection of how many people were there? Individuals, family?

Respondent 2: We had a family upstairs that – parents and an older son. We had them there for a while, and there was also an extra room rented out to a single guy. I think his name was Eugene. And also, I think, before them or after them, I can't remember the order, there was a [0:08:00] Hungarian couple and an older couple that came – that used to make apple strudel. And the woman used to sew suits for me. [Laughter] I remember that she was so very talented. Homemaker.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Lovely woman. [indiscernible 0:08:10]. I remember them very well. And downstairs we had a lovely rec room.

Interviewer: Downstairs you mean in a basement level?

Respondent 2: Yeah. It was built – I think our home was a builder's home. It was a renewer home, and it had one of these floors that had musical notes on it. It was really cool, with a little bar, and [0:08:30] we had that rented out to an older lady, an English lady called Mrs. Seymour. She lived down there. And we had a little bathroom downstairs just, you know, a very small one. It's sort of a toilet and sink, and I guess she used that. And I think my – we used that too occasionally, and then washing facilities down there. A washer. Ringer washing machine. And then my father worked in the back room. There was sort of a dark room and he worked on sewing. He put fur [0:09:00] pelts together to make a few extra bucks, so he was always down there trying to make a few extra bucks.

Interviewer: So every space was used.

Respondent 2: Every space.

Interviewer: Yeah. What kind of work did your father do when he wasn't doing pelts downstairs?

Respondent 2: He was a furrier. He was...

Interviewer: Oh he was.

Respondent 2: ...a furrier. He worked...

Interviewer: Working for somebody else?

Respondent 2: Yes. But it was very seasonal work, and he was often unemployed, so they used him, you know, the fur trade goes for a while, and then – so he's – they really struggled. And...

Interviewer: But they bought this [0:09:30] property, and they filled every space with bodies, and paying bodies.

Respondent 2: Exactly. I remember once they had a woman there and she didn't pay her rent, and I remember going with them to try to collect it. I remember her name was Linda, and I remember it was very upsetting for my parents that she just skipped out, and I do recall that.

Interviewer: And it shows how significant it was if you recall it from decades ago.

Respondent 2: Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: But it's so meaningful for your family to not have that income.

Respondent 2: Yes. Yes. They came with [0:10:00] a little bit of money from Germany, because my father had worked there after the war, and so that's why they had that. It was their little sort of nest egg, which they pretty well all put into this house. So that's how they were able to afford it so early. But in order to keep it up, keep up the bills, they had to rent out every space. But we were fine, we didn't mind it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Just used to it.

Interviewer: Yeah. I think – what about your family? Were there extra people? Or did your family fill the space?

Respondent 1: Yeah. [0:10:30] There was one sort of similarity between Rachel's parents and my parents. Our fathers – in those days, it was the man who made the money in those cases.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent 1: Both of our fathers knew how to make money. They made a living, you know, at best. What they did is they knew how to save money.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: Okay?

Interviewer: So they – yeah. Very thrifty.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: Yeah, [0:11:00] yeah. So any monies they accumulated wasn't, you know – it was due to extreme thrift, and we had – we lived in a house that was probably, I don't know the downstairs – semi-detached, small, semi-detached. Probably around five hundred square feet and five hundred square feet upstairs. And [0:11:30] my parents' bedroom was the dining room. Yeah. And for the first part of my life, I slept in the back where the kitchen was. It was sort of a – like that room there. And my sister lived in the front room upstairs. She had the best room in the place. You know, thinking now I didn't think of it until now because – and then there are two [0:12:00] back rooms upstairs – were rented out to, usually, couples. And I remember about three or four couples. I remember five couples, as a matter of fact, going back to the very early '50s. And occasionally on and off they'd rent one of the rooms upstairs, and I remember a few tenants who lived upstairs, and then I moved up when I was about six years old to that room upstairs. The basement wasn't [0:12:30] finished, so they didn't rent out the basement. And my father always, always had a job. He worked for the same company for about forty years.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: So he was reliable.

Respondent 1: Oh, my father was – yeah. My father was reliable. And he was extremely risk-adverse. [0:13:00] I remember recommending to him to buy RSPs. He might have saved 150 dollars a year, but 150 dollars a year back in the late '60s was more than a week's work for him. So finally I convinced him to do it, and I said to him, "With Canada Trust, I can get this percent." And he says, "Oh, no, no, no, no. [0:13:30] I won't go with Canada Trust." I says, "Why?" He says, "I only do my business with Commerce?" I says, "Why? Why? What's?" "Since 1923. The whole Bank of Canada went bankrupt and I lost thirteen dollars."

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 2: So he learned his lesson. [Laughter]

Respondent 1: He learned his lesson. Yeah. It was a whole – like I look at it and I don't know how [0:14:00] – how they adjusted to that, but I adjusted. I didn't know that we were – I wouldn't say impoverished. We were definitely not impoverished. I never missed a meal. Everything was budget, and many times I had hand-me-down clothes, but you know, when my mother died I was surprised that there was a couple of hundred thousand dollars in cash. I couldn't figure out where she got that from.

Interviewer: So what do you understand about that?

Respondent 1: Saving.

Interviewer: Yeah. [0:14:30] Saving.

Respondent 1: Saving.

Interviewer: Yeah. So their internal message system was we're poor, and you can never be what they would consider extravagant.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah. No, no.

Respondent 2: It's a barrier.

Respondent 1: No, no. We rarely went out to restaurants. We never traveled. I think we – well we went to Montreal because my father had a brother who lived in Montreal as far east – we went as far west, we went – my mother had a cousin in Buffalo. [Laughter]

Interviewer: [0:15:00] Yeah.

Respondent 2: You probably used the word "traveling" then. [Laughter]

Interviewer: But both your families packed a lot of people under the roofs after your families bought those homes in order to help pay the mortgage.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Exactly. Exactly. And...

Interviewer: But it sounds to me as if it was the norm, so nobody felt sorry for themselves.

Respondent 1: No.

Interviewer: They were using what we consider a living room and a dining room, which are nice to have, practically essential, they were beds, and dressers, and [0:15:30] people sleeping there.

Respondent 2: Yeah. A place for a body, so to speak.

Respondent 1: Do you know how many people used that one washroom?

- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. That's another issue. [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** Right.
- Respondent 1:** I never had to wait for the washroom from what I remember. It was never, ever – I was never unhappy about the situation. My mother was, but I wasn't unhappy, but I thought that everything was just fine.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So one bathroom. What about [0:16:00] kitchen and refrigerator?
- Respondent 1:** We had a kitchen refrigerator on the main floor, and it was an icebox...
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent 1:** ...on the second floor with a stove.
- Interviewer:** Oh, so they had a little bit of a kitchen upstairs.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Yeah. First room was a kitchen. The second room was a bedroom.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And you?
- Respondent 2:** Mm-hm. We had a little kitchen upstairs that probably was built in there for, you know, to accommodate renters.
- Interviewer:** Right. So you shared the bathroom, but you didn't share the kitchen.
- Respondent 2:** No, no. We had our own [0:16:30] kitchen. Sort of a galley-style kitchen. Very small, but I remember with it, the black and white checked, you know, tiles or whatever it was. And I distinctly remember that. It was a lovely – it was a small space, but well used, and we had a small table there, so we ate our – just a, you know, a quick bite there, but we would always eat our dinner in the

breakfast room. And my mother entertained a lot. She was always entertaining, cooking, [0:17:00] and baking. Did it all. And of course...

Interviewer: With no dining room, no air conditioning.

Respondent 2: No dining room.

Interviewer: Living room?

Respondent 2: No. Well the living room later on, actually the living room we started to use, I think in the – probably about 1955, I think, just before my – '54, '55 before my sister was born, and they bought some really nice furniture. I wish I had it today. Turquoise couches, and they had the mantel. They had some really nice, old elephant sculptures, [0:17:30] and cool coffee table.

Respondent 1: What about that cigarette holder?

Respondent 2: And cigarette holder that opened up to – which I still have. It's broken, but I kept that. I insisted on, because that's my youth. And you know, they'd have cigarettes in there. People would come and, you know, just like you'd put out candies today or nuts, have a cigarette. And you know, and of course ashtrays out, and that's what everybody did.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: So that was actually a beautiful space. And I'd been back to the house since and it's been gutted completely, [0:18:00] so there's very few, you know, remnants of what I recall, but just the odd thing in the basement.

Interviewer: One of you mentioned the washing machine, the ringer.

Respondent 2: Mm.

Interviewer: Washing machine.

Respondent 1: Right.

- Interviewer:** what are some of the other memories that you have of the interior of the house, including the heating system? And you also mentioned, one of you said, no air conditioning.
- Respondent 2:** Yes. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** No. Not only that, I never felt hot.
- Respondent 2:** I remember feeling a little hot once we had our cousins come from Israel. My [0:18:30] mother's sister, one sister that connected after the Holocaust. She came in 1959 with her two daughters and her husband, and they stayed with us. There was another story. For, I think it was about six months, something like that. Unfortunately, my parents are both gone, so I can't ask – I can ask my aunt. She's still around. I'll see if she remembers. And we all stayed there. And I remember a couple of times, because they came in the summer feeling the heat, and I shared the bed with one of my cousins.
- Interviewer:** [0:19:00] So those bodies warm each other up, right? So you're talking about a twin-size bed with two...
- Respondent 2:** Well it was – actually it was probably more of a double. It was a couch that opened up. I'd say a small double.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent 2:** You know? Very small. So I remember feeling a little hot in those days, but you know what? It was nothing terrible. We'd go outside, we had a backyard, we'd go outside and relax, we'd play in the laneway, which was right beside our house. Everybody [0:19:30] hung out outside. We just stayed out.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** That's what we did.
- Interviewer:** You're talking about so many things that I want to concentrate on.
- Respondent 2:** Okay.

