

067 Hindy Hirt

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

**[0:00:00]**

**Interviewer:** The date today is the 7th of August, and I'm sitting in my kitchen with Hindy Hirt, who grew up on Brunswick. And first, I want to say thank you so much for coming.

**Respondent:** Really, it's a pleasure.

**Interviewer:** But I also want to add, of course, that our children went to school together and you were my children's teacher.

**Respondent:** You trusted me with your kids. Thank you. [Laughter] **[0:00:30]** I have to trust you with my words.

**Interviewer:** So I'm going to ask you to start by telling me the address where you lived, the years you lived there, and how old you were during those years.

**Respondent:** Okay. The address was and still is 177 Brunswick Avenue. My parents were the original owners of the house. It was built in 1939. I was born July 10th, 1940. **[0:01:00]** And I guess I was brought home to that house from the hospital, whatever day that was, and I actually lived there a few months after I was married, which would have been 1963, August the 4th was our forty-ninth wedding anniversary, so I lived in the house a few months after that because my husband was still based in Winnipeg. So I guess I finally left the house **[0:01:30]** on about October of 1963.

**Interviewer:** So you lived there for twenty, more than twenty years.

**Respondent:** Twenty-three plus, right?

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Who else lived in that house during those years?

**Respondent:** Okay. When my mother had a bachelor uncle, a bachelor brother, he was a younger brother of hers, and he lived with us and I loved him as a second [0:02:00] father until he died, which was January of 1950. And we always had tenants in the house. Now my first memory of the tenants is not there, but we were always good friends of most of the tenants. So I knew the family, and I still see the woman who was a two-year-old. I bump into her on occasion. Their name was Dobiner. And they [0:02:30] were connected to the Yo-Yos.

**Interviewer:** Oh my god.

**Respondent:** So Fan's brother, no Jack's brother, Sam, had a toy factory called Cheerio toys, and they manufactured the Cheerio Yo-Yos.

**Interviewer:** I loved Yo-Yos.

**Respondent:** And I had a huge box of toys because my father did the electrical work in a toy factory. How lucky can a kid get? [Laughter]

**Interviewer:** Do you know why your parents had [0:03:00] these tenants?

**Respondent:** They couldn't afford to maintain the house by themselves, and before they actually moved into the house, instead of having a fourth bedroom, the bedrooms were – two of them were tandem bedrooms. They converted the front of the two tandem rooms into a kitchen, and that remained until about ten years ago. That room could still hold a kitchen facility, [0:03:30] although it didn't, after I