- Interviewer:** Okay. So let's start with – you mentioned it. We'll start with the laneways. Okay.
- Respondent 1:** Oh yes.
- Interviewer:** So if both of you could talk about the laneways and how you used them.
- Respondent 1:** Okay. There was two laneways that I was familiar with. One was my – Borden Street, Croft Street, which is just behind here.
- Interviewer:** Yes, it sure is. Right there.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** The other [0:20:00] one was my grandmother, behind on Markham Street. And that was Markham Street between Ulster and Harbord – was at one time a very high-class area. Now it's very, very expensive again. But going to Borden Street, I remember you were asking – you wanted to know about the laneway. There were two [0:20:30] when I was – I can remember two people still had horses.
- Interviewer:** Okay.
- Respondent 1:** Okay?
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** And on Markham Street there was one guy that still had a horse. Right up to probably 1960, '61.
- Interviewer:** These horses were used for?
- Respondent 1:** Well they were used for work.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

- Respondent 1:** The guy on Markham Street, he was a fruit peddler. Fruit and vegetable peddler. And he had a flatbed dray [0:21:00] and he would sell produce from his dray.
- Interviewer:** Dray?
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. That's a flatbed cart.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** And then there was on Borden Street, there was Louis Mandle. Nice guy. He died young, and he had a horse, and he was – he delivered fruit and vegetables. And I remember the manure guys [0:21:30] shoveling manure out of the stables onto the truck to take it away.
- Interviewer:** Where was the stable?
- Respondent 1:** The stable was on Croft Street.
- Interviewer:** So just down this lane somewhere. Closer to College?
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, close to College.
- Interviewer:** So we're just a three, four-minute walk away from there.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. And you can see in the old – well the days when I was growing, you could see the stables because the stable had a – like our – on Borden Street behind our house was a [0:22:00] garage, but it really was a stable. You could see a partition where the horses were, or a horse was, and upstairs was a hayloft. And you can still see occasionally – very rare now – the hay loft and see where there were stables, okay? And on Markham Street they used to have blocks, concrete blocks beside the curb, and they got rid of them because when you park your car, you couldn't open up your door, if you parked adjacent to the [0:22:30] concrete blocks. There were four. If you wanted to get off of your buggy, the ladies could dismount.
- Interviewer:** Oh, they didn't have to jump down.

Respondent 1: Yes, it was a fairly high carriage.

Respondent 2: Sure. Yeah, sure.

Respondent 1: And then another thing, speaking of horses, there was a – I know this is slightly out of the area. This is at Spadina and College on the southeast corner [0:23:00] – was a very unusual trough. I only knew two in Toronto like it. It was cast iron. It was quite big. It was about the size of this table. Maybe a little bit longer. And water was flowing, and a little sink was there. Water was flowing right out of a spigot, and you could go and drink the water. And then the overflow would go into a bigger vat and the horses would drink from that side, and that [0:23:30] was right on the curbside.

Interviewer: So that was in the early '50s.

Respondent 1: Yeah. It was right on the...

Respondent 2: I remember that too.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: I remember that too. So that was – I think they demolished it in, what would you say? Late '50s, early '60s?

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Quite clever when you think that human beings could drink from it and the horses got the rest of it.

Respondent 2: Yeah. It was a gorgeous structure. It's too bad they got rid of it.

Respondent 1: And kitty-corner from it was the old building of the present CIBC, and it was an old building, [0:24:00] probably from the 1880s or something like that. And on the windows it had gold leaf Yiddish lettering.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

- Respondent 1:** And it would say, "Safety deposit boxes."
- Interviewer:** Oh, in Yiddish?
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** "Checking accounts," in Yiddish.
- Interviewer:** Oh, so that's where the current CIBC is at College and Spadina.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. Exactly.
- Respondent 2:** Yes. Did we see that? Or did we each see it...
- Respondent 1:** No, I – passing it by.
- Respondent 2:** Did you show it to me? I can't remember now.
- Respondent 1:** No. I think it was gone – well I think it [0:24:30] was gone by the time...
- Respondent 2:** Maybe I saw a photo. But he's told me about that.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. In gold leaf letter. It was beautiful. And then I was so sad when they wrecked the building, and that disappeared.
- Interviewer:** Oh. That's remarkable. We hope to have somebody work with us at some point, and that would be wonderful if we could find pictures of that because I'm sure your family didn't take pictures of it.
[Laughter]
- Respondent 1:** No.
- Respondent 2:** No. There must be some somewhere.
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. But I know I have seen that, [0:25:00] and I don't remember where. So probably in a photo.

Interviewer: So it was Yiddish lettering.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Interviewer: English words.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's remarkable.

Respondent 1: Transliteration, is that what that is?

Interviewer: Yes, yes.

Respondent 2: The same as the Mendel's Dairy.

Respondent 1: No, but that's in Yiddish.

Respondent 2: That's right.

Respondent 1: [indiscernible 0:25:15]

Interviewer: And where was Mendel's Dairy at that time?

Respondent 1: Oh that was in Kensington – that was on the other side of...

Interviewer: On Baldwin?

Respondent 1: On Baldwin, yeah.

Respondent 2: On Baldwin.

Respondent 1: On the other side of Spadina.

Respondent 2: Have you [0:25:30] seen that? Because I think it's still there.

Interviewer: Yes.

- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yes, no, I have. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Now on the end of this street, corner...
- Interviewer:** Borden Street.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Mm-hm.
- Respondent 1:** Borden Street, Borden and College on the northeast side, as I mentioned to you, which is now a pizza place, was the Koffler's first drugstore. Okay. Murray Koffler.
- Interviewer:** So his parents?
- Respondent 1:** His father owned a drugstore, and then Murray Koffler took it over. **[0:26:00]** And I would go in and Murray Koffler – and ask him for a Mello Roll.
- Interviewer:** I remember the Mello Rolls. Oh yes.
- Respondent 1:** And here was – it went for six cents.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** He would pull a cone out of a thing, take it, put it on, undo it, and then lift the lid off. And then across the road there, on the other side...
- Interviewer:** Was it called Koffler's Drugstore? What was it called?
- Respondent 1:** **[0:26:30]** I don't remember.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent 1:** I don't remember.
- Interviewer:** But it was the Koffler – so Murray worked in his father's store is what you're saying.

Respondent 1: Yeah. But he became a pharmacist as well.

Interviewer: Oh yes. Big time. [Laughter] Yeah.

Respondent 1: And across the road was Stanser's Bakery. The Jewish Bakery. And then you go back, on the other side was an Italian produce store called Tabando's in a Jewish area, and then there was – ever heard of the **[0:27:00]** Bellevue movie theatre?

Interviewer: I've heard of it, but I don't know where – was it on College?

Respondent 1: On College. You know where Bellevue T's off to College? You got the Bellevue – here's Bellevue there, and then College is over here.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent 1: Bellevue Theatre was right at the T-junction, right at...

Respondent 2: Where's Bellevue though? Between what streets?

Respondent 1: Where the fire station is.

Interviewer: Oh okay. Got it.

Respondent 1: Okay?

Interviewer: Okay. Right.

Respondent 1: Okay. And that was Bellevue movie – it used to be the Bellevue Theatre. **[0:27:30]** And the Bellevue Theatre was ten cents on Friday. On Saturday.

Interviewer: Was that a movie theatre or a live theatre?

Respondent 1: Yeah. Movie theatre, yeah. Ten cents, and you'd line up at twelve o'clock, and for ten cents you saw two full-length movies and five cartoons. And it was all kids, of course. And it was a great deal because my father would give me fifteen cents or twenty cents, **[0:28:00]** send me off, and he'd be rid of me for [laughs]...

- Respondent 2:** Babysitting, I had the same experience. Yes.
- Interviewer:** Do you mean going to movies and...
- Respondent 2:** Exactly.
- Interviewer:** ...going there for four hours?
- Respondent 2:** Yeah, yeah. Exactly.
- Respondent 1:** It was a beautiful theatre, too. It wasn't a junky theatre. It was built as a theatre.
- Respondent 2:** Mm. Oh, it was built as an actual theatre.
- Interviewer:** Oh, so it had some old-time elegance.
- Respondent 1:** Gorgeous.
- Interviewer:** Interesting.
- Respondent 1:** It had the marquee and it had the ticket box outside, similar to what the old...
- Respondent 2:** It's okay. No problem.
- Respondent 1:** **[0:28:30]** What Rachel and I remember, which is really funny, corner of Ulster and Bathurst, there's a little store right on the corner on the northeast corner.
- Respondent 2:** Oh yeah.
- Respondent 1:** And Rachel and I remember it. It was at one time McGillivray's Pharmacy. And I thought the guy didn't like me, but when you went in there, he was a small, grey-haired guy, **[0:29:00]** the pharmacist, and with glasses on, and he never smiled. And when I go in there, I was intimidated when I'd go in for a chocolate bar or something. And he'd scowl at you. And then many years later I'd tell Rachel about it. She said, "I had the same feeling he was mad at me too."

Respondent 2: I bought my potato chips there. [Laughs] Hostess potato chips. That's when I lived on Markham near Ulster.

Interviewer: So you took it less personally [0:29:30] after that?

Respondent 2: [Laughs] It wasn't just you.

Interviewer: He was just a scowler.

Respondent 1: Yes.

Respondent 2: He wasn't a happy man, no. So that's right. McGillivray's.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: So getting back to the laneways, I don't have that many memories of the lane. I mean those horses I don't recall, but all I remember is it was another world in there, and it was...

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: ...just next door to our house. Like we lived literally between, you know, two houses and there was the laneway between us, so it was right there. And that was our spot. We'd [0:30:00] go outside, you know, who's – we didn't have holidays either or anything special to do, and we'd be out there playing, see who came, we'd be exploring. And my sister remembers something about finding some bones or something there once, and they thought it was a human body. She's younger...

Interviewer: Imagination.

Respondent 2: Yeah. And they all said, oh, it was a – yeah. So. That I don't recall.

Interviewer: Were they all paved? When you were playing in the lanes, were they paved?

Respondent 1: Yeah.

- Interviewer:** They were.
- Respondent 1:** They were.
- Respondent 2:** They were paved, I think so. Oh no, I do [0:30:30] remember some dirt. No. I think ours was dirt.
- Interviewer:** Like a hard mud.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Ours was dirt. And we had a little garage at the end, which of course my parents rented out because they didn't have a car on Major, so we had a garage, so cars...
- Interviewer:** More income.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. And we have a lovely little backyard. And I also remember playing ball outside. Like in the laneway we had a wall there with our ball, and because I was the only child for so many years and my mother – you know, what was I going to do? So I'd play there [0:31:00] for hours with that ball, ordinary moving, and all sorts of things. And people would come around. There was all sorts of kids down the street that we all got to know. We knew. And that was the other thing, we knew who lived in each house. And you had your own little area.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** So my area was basically from Harbord down to Sussex on – that was basically my area. Sometimes I moved over to Brunswick, or you know, over to [0:31:30] Robert, but that was my little world. And we remembered who lived there, and what they were like, and there were all sorts of characters. And I remember we had an Italian family a couple of doors down, and I'd be playing with the boys outside, and they'd invite me up for spaghetti, pasta, and I thought, "What is this?" Worms. It was delicious. I thought, "Oh." They had me – and at – because at first, I was just, you know, waiting for them to come out and play again. [0:32:00] And he said, "No, have a little bit." And I thought – we didn't know from that. So it was just totally another world.

Interviewer: So you were introduced to Italian food.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yes, yes. Just with that family.

Interviewer: Well and that – I want to talk about so much, but you're saying that the families, the children played with each other, even though you were different religions.

Respondent 2: Absolutely.

Interviewer: Religions, different backgrounds.

Respondent 2: We had a black family next door, and I think they lived there until the '70s. The Baileys. So there were two [0:32:30] brothers, Vincent and David, and Vincent was my age. He was my friend. I played with him all the time. Remember going into his house, which was very different from mine. It was kind of the original house, and very little done to it. You know, because my parents always painted and fixed up the house, and that was a – you know, just totally – I guess probably from the 1880s, 1890s, and the original. So Vincent was my friend. He was a great guy, but his older brother, David, would be [0:33:00] very mean to me, and I think he hit me a couple of times going down the street, and my mother tells me the story – told me the story that she came up to him and gave him a threat and said, you know, basically, "If you ever touch my daughter again, I'm going to go and tell your parents, and you're going to be in big trouble." And she said after that, every time David saw me he'd run to the other side of the street. Wouldn't even look at me. I don't even remember him hurting me or any of that, but I just obviously – I'm sure [0:33:30] the story's true. So that's how they handled it in those days. And...

Interviewer: So they didn't worry about bullying.

Respondent 1: No.

Respondent 2: No.

Interviewer: They took charge.

Respondent 1: They took charge, yeah.

Respondent 2: Yeah. There were always bullies. There were bullies. He was a big bully.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: What did he want from me? So that's, of course, of an interesting comment, but we had – and then there was another girl from across the street. I think her parents came from California, and my father wanted to introduce me, so he took me actually over there, and she had – [0:34:00] they lived – I think they had the whole second floor. It was very nice, and she had a dollhouse, and that was my first introduction to dollhouses. I didn't know about that. I loved that dollhouse, so I'd go over there pretty well every day. We'd play dolls.

Interviewer: And you picture it as if you're standing in front of it at this moment.

Respondent 2: Sure.

Interviewer: Is it that clear to you?

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: It is.

Respondent 2: It is. I don't know. I think her name was Janet or Janice, and she moved away a couple of years later. But I remember my father taking me over there. I was a little bit shy, and they were – you know, [0:34:30] because they didn't have a sibling, and they want to make sure I always had someone to play with. But I remember going over there. And then I remember once going myself, and crossing the street, and almost being hit by a car. That I remember.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

- Respondent 2:** Because, you know, there were a lot of cars in those days, and I just – and I remember my father, my parents coming out and going nuts, like screaming, yelling.
- Interviewer:** At you, or the driver?
- Respondent 2:** No, at me.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent 2:** At me. The driver stopped, and he apologized, and he just said – **[0:35:00]** she just came out, and he was literally this much from – and my main thought at the time was all the neighbourhood kids came out because this was a big thing, and the break, the screech, and the yelling. And my main thought was, "I'm so embarrassed in front of my friends."
- Interviewer:** Oh. Oh. How old were you?
- Respondent 2:** Probably about six. Something like the five, six, you know, around there.
- Interviewer:** You learned the lesson the hard way.
- Respondent 2:** I really did. I really did. My parents **[0:35:30]** took – hauled me in there...
- Respondent 1:** Sometimes it's the best way.
- Respondent 2:** ...and I – after that I was very, very careful. So thank god.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Oh. At least childhood memories – but they're vivid.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Right? So.
- Interviewer:** So you used the lane a lot.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Interviewer: It was a real playground for you.

Respondent 2: Absolutely.

Respondent 1: But her lane wasn't like the Croft lane. It was beside the house.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm. Yeah.

Respondent 1: The lanes that, like – I remember the lane as being a little bit mysterious, a little bit A, more dangerous, a little bit more adventurous.

Respondent 2: Yeah. That was true too.

Respondent 1: [0:36:00] Yeah.

Respondent 2: I do remember that.

Respondent 1: And you'd go in there and you could get away with little things that you...

Respondent 2: Yeah. Once out there, yeah.

Respondent 1: We'd have firecrackers and whatever prepared. We didn't – one thing, we'd climb up to the garage later, and when I was about eight or nine, and we'd jump from garage to garage. [Laughter] The imagination would flare up with the laneway, where it [0:36:30] didn't flare up at the front of the house or down the street. And as Rachel said, you had your area, and when you went beyond the bounds of the area, you were – early on you felt uncomfortable. Later on when you were a little older, you started to feel more emancipated as you'd get further and further and further. I'm an adult. I remember the first time I took the streetcar by myself, I felt like a real [0:37:00] big time now. Big boy.

Interviewer: How old would you have been approximately?

- Respondent 1:** I must have been about seven years old.
- Interviewer:** Well not too many parents let their children do it now at seven years old.
- Respondent 1:** You know, and I don't understand that because I don't think things are any less safe now than they were then. That's my opinion.
- Interviewer:** I share that. I agree with you.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** I think you're more cautious because of radio and television.
- Respondent 1:** Exactly.
- Respondent 2:** The media has played it up, yes. But there were always predators out there.
- Interviewer:** Of course. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** But I remember the same thing with the [0:37:30] streetcar, just before I forget my thought. So we had that Harbord streetcar, as I mentioned.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 2:** And my parents got me into piano lessons, and anyways, they – my father would take me down to where the grange – where the Art Gallery is. There was a grange, and there was a teacher there. I think her name was Edie. I think Susan knows her from the bakery. She was friends with Rafi.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 2:** And so he would take me every Saturday morning, and [0:38:00] – or every second Saturday, I don't remember, and it was very nice. I was very attached to my dad. You know, I was very – we looked exactly alike, and I was his first child.

- Respondent 1:** Come on, you were better looking.
- Respondent 2:** [Laughter] So anyways, we had a very special bond. So when I left those times – and then all of a sudden one day – I mean, you know, the guy must have been exhausted from working all the time, and you know, working, trying to help my mom. My mom was a little bit sickly, so he – one Saturday or one day, he just said, **[0:38:30]** "You know what? I think you're ready to do it yourself." I said, "What?"
- Interviewer:** And you were approximately what age?
- Respondent 2:** Oh, about the same age, I would say. About seven. And I remember being terrified, and he assured – you know, he was a very calm person. He said, "You can do it. Take you over. I'll tell the driver where you should get off. You can do it." And I remember having my piano books and just being so fearful, but he did take me over, and the driver was very nice, and he said, "You sit near me, and I'll announce the stop. **[0:39:00]** Make sure you get off." And after that, I was fine. But I do remember exactly that initial outing. You know, I guess like the first time you drive a car or you're in an airplane or something. Those are the things you remember, but...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** ...it was very handy to have that Harbord streetcar there.
- Respondent 1:** There's one more...
- Respondent 2:** No, it's a bus. I think it's a bus.
- Interviewer:** And it goes right to – it goes along Wellesley and takes you right into the station at Yonge Street.
- Respondent 2:** At Yonge. Yeah. So it's handy. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** You know, **[0:39:30]** amazing – you know, the feeling. Again, we knew everybody on every house. We knew all the kids. I mean there was no such thing as a kid not being brought in and being part of the group.

Respondent 2: That's right.

Respondent 1: It was all a hundred percent, and it wasn't – it wasn't that we attempted to do that, it's just that that's the way it was done. You just – and we played baseball in one of the most ridiculous places in [0:40:00] the world, in somebody's backyard or in a laneway that we didn't know whoever belonged to it. [Laughter] Oh, one story I have to tell you. I think you'd like this story because it's got a lot of depth to it, or at least I think so. They used to – Borden's Dairy delivered milk on horse and wagon here probably up to about 1961, and 1956 I remember my mother telling [0:40:30] the Borden's Dairy driver that we're moving. And they stopped the milk delivery. And the way they used to do it is you used to buy these tickets. Do you remember that? You'd buy these tickets, and you put out an empty bottle...

Interviewer: Glass.

Respondent 1: ...glass bottle, and you have the tickets bent around the...

Interviewer: On the inside.

Respondent 1: On the inside of the lip. And they'd come in and replace the [0:41:00] bottles with what you put out.

Respondent 2: In the milk container, in the – what is it called?

Respondent 1: Milk chute? No, we didn't have the...

Respondent 2: Not milk chute. On the side of the house. The side of the house.

Interviewer: A special box?

Respondent 2: Box.

Respondent 1: No, we didn't have one.

Interviewer: Out on the front?

- Respondent 2:** Oh, yours is on the front?
- Respondent 1:** They did it on the verandah.
- Respondent 2:** Oh okay. Okay.
- Respondent 1:** Beside the front door.
- Respondent 2:** Okay. Because we had the milk chute. Okay.
- Respondent 1:** And anyway, there was one guy, probably somewhere about 1968, '69, **[0:41:30]** his name was Percy and my father knew Percy. And he was the last guy to have a horse and buggy delivering milk. A Jewish guy. And the Borden's Dairy stables was on College Street, and this is important, College Street near Spadina on the south side of the street. And I remember walking by and you could smell the horses and the manure, and you could see the horses in stalls, and it was sort of a diagonal thing. **[0:42:00]** And then one day the horses are gone, and there's trucks in there now, okay? But Percy had one horse in there and they allowed him to keep his horse in one stall. So I said to Percy, "Why don't you get a truck? Be modern." And I was maybe sixteen years old, seventeen years old. No, I was probably older. And he said, "Trucks are no goddamn good." [Laughter] **[0:42:30]** And I cannot figure what he's – how he's going to justify that, but he did. He justified it. What he said is, "When I load up my tray of product and I deliver to down the house, the horse follows me. With a truck I have to backtrack. So I can do my deliveries a lot **[0:43:00]** faster," and he said, "And besides, on Friday, I finish my route early and I keep a bottle of whiskey behind my seat and I get myself a little sicker before Shabbos, but the horse knows where to take me." [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** Oh that is a fantastic story.
- Respondent 1:** And it's true.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. I remember he's told that story many times.
- Interviewer:** Did Percy's horse have a name?

Respondent 1: Oh, I'm sure [0:43:30] it did, but I don't remember the name.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: I know that he had a horse for a long time. The reason why he got rid of it – and his buggy stood up on Dufferin Street on a farm until it disintegrated for about twenty years. The reason why he got out of it is because there were no more manure collectors.

Interviewer: So he would have had to have taken it somewhere.

Respondent 1: [0:44:00] Yeah. Yeah. He had no...

Interviewer: So that was the pivotal point for him having to give up his horse.

Respondent 1: Yeah. And basically I was a – that was a final situation for a lot of guys with horses.

Interviewer: But that must have been quite a picture to see all these trucks.
[Laughter]

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: And Percy's horse.

Respondent 1: Yeah. It was. It was.

Interviewer: That was an absolutely delightful story, how he ended on Friday.
[Laughter]

Respondent 2: Yeah, what can you say, right? [0:44:30] I mean he had it worked out.

Respondent 1: The truck.

Respondent 2: He had it worked out.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

- Respondent 2:** Yeah. So another memory I have, do you remember the Eisenberg Store, the variety store that was...
- Interviewer:** You know what? I'm from Montreal.
- Respondent 2:** Oh, you're from Montreal. Okay. Sorry, I thought...
- Interviewer:** I didn't come here until 1968.
- Respondent 2:** Oh okay. So it might have still been there. It's kitty-corner from the Harbord Bakery. So right on Harbord, Harbord and Major on the corner, the northwest corner.
- Respondent 1:** Right across from the gas station.
- Respondent 2:** **[0:45:00]** Yeah. Anyways, there was a little Eisenberg's Variety Store, which where I got my Mello cones, and it was a beautiful store when you walked in. It was all wooden cabinets where they have the cards, the greeting cards.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 2:** Beautifully done. And then in the back, there was a little toy section, you know, some small toys, and then in the front there were the chocolate bars, of course, and the gum, and you'd keep going down and it was the three tubs of ice cream – chocolate, vanilla, strawberry.
- Interviewer:** Yes, of course.
- Respondent 2:** Six cents. And then **[0:45:30]** it went up to seven cents. Oh my goodness. [Laughs] But I remember going in there. And outside, right outside the store, they had a gum machine and where you could – it was Adam's Chicklets, so it was right there, and you put in your penny in the slot, and push in the slot, and you'd get your small gums. It was like two bits of Chicklets. So it was just sitting there. I mean today it would – probably someone would walk off with it, but in those days it was there. But I was not a gum chewer, **[0:46:00]** and I didn't even like candy, but I loved those ice creams and the occasional – I liked potato chips and the occasional

chocolate bar. But you weren't really into junk food in those days. You know. [Laughs] The diet was – I mean my favourite thing to eat was salami sandwiches on rye bread with schmaltz. My father would make that for me, and I loved it. And I had sort of a savory taste for food then, and I used to enjoy [0:46:30] my food. I used to enjoy my food.

Respondent 1: It's very good for you too.

Interviewer: Right. I'm sure.

Respondent 1: What the cardiologists absolutely hate about it.

Respondent 2: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: So since you're talking about – well one thing that you made clear is when you were younger, your community was very, very local. I mean if you lived near College, that was your community, and if you lived near Harbord or on Harbord...

Respondent 2: Exactly.

Interviewer: ...that's who you played with.

Respondent 2: That's it. That's it.

Respondent 1: It changed then when you went to school because then you – not everybody lived on your same street, of course.

Respondent 2: Branched out a bit.

Interviewer: [0:47:00] And what schools did you go to?

Respondent 2: Well I went to Lansdowne, right to the end, to grade eight, and then I went – I transferred over to Harbord for about two-and-a-half years, and I think that's the main reason I drove my parents crazy. I thought I was a little bit of a difficult kid in some ways because they – I convinced them to stay downtown because I was going to Harbord because they wanted to move up to an apartment. They

were trying to find a house, but couldn't find one. They were going to move up to [0:47:30] Baycrest area.

Interviewer: That's far away.

Respondent 2: There's an apartment – yeah. And then they were going to move up to – they would just look for a home. But anyways, that was my career. But I stayed in Lansdowne. I was in the old school, which was a great school, and I have lots of fond memories of the girls – the girls' playground, the boys' playground, and we played Yoki with the elastics. We would tie them and we would, you know, jump over them, and lots of double-Dutch. [0:48:00] Skipping, and balls, and it was just great fun.

Interviewer: Kids played outside with each other a lot.

Respondent 2: Absolutely.

Interviewer: Yeah. At school and in the neighbourhood.

Respondent 2: That's right. And we always had a skipping rope, and I would do Double-Dutch, or just single-Dutch or whatever. Get a couple of kids together and just skip, or just with a ball. But the old school of Lansdowne was gorgeous, and I can still picture it with the old staircases [0:48:30] and you know, ring the bell in the schoolyard. Now of course, when I was in grade eight, the grade going into grade eight, they switched to the new structure, which was in those days stunning. I mean, incredible.

Interviewer: So what you're saying is...

Respondent 2: Circular.

Interviewer: At this point it's quite old. [Laughs] The new structure.

Respondent 2: The new structure.

Interviewer: New and improved.

Respondent 2: I saw it, and I was looking – yeah. I was looking...

Respondent 1: Like the new Mount Sinai Hospital is that little one.

Respondent 2: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: [0:49:00] And did you go to the same school?

Respondent 1: No.

Interviewer: Where did you go?

Respondent 1: I went to King Edward.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent 1: But it was a sort of the same thing. When we left October 1956, they were wrecking the houses north of the old school to make way for the new school, and after that summer they destroyed the old school and I remember is – [0:49:30] is being really, really beautiful school. And it had a lot of character. It had the boys' entrance and the girls' entrance, and the girls' playground and the boys' playground. Boys could go into the girls' playground if there weren't up to mischief or something like that. You'd walk in and nobody would chase you out. And we played marbles, like gamble with marbles.

Interviewer: You'd play for pennies [0:50:00] when you say gamble?

Respondent 1: No, no, no. We'd gamble with marbles themselves.

Interviewer: Oh. Oh okay.

Respondent 2: Okay. That was the currency.

Respondent 1: That was the currency. And the teacher would stand there at recess and have an old-fashioned bell and go, "Da-ding, da-ding, da-ding, da-ding." And beautiful hardwood floors. I remember the kindergarten. It was a very odd-shaped room, but I also remember too how regimented things were. It was post-war and the teacher would get on the piano [0:50:30] and played marching songs. We'd

march around, single-file, double-file, you know? It was very, very militaristic, regimented. I mean we'd come through in a generation after two major wars, and we were in a smaller war, Korea, at the time. So I think part of the school system has always been used [0:51:00] in some way right from the Industrial Revolution to indoctrinate the children in how to become adults and fit into the – where they should fit in.

Interviewer: So it was reflecting the times.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm. Yes.

Respondent 1: It was reflecting the times.

Respondent 2: I remember the same thing. Exactly.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: And when you went in, could you just go in? Or did you get into lines to go up to your...

Respondent 2: Oh, get into lines. Always.

Interviewer: You got into line.

Respondent 1: We didn't get into lines.

Respondent 2: No, we did.

Respondent 1: And then the thing that got me, that I really didn't like, is that you know – and I didn't know I didn't like it, [0:51:30] but I just kept on getting into trouble there – was going to Brunswick Talmud Torah after school.

Respondent 2: Oh, that was a whole other thing.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: The Brunswick Talmud Torah. Do you know about that place?

Interviewer: I know about it, but I – actually...

Respondent 2: Oh that's a whole...

Interviewer: ...nobody I interviewed talked about it, so please talk about it.

Respondent 2: Oh. You started off, but I have my thoughts.

Interviewer: So that was on Brunswick and College?

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Respondent 1: It was on the...

Interviewer: And what years are you talking about? Let's...

Respondent 1: I'm talking about '53 to '56, about there.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay.

Respondent 1: And it was after school, [0:52:00] every day except for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Respondent 2: Well you went Sunday.

Respondent 1: But you went – oh yes. Sunday...

Interviewer: It was Monday through Thursday and then Sunday.

Respondent 2: And then Sunday, yes.

Respondent 1: And here you are, you'd been sitting in school until three-thirty, crossing your hands sitting there.

Respondent 2: Yes. You used to sit like this.

Respondent 1: Okay? And then after school you had an hour, four-thirty, and then you had to go to this jail until six-thirty.

Interviewer: Yeah. The cheder.

Respondent 1: The cheder.

Interviewer: Yeah, [0:52:30] yeah.

Respondent 1: And I call prison "cheder" now. So...

Interviewer: It's a lot of sitting for children.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Especially for boys.

Respondent 1: Yeah. And I was an active kid. I was very, very creative in a lot of things, and creativity was shunned upon. It went against regimentation. So anyway, that was [0:53:00] there, and next door to that was the Jewish Y. And you look down the stairs and there was a swimming pool down there.

Interviewer: And you were sitting there learning Hebrew.

Respondent 1: Yes. That's right. And then there was a pool hall towards College Street, which only bums went to play pool in those days. And then around the corner about four or five stores down, there was a place called Welsh's Delicatessen. And Welsh's Delicatessen [0:53:30] was an old guy, Peter Welsh, and he would sell hot dogs for ten cents. So a lot of times you'd go in there, you'd buy your – if you were really good, you got a quarter on Sunday for going into cheder, and you'd go in and buy a couple of hot dogs, and a – he used to serve the Coca-Cola from a bottle into a beer-type glass. [Laughter]

Interviewer: [0:54:00] Pretty small glasses.

Respondent 1: No, they were the bigger glasses.

- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. That's a funny memory.
- Respondent 1:** And across the road was Becker's Delicatessen, but hot dogs were fifteen cents, so you couldn't splurge.
- Respondent 2:** I remember going to Becker's once with my parents. That was such a special treat. You were all out on an outing. You were probably going to Kensington. I think my sister was with us, and we went in there for a little meal. I think I had a hot dog. My father might have had a sandwich or something, [0:54:30] but it was such – it was like going to the grandest hotel, finest hotel for a meal today, but not even that equivalent. I can't even explain it, but I remember just thinking, "Oh, I can't believe I'm in this restaurant, sitting in this booth, and sort of a curved booth." But anyways, getting back to the Brunswick Talmud Torah, I think just a – I know you don't want me to tell this story, but...
- Respondent 1:** Go ahead.
- Respondent 2:** ...your sister tells it, and now you've told it. His father begged for...
- Respondent 1:** No, no, no. That wasn't Brunswick.
- Respondent 2:** That wasn't Brunswick. That was another [0:55:00] school.
- Respondent 1:** That was Rabbi Katzberg from my bar mitzvah lessons.
- Respondent 2:** Oh yeah. To get back in. Okay.
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah. He threw me out of my bar mitzvah lessons.
- Respondent 2:** But that wasn't there. Sorry. That was another place.
- Respondent 1:** No, that was up there. No he – what he did is we break – [laughs] we break paperclips in half to form a U, and we'd then take an elastic band and...
- Interviewer:** Oh, it's like a slingshot.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Like a slingshot.

Interviewer: Homemade slingshot.

Respondent 1: Yeah. So Rabbi Katzberg [0:55:30] was bending over to pick up something, and his [indiscernible 0:55:36] was right over there, so I went like that, and I was just – because the other guys were in the class. I was just pretending that I was going to do it, but it slipped and it – I didn't mean to – [laughter].

Respondent 2: You laugh now, but you were probably freaking out.

Respondent 1: Holy mackerel.

Interviewer: You never know the effect of the unconscious.

Respondent 2: Yeah. [0:56:00] [Laughter] Exactly.

Respondent 1: You're right. You never know the effect of the unconscious. Well he wasn't too pleased about getting – he knew it would hit him, and he turned around and he told me to get out immediately and never come back, so I didn't know. It was a long walk home, and it was a longer walk because I had to think of how do I break this to my parents.

Respondent 2: And it was close to your bar mitzvah time, right?

Respondent 1: It was about six months from my bar mitzvah.

Respondent 2: Yeah, yeah. [0:56:30] And I think – and Barbara, his sister, tells a story that his father was kind of a very meek, quiet man. Had to go there begging – I don't know, he had to give a donation, I don't know. Begging to take him back for...

Respondent 1: He took me back.

Respondent 2: They did. But then after that you didn't use the slingshot anymore.

Respondent 1: No, no.

Respondent 2: But anyway, so getting back to Brunswick, so the boys – I went with the girls. I went with Suzy from the bakery...

Respondent 1: Mm-hm.

Respondent 2: ...and I had another friend, Francis, and [0:57:00] Freda would – no, she wouldn't. Anyways, we would walk, we would have our little walk, and we'd go down Brunswick Street, and we'd discuss – I remember we discussed the birds and the bees. All sorts of interesting topics.

Interviewer: At seven years old?

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: At twelve?

Respondent 2: Seven. I think, yeah, I started around seven. That was grade one.

Respondent 1: That was early.

Respondent 2: Maybe I was a little bit older when we talked about that.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent 2: But I remember having that discussion walking down that street. And I went until I was about – I think I stopped in grade [0:57:30] four. So I went from grade one to grade four, and you know, I have very good memories of Brunswick because as a girl, I could sit longer. I didn't have the same issues. I mean – but I remember the boys were always getting yelled at, and kicked out, and a lot of, you know, hands stopping, and teachers freaking out, and the girls were usually pretty good. But you know, we'd sometimes go to the washroom and go in there and be silly, and have some laughs, and I remember our teacher in grade two, Rabbi [0:58:00] Gordon's wife, Mrs. Gordon, would ask us to go to the bakery. Was it Crown? Was it Crown Bakery there?

Respondent 1: Crown Bread Bakery.

- Respondent 2:** Crown Bread Bakery on College to pick up some...
- Respondent 1:** It was on Kensington.
- Respondent 2:** No, but there was one bakery on College...
- Respondent 1:** Quality.
- Respondent 2:** Quality. Quality Bakery – and ask her – just during the class, "Would you girls please go out and get me some buns?"
- Interviewer:** For her to take home after work?
- Respondent 2:** For her to take home. That's what we did. So I mean, things that are totally unheard of today.
- Interviewer:** **[0:58:30]** For sure. Well even right now, a lot of them call their teachers by their first names and you said, "Mrs. This, and Mr. This."
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, sure. Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Didn't even know. Who knew? But each teacher – and you know, I used to get, like, really high marks, and you know, I liked it. I mean I didn't love it. Towards the end it was getting a little bit...
- Interviewer:** It's a lot of sitting.
- Respondent 2:** Even for – yeah. Even for me.
- Respondent 1:** I hated it.
- Respondent 2:** But most of the boys hated it. And we've talked – we've met people later on in our **[0:59:00]** lives who also had an experience of being there, and they also...
- Respondent 1:** I thought I was the only one that hated it. I really did.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Well you didn't – in those days, you didn't talk about that with others. You just felt – you kept it inside.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: You know? So.

Interviewer: I remember going to cheder after school in Montreal and then when my children were that age in Toronto, I sent them to a Hebrew day school.

Respondent 2: Did you? Yeah.

Interviewer: Because I thought sitting, getting out at three-thirty and at four-ten you started school again until six. It's a lot of sitting.

Respondent 2: **[0:59:30]** It's a lot. And you start to resent it. You're not into it, so you know, it's...

Respondent 1: One other thing that's interesting, you know Caplansky's?

Interviewer: Now. Yes.

Respondent 1: Yeah. That, I remember up until about 1953 approximately it was a Jewish delicatessen, Smith's Delicatessen.

Interviewer: Oh, so now it's back to being a Jewish delicatessen.

Respondent 1: Yeah, everything comes around.

Respondent 2: Yeah. Full circle. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Full circle.

Interviewer: And anything else that you recall? Any other specific **[1:00:00]** interesting stories about the stores on – because you've both touched on stores. Anything else?

Respondent 1: Yeah. Goodbaum's.

Interviewer: Yeah. What?

- Respondent 1:** There was Goodbaum's, a supermarket.
- Respondent 2:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** Where was that?
- Respondent 1:** That was on College Street east of Borden, just between Borden and where Bellevue is.
- Interviewer:** But you say that was the first?
- Respondent 2:** I think that was the first supermarket.
- Respondent 1:** The first supermarket I've been in.
- Respondent 2:** In Toronto. Yes.
- Respondent 1:** No, I don't think it was the first in Toronto.
- Respondent 2:** Maybe not the [1:00:30] first – maybe in that area. For sure in that area.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** An early supermarket.
- Respondent 1:** But you know, when I went back, you know, years later just before Goodbaum's closed off and I took a look at the supermarket, it was a joke. But comparatively speaking, it was not a little grocery store.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. I remember going in there just a couple of times and thinking, "Wow."
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** So yeah.
- Interviewer:** It was relative.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. It was relative. Definitely relative.

- Respondent 2:** And your mother used to shop there, so...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. My mother shopped there a lot, and on Harbord, there was [1:01:00] Harbord Fish Market, and then it was the Brunswick Fish Market. And the only vendor right now there is Health Bread, and it was a lot smaller.
- Respondent 2:** Health Bread? Or do you mean Harbord Bakery.
- Respondent 1:** Oh excuse me. Harbord Bakery.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah, it was smaller then. It was where – I guess where Calandria's now – that was kind of the area for Harbord Bakery. It was just a small bakery, and then they expanded, I think, in sort of the mid-'50s, I would say.
- Interviewer:** And your families shopped there at Harbord [1:01:30] Bakery?
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Well ours did because we lived down there, and I remember going in and buying challas. I think they were twenty-five cents. I remember going in the odd time, and I'd go in to buy.
- Respondent 1:** They're now thirty-five?
- Respondent 2:** [Laughs] Add a zero. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** By the way, Susan would be a real good source, and Rafi would...
- Interviewer:** I interviewed Rafi. He was wonderful.
- Respondent 2:** Oh okay. Yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah. They know a lot.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. He would be there. But I remember my mother going into [1:02:00] the Brunswick Fish Market. And there was also – I'll tell you about that, but there was also Greenspan's Kosher Butcher at the corner of Brunswick and Harbord.
- Respondent 2:** Where there's now a pottery store?

- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. That was Greenspan's.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Kosher meat.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** I think they were kosher.
- Interviewer:** So many Jewish establishments.
- Respondent 1:** Oh, this was all Jewish.
- Respondent 2:** All Jewish.
- Respondent 1:** And then Italians started to move in. There was one old Italian family lived across, northern Italians. They were here way before the war. **[1:02:30]** But anyways, where was I? Oh, yeah. Harbord. The Brunswick Fish Market. They used to have a tank there, and in the tank were these humungous carps.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 1:** My mother never would buy the carp, but I'd see them pulling a carp out of the tank, and he had a bowling pin. He hit the carp over the head with the bowling pin a couple of times, and then **[1:03:00]** process the carp for the person while they waited.
- Interviewer:** Oh, so that's how they killed it. By whacking it with a bowling pin.
- Respondent 1:** That's right.
- Respondent 2:** And you saw this.
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah. A few times. Quite a few times.

- Interviewer:** And the carp would be kind of wriggling around and slippery.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. But I've heard people taking the carp home and being in their bathtub for...
- Respondent 2:** Mm.
- Interviewer:** Because they didn't want to cook it. They wanted to cook it fresh.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** They would do their own killing.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. They'd become their own shochet.
- Interviewer:** Right. What about Kensington Market? [1:03:30] How much did your families use that?
- Respondent 1:** Oh I went there a lot. My grandmother used it a lot, and it was almost all Jewish, as you know.
- Respondent 2:** You should mention what your grandmother did.
- Respondent 1:** My grandmother, for a while, she used to sell chickens. She was a middle woman for chickens, and it wasn't big. It was – she'd pick up a chicken and have a bit [indiscernible 01:03:56], and then she'd take it home and she would [01:04:00] eviscerate it, and do things, and deliver it.
- Interviewer:** So she saved them a lot of work then.
- Respondent 1:** That's right.
- Interviewer:** I mean she saved the housewives a lot of work, so she did all the cleaning, and...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. And I used to help her sometimes.
- Interviewer:** And what were some of your jobs when you helped her?

Respondent 1: Cleaning out the innards of the chicken, cutting the certain spot, sticking it, and pulling it out. The innards. And I remember the smell.

Interviewer: And?

Respondent 1: It was not bad. I mean, but I remember sticking my hand in and the innards were [1:04:30] still warm.

Interviewer: Oh my god.

Respondent 2: And you did it in the kitchen or in the dining...

Respondent 1: No, in the basement.

Respondent 2: Basement.

Respondent 1: She had a table in the basement.

Interviewer: Oh, she had a little home industry.

Respondent 1: Yeah. She was a very – always, always, always worked. That woman didn't know what work – and my grandfather too. It's all they did was work. They – I've never seen my grandmother sit down and watch TV.

Interviewer: Yeah. So I want to talk about this home [1:05:00] industry and come back to your grandmother for a while. She would go buy the chickens in there. They were dead.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: And then she would...

Respondent 1: Brought a lot of chickens to the shochet.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent 1: And I would go with her sometimes to the shochet, and they would slaughter the chicken, and they had women there that would pluck the chickens, they'd put the babushkas on.

Interviewer: Yeah. Oh my god.

Respondent 1: Yeah. What they – you wouldn't believe the conditions where they [indiscernible 01:05:24] these. If I were to take you 1890s to [1:05:30] a shack, and see there, it was really that thing. There was one light bulb hanging from a pendant, light bulb. The shochet was there, and it was a dirt floor. And what he had to do the chicken was an old wood stove with the burners or the plates taken off, so [1:06:00] he dumped the – after he slit the chicken, he dumped the chicken in there to bleed it. The legs would be going like that.

Interviewer: Oh my god.

Respondent 1: And then after he bled them, he'd give them to the women that would sit there like this, pulling the feathers out, and they would wear leather aprons. And it smelled like crazy, but even as a kid, I walked in there and I thought, "Oh my god. This is like being [1:06:30] back before the Russian Revolution."

Respondent 2: Yeah. That era.

Respondent 1: I didn't use that term, but...

Respondent 2: Yeah. You knew that you were in a sort of bygone era.

Respondent 1: Oh yeah. It was really something.

Respondent 2: And then your grandmother also did catering, right?

Respondent 1: Yeah, she did catering.

Interviewer: So it had been killed in the way that it has to be, kosher chicken.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: And all the feathers were removed.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: And then you took them home.

Respondent 1: Then you took them home, and we'd eviscerate them, and wash [1:07:00] them. We never salted them for koshering. That was left up to the...

Interviewer: The families.

Respondent 1: And my grandfather – I never delivered the chickens, but my grandfather or my grandmother would also deliver the chickens. Probably be twenty-five cents a chicken.

Interviewer: So you were working at a young age.

Respondent 1: Oh, I've always worked. I've always worked. Yeah.

Interviewer: And was there some – this is your [1:07:30] responsibility, you're a member of the family. But did they give you a nickel or a dime occasionally?

Respondent 1: Yes and no. I mean I was never – my grandfather was quite generous with me. I mean they would – he would hand over some spending money to me. Not a lot, but you know, they would – oh, I would be glad to help out, and sometimes I got paid, sometimes [1:08:00] I didn't, but.

Interviewer: So that work was going on in your home. I mean that's a real job.

Respondent 1: My grandparents.

Interviewer: Grandparents. Right. Your grandparents' home. Anything in your home? Any kind of home industry?

Respondent 2: Just that – well actually, the furrier. My father would be in that darkened room. And I remember even those days going down there and it was really dark, and all these furs piled up. It was almost – my mother, I remember she used to urge him to come out, you

know, and get some fresh air, but he was also – you know, he was, you know, he was [1:08:30] worried about the money situation. So whatever, they had to make sure – probably made a penny a pelt or something. They'd be sewing and cutting, so he did that. And then my mother later on, she did sort of touch-up photography and my – because I think her cousins had this in with the photographer, and they had these little boxes where they would – a wooden box with a hole, and they'd put the photograph [1:09:00] in, and the two of them would be there with their pencils, and they would work in the breakfast area and they'd be touching up – I think one of the studios was Yamaha Studios, I believe, on Yonge Street. Yonge and Dundas.

Respondent 1: Yamada? Or?

Respondent 2: Yamada. Maybe Yamada. I think that was one studio that they worked for, but I guess it was piecework. And she did it, you know, just...

Interviewer: And that was your mother doing it.

Respondent 2: That was my mother.

Interviewer: So your mother did the photography stuff and your father was doing the furrier stuff?

Respondent 2: Yeah. But she didn't do much. [1:09:30] It was – it was a little bit later on. She really just did it sporadically, so it wasn't like my father who did it quite...

Interviewer: Okay. But here we have three different kinds of industry happening.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Respondent 1: Well my father also...

Interviewer: Your grandfather, yeah.

Respondent 1: No, my father also had a side job. He worked five-and-a-half days a week for a while, and then it was five days, and where he worked it

was the Marshall Mattress Company. And that's where he worked for about forty years. And they would have [01:10:00] leftover ends, so he would either get them for nothing or pay a little for them, and he would – then Saturday we'd go on Spadina and he had some customers he'd sell it to on Spadina and he'd take me for breakfast to Mars Restaurant before going out. And I'd get two eggs, and some hash browns, and a slice of tomato, and a bit of lettuce, and some toast. [1:10:30] A glass of milk. And then...

Respondent 2: Very nice.

Respondent 1: Mars is about one of the only establishments that's still around. And they'd go and flog the stuff. We had a – and then he got into fur scraps. So he had some customers for fur scraps as well, and also occasionally he found some scrap metal. So he would do that.

Interviewer: [1:11:00] Selling kind of odds and ends and odd things and he found customers to...

Respondent 2: : Yeah. A few extra dollars.

Interviewer: A few more dollars.

Respondent 1: And most of them were steady customers.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: But you're talking about a lot of different industries. You've just talked about your parents, and with you, your grandfather.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. Yeah. Exactly.

Respondent 1: They also had a steam bath too that my grandfather ran on College Street across from the Western Hospital. Misnomer, the Sanitary Steam bath.

Interviewer: What was it called?

- Respondent 1:** The Sanitary [1:11:30] Steam bath.
- Interviewer:** Oh. As opposed to...
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. [Laughs]
- Respondent 1:** No, a parking lot. I think it makes a better parking lot than a steam bath.
- Respondent 2:** And they had a – the women's night and...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Men's night.
- Respondent 2:** Men's night.
- Respondent 1:** Then my grandmother worked there. My father, then in '58, he was offered a partnership in there and he quit his job at Marshall Mattress and then went and worked there, and that was also a Jewish hub. Now the steam bath in the early '50s [1:12:00] like this was an integral part of the Jewish life because they had a Mikvah in there.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent 1:** Okay? But also the fact that a lot of people didn't have hot water in their house in those years.
- Respondent 2:** Or baths or anything.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. So they'd come once a week to the steam bath to have a cleaning because there was always hot water there. There was no baths, but there were [1:12:30] showers.
- Interviewer:** So there were showers. It was a community place. And to have a Mikvah is very serious for the families.
- Respondent 1:** So you look at one of the few people in the world, or the city that's actual father owned a Mikvah. [Laughter]
- Respondent 2:** And then you used to give [indiscernible 01:12:46] there, right?

Respondent 1: Yeah. My grandfather used to give **[indiscernible 01:12:48]**.

Interviewer: And what is that?

Respondent 2: Like a rubdown.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 1: With an oak-leaf broom.

Interviewer: Oh okay.

Respondent 1: He'd get up and lie down in the top section of the steam room and rub **[1:13:00]** you with a soap. An old European thing with a soapy water mixture. It was actually – my grandfather gave me a few of them, and they were really, really incredible.

Interviewer: Hardworking family.

Respondent 1: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Very resourceful, if you can think of something to do and you do it, you earn a few extra dollars for your family.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. Oh, I've got to tell you one story that was really funny. When my grandmother got older, she started to have to relax a bit because of her **[1:13:30]** health. And one day, we were living up in **[indiscernible 01:13:33]**. My phone rings on a Friday night, and my grandmother says to me – do you understand Yiddish? **[indiscernible 01:13:42]**. I says, **[indiscernible 01:13:49]**. And then she says, **[1:14:00]** **[indiscernible 01:14:00]**. So I went to the TV listings and I look...

Respondent 2: TV Guide, yeah.

Respondent 1: Country ho-down.

Interviewer: Oh my god.

Respondent 1: So I said to her, "Bubbe, that's the country ho-down." Yeah. "The conthodown." She was a country western fan.

Respondent 2: Yeah. How funny. But before I forget, I don't know if anyone's mentioned the corner stores and about the candy we used to buy. So that's an interesting part of the past that's long gone. [1:14:30] So it was little stores, were pretty well on every corner. You have a variety store, so the closest one to us was Ulster and Major, and it's a house now. Anyways, we'd walk in. It's sort of a dark, straight room, and they'd have all these candies that are just sitting there. I wasn't a huge candy fan, but for some reason, I enjoyed those treats. So for one penny you got three black balls. One penny. Two cents, [1:15:00] you'd get the Lik-A-Maid, and it was also across from Lansdowne School. Was a little store. The Lik-A-Maid was in a – so sugary fruit-flavoured sugar in a little pouch with a straw.

Respondent 1: Made of licorice.

Respondent 2: Yeah, yeah. So that was two cents. And then we had the – what do you call it? The – what are those strips called? Gosh, I have a mental block. The licorice. Licorice was a huge thing. I think that was also two cents for a stick – for the red licorice. I didn't [1:15:30] like the black. And there were also assortment of candies, but for – if you had two cents, you could go out. And I remember going in there once and just really debating, and the poor woman that was trying to serve me thinking, you know, "I'm going to" – she's standing here, she's driving me crazy and trying to decide what to buy with her penny. But that was the excitement. I remember going there once, getting my mother her milk, and it was in a glass bottle. It was a [1:16:00] hot day, and I didn't really want to go. I remember there was – I think I paid twenty cents or twenty-five cents for this thing, and I was schlepping it back, and kind of feeling resentful, and sure enough just before I got to the house, I dropped it. Not on purpose. Oh my god did my mother give it to me. You know? I remember that. And after that she either didn't send me again, or if she did, I think she just sent me one more time. I was careful with that bottle. But I remember that.

Interviewer: [1:16:30] You've had a couple of hard-learned lessons.

- Respondent 2:** I don't think I was the easiest kid. I think I had my, yeah, my issues. Although, I mean, I was a good-natured – you know, I got along with everybody, but you know, I had my stubborn streaks.
- Respondent 1:** Still does. [Laughter]
- Respondent 2:** But I remember the – so the candy store was a whole world in itself...
- Respondent 1:** Absolutely.
- Respondent 2:** ...in that we all just – you know, be so excited to go in there.
- Interviewer:** So the candy store was another place that the kids had a good time in.
- Respondent 2:** That's right.
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** [1:17:00] The kids – the community, and a place to gather.
- Respondent 2:** That's right. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. And there was one usually across the school. There was one across the road on the corner of Vankoughnet and Lippincott. There was a store owned by the Goldberg family, and they had all the cheap candies out there for the kids at school, and we'd buy our marbles there, you know, ten cents for thirty.
- Interviewer:** So corner stores were a big part of your...
- Respondent 1:** Absolutely.
- Respondent 2:** Yes. Yes.
- Respondent 1:** Oh, and I think we should probably – nobody will ever tell you [1:17:30] about because it's so obscure. They used to have these little red boxes on lampposts made of cast iron, and it had a little sort of roof – like a birdhouse, but made of cast iron, and in case of

fire you broke the glass and you pulled a thing, and I'd never seen anybody do it, nor did I ever do it. But that was – in those days, before you had telephones.

Interviewer: Oh, so that was a way to contact [1:18:00] the fire department.

Respondent 1: Exactly.

Interviewer: Directly.

Respondent 1: Absolutely. So that was one of the last things. Remember the party lines?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent 1: Okay.

Interviewer: So you had a party line.

Respondent 1: We had a party line.

Respondent 2: We had a party line for a while.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: We did too.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: And we had a little telephone table, and when you came into our house, just sitting on the little landing before you go upstairs, this telephone, this black telephone, and I don't even – I'm sure there was a little book there with the phone numbers, but that was, [1:18:30] you know, where you made your calls. And you know, we had another phone.

Respondent 1: And when you went to shul, everything was in Yiddish and they used to auction off the...

Interviewer: Oh, the [indiscernible 01:18:42].

- Respondent 1:** The [indiscernible 01:18:43]. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Oh really?
- Respondent 1:** During Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, [indiscernible 01:18:48].
- Interviewer:** Oh so you really – oh.
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. I used to – you used to walk in and the place had a [1:19:00] very pungent smell. And this was the Kiever shul. And the reason why is these guys here hardly wore their suits, and they were heavy wool suits, and a lot of them were in moth balls, a lot of them never went to the cleaner's, and there was this real pungent smell. You walk in and it hit you.
- Interviewer:** And then they weren't using deodorant.
- Respondent 1:** No, of course not. And...
- Respondent 2:** And they didn't bathe that often.
- Respondent 1:** They didn't. No one used toothpaste. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** [1:19:30] Did you speak Yiddish at home? You seem to speak Yiddish.
- Respondent 1:** No. My father hardly spoke. He could understand and speak very little. My mother was able to speak better, but my grandparents...
- Interviewer:** Oh, so you...
- Respondent 1:** And I seemed to have some sort of affinity for languages, so...
- Interviewer:** Because several times you seem to speak it comfortably...
- Respondent 2:** Yes. He speaks very well. [1:20:00] He's very good with it.
- Interviewer:** So that was communicating with your grandparents.

Respondent 1: Yeah. But my grandmother – neither of them spoke English well. My grandfather could – they both understood it, and my grandfather was a lot better of speaking English than my grandmother. But my grandmother – it's like right now, you can find Italian women who came in 1952. They don't speak any English. Everything is – all their business is done in Italian.

Interviewer: [1:20:30] Right.

Respondent 2: Right.

Interviewer: So they would speak Italian and their younger generation might answer in English, and they could get by with that.

Respondent 2: Yeah. So just Jack and his sister, older sister who might be interesting to interview her too, but she lives in New York.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: We can give you her information if you'd like. But she – so those two picked up the Yiddish, but none of his other cousins, which are not that far off in age from him – they've just got one that's just – two that are a year younger, and many others – but none of the other ones picked it up.

Respondent 1: [1:21:00] Yeah.

Respondent 2: So they, you know, which is great. So he's got that language as a gift.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: And I have the same – similar thing because I spoke obviously German as a little girl, but then my parents spoke Polish. That was their first language for both of them – and Yiddish was, I think, the language I used kind of in, you know – maybe when they didn't want me to understand. I don't know. They went into both, but I'd say Polish, you know? So now to this day, I don't speak Yiddish as well as Jack, but I've taken [1:21:30] lessons, and I was in a drama group, but I can pick it up and I can follow a conversation, and I can

actually read and write in Yiddish. Well my younger sister, both of them – one is much younger – nothing. And the Polish, I also have retained quite a bit, and I've been told that if I – let's say if I was immersed in Polish society for two months...

Interviewer: You would speak it again.

Respondent 2: Yeah. Because I can follow and [1:22:00] I can say certain phrases and even some sentences, but you know, I don't hear it anymore, but that's what my parents spoke. And my mother would have her friends over a lot, she was an entertainer...

Interviewer: They spoke Polish, a combination of Polish and Yiddish?

Respondent 2: Yeah. But mostly Polish, I'd say. And my mother wrote beautifully in Polish, and that was her first language. That's what she was educated in. So we picked it up, so we feel blessed that we have a little bit – not that we're fluent so [1:22:30] much so, but it's a bonus.

Interviewer: I'm wondering if you can talk – we're going to end very soon.

Respondent 2: Okay.

Interviewer: I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about the churches and the shuls in the neighbourhood.

Respondent 1: Oh, there were so many shuls. I mean if you walked at Spadina and College, you could probably hit fifteen, twenty shuls in a matter of a half an hour just doing a circuit. [1:23:00] There was about two or three shuls on Brunswick.

Interviewer: Little [indiscernible 01:23:06].

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. In fact the...

Interviewer: For Brunswick, the Narayever is still there.

Respondent 1: The Narayever's still there.

Respondent 2: Yes, yes.

Respondent 1: But there was one shul just a little north of College that closed down probably only about fifteen years ago, but you had to have credentials to be, you know, to be a member there. You had to be at least ninety and have a white beard down to your...

Interviewer: So that was on [1:23:30] Brunswick north of College.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. Just north on the west side of the street. The shul that's on Markham Street, there was one kitty-corner across from it, one directly across from it, and then there was two further down, one on the west side and one on the east side. One was also the Beth Jacob Girls' School on Markham Street.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: Corner of Markham and Harbord on the [1:24:00] southwest corner was a Jewish library.

Respondent 2: Yeah. Which I used to go to. Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: Okay?

Interviewer: That's on the wrong side of the tracks for our...

Respondent 1: Okay. Okay.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Okay, and the shuls, there wasn't a plethora of shuls...

Interviewer: On this side of Bathurst.

Respondent 1: On this side. On this side of Bathurst. There was just on Brunswick.

Interviewer: Okay, yeah.

Respondent 2: Well there was one. Yeah. The one I went to was Brunswick and Sussex.

- Respondent 1:** Yeah. The Shomrei Shabbos.
- Respondent 2:** The Shomrei Shabbos, which is now an art institute.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** [1:24:30] You've probably seen it. Right at the corner of Sussex and Brunswick. It's sort of a – they've modernized it, but they had the downstairs, which was probably less expensive. That's where we used to go, my father used to go for yontif. And then the upstairs was really beautiful, I remember. Very elegant. And both of us remember going in there on Yom Kippur and there was a really bad smell of bad breath because...
- Interviewer:** Oh yes.
- Respondent 2:** The bad breath smell in the shuls. [1:25:00] In the shuls.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. There was a shul still – the edifice is still there. It was a shul right next to King Edward School on Bathurst Street. It was the forerunner of the Adath Israel.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent 2:** That's right. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** It was one of the first to move out of the area. I believe it moved out probably around '53.
- Respondent 2:** Mm-hm. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** That was a shul. [1:25:30] There was no shuls on Lippincott. That was the only shul on Bathurst from College to Borden, I mean to Bloor. There was none on Borden.
- Interviewer:** But that's still quite a few considering we're just talking about what we now call Harbord Village.
- Respondent 2:** Yes.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Respondent 1: Harbord Village goes up to Bloor, down to College?

Interviewer: Yeah. Exactly. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Oh.

Respondent 2: I didn't know about any other ones.

Respondent 1: Brunswick was about three or four shuls.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: That was a shul [1:26:00] street. There was none on Major that I know of, and none on Robert.

Respondent 2: No. No.

Respondent 1: Oh, do you know Robert Brass and Fanny Brass?

Interviewer: No.

Respondent 1: I should get a hold of – I haven't spoken to them in many, many, many, many years. They live on Robert Street.

Interviewer: A family?

Respondent 2: They lived here.

Respondent 1: Mother and son.

Interviewer: And related to you?

Respondent 1: Yeah. Fanny was related to my father's first cousin, Harry Brass, an infamous fellow. [1:26:30] But you wouldn't want to know why.

Interviewer: Of course. [Laughter] Of course I would.

Respondent 1: Okay. Up until probably, I'd say about fifteen years ago, the older Jewish generation in Toronto who were before the war here and, you know, greener, so to speak, [1:27:00] knew Harry Brass because he had a – he was known to have a humungous penis.

Interviewer: Oh. [Laughs]

Respondent 1: And people – when they'd be introduced to Jack Brass, they would – any relation to Harry Brass? And when they'd do it, they'd be looking at my trousers. [Laughter]

Interviewer: [1:27:30] Strange story.

Respondent 2: Yeah, we had that happen. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. It was quite a thing. And I remember we were – I was in the Bank of Commerce where I had my business account, and my manager calls me in and sitting there is a rotund guy about that time in his seventies, and he says, "Phil Green, this is Jack Brass." And Phil Green looks at me and says, "Any relation to Harry Brass?" [1:28:00] I says, "Yeah, my father's first cousin." He says, "You've got a big shlong too."

Interviewer: So this was a well known...

Respondent 1: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

Interviewer: ...and probably true.

Respondent 1: Oh, I would imagine. First wife – his first wife got an annulment because she couldn't consummate the church. [Laughter] But Fanny's still alive. She lived on Robert Street for a long, long time.

Interviewer: Would you [1:28:30] check with her and see?

Respondent 1: Oh yes, yes.

Interviewer: So where is she living now?

- Respondent 1:** On Robert Street.
- Interviewer:** She is on Robert Street?
- Respondent 2:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm..
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. And Bobby Brass, Robert, lived on Borden Street for, oh, probably until the '80s.
- Interviewer:** So I'm going to ask you to check with them and see if I could interview...
- Respondent 1:** I will. I haven't spoken to either of them in at least thirty years.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Would you be willing to do that? Is that...
- Respondent 1:** Well what are they going to do?
- Interviewer:** [1:29:00] They could say yes or no. [Laughter] We're going to end. I just want to talk about one thing...
- Respondent 1:** Sure.
- Interviewer:** ...and that is the security. How safe it felt at that time in your experiences.
- Respondent 1:** I remember a big stink. My mother was going to the Quality Bakery to pick up some stuff, and this was late at night, and she saw somebody getting murdered in front of the Bellevue Theatre. And that was the big hit of the thing. It was safe.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Besides that...
- Respondent 2:** [1:29:30] Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** You never complained. There was no issue.

Respondent 2: Yeah. We felt very safe. We felt very safe. I remember one incident though in Lansdowne – in the playground there. We'd hung out one night, there was a few girls, so I was older already. I was about ten, probably ten, eleven almost. Something like that. But anyways, just playing there, and there was this guy following us around and asking questions and this and that. And I wasn't concerned, but the girls said, [1:30:00] "You know what? We should call the police. We should call the police." So I remember going home and we called him "Mr. He." I don't know. And I remember a police officer coming to my parents' house and asking us all sorts of questions about him, so I don't remember anything. He didn't touch anybody, but you know, that was – and I know this is out of the jurisdiction, but on Markham Street there was a guy who was, you know, interested in all the young [1:30:30] girls, and lived next door to our house.

Respondent 1: We never lived on Markham Street, so.

Respondent 2: Yeah, yeah. Okay. He lured the young girls up with candy and stuff, and he would throw candy down. Yeah. Andy. I remember his name.

Respondent 1: Andy?

Respondent 2: And I know once my sister and her friend, they were living at 411 as well, almost went up there because he said, "Come on up. I've got lots of great candy. I've got" – and you know, my parents weren't home. And in those days, it was just the way [1:31:00] it was.

Respondent 1: He was never going to do anything?

Respondent 2: Yeah, he was.

Respondent 1: He was?

Respondent 2: He was known, yeah.

Respondent 1: Oh.

Respondent 2: But anyways, they never went up. They just had a funny feeling. But myself? I always felt safe.

- Respondent 1:** Same with me.
- Respondent 2:** We were out in the evening, and...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** ...there was no...
- Interviewer:** You see, those kind of people now would get so much attention.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Absolutely.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** And at that time you kind of fended for yourself.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, we – yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. But what you're saying is both of you lived in the neighbourhood and it was a safe place.
- Respondent 1:** Absolutely.
- Interviewer:** There are [1:31:30] incidents always.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think it's still a safe place, and I really – I think people got nothing to worry about. It's not a case where we're living in a subsistence level. We've got too much time to think about all our fears, right? Really. And you know, when we have grandchildren, I would let them play on the street.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 1:** I would have no problem with it. [1:32:00] We sent our kids to Bialik. We lived on Strachan. They were eight years old. We sent them on public transit to Bialik, and the other parents were looking at us...

Interviewer: So they would just take the Bathurst...

Respondent 2: Yes. Bathurst west. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Are you – wrong with you? **[Indiscernible 01:32:19]**.

Respondent 2: Yeah. Yeah. And I just want to say before I forget about the – Jack had the Bellevue, but in our area we had the two theatres you probably heard about – the Midtown, which is **[1:32:30]** now the Bloor, and then the Alhambra, which was right across from Honest Ed's. So those were our hangouts. And pretty well same sort of a thing. Every Saturday, if I wasn't out with my parents, sometimes I'd go with my parents to a movie and our walks were certainly – like they were – they'd always get me a treat, sometimes a little toy at Woolworth's, which was next door – I think it's Blockbuster? No. There's a – I think it's a dollar store next to the Bloor, but if I went with my friends, which was **[1:33:00]** Suzy from the bakery and sometimes Frances, and there'd be another friend, Frieda, we would go and we'd have twenty-five cents. So our show was more expensive. Fifteen cents for the movie, all the movies. You know, you could stay there all day if you wanted, and ten cents for the popcorn. Well we never got a drink. But Susan always had extra money. I think her mother just gave her extra change, so she was fun to go with.

Interviewer: Yeah. [Laughs]

Respondent 2: And she'd treat us to ice creams and, you know, **[1:33:30]** buy licorice, and we'd have a great time with her. She was just...

Respondent 1: Anyways, we'd better get going.

Respondent 2: Yeah. So yeah. So Suzy's at the Midtown and the Alhambra, so those were our – lots of great memories.

- Respondent 1:** We can't go into the Harbord Bakery without trepidations because if we want to buy something, we have to fight with her to pay for it. [Laughter] You know?
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** And the first thing she says is, she gives me a hug and says, "Do you want something to eat?" [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** [1:34:00] I just – we are going to stop now.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Okay.
- Interviewer:** I think we can talk for another two hours.
- Respondent 2:** I know.
- Respondent 1:** Easily.
- Interviewer:** Easily.
- Respondent 2:** We should do a walking tour one day.
- Interviewer:** I'd be happy to do that with you. I would.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Especially with Jack, because he knows...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah. Especially I can tell you that I lived – I should show you one day my shortcut to King Edward Public School. [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** Was that through a lane?
- Respondent 1:** There was a building. You know the building down Koughnet?
- Interviewer:** Yes, I do.

Respondent 1: There's a little space between a house just south of it. It's about that wide.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent 1: And I figured that was a shortcut, and I'd [1:34:30] wriggle my way through that little [laughs]...

Interviewer: I just want to say thank you to both of you.

Respondent 1: Thank you.

Respondent 2: Oh, you're welcome.

Interviewer: You've got an awful lot – very rich stories, and maybe we will do this walking tour.

Respondent 1: Oh, I'd love to do it.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Respondent 1: And I can show you a lot of the stores, like for instance at the corner of Croft and College, there's a beer store.

Respondent 2: Oh. [Laughs]

Interviewer: I'm going to turn this off.

Respondent 2: Okay.

[01:34:54]

[End of recording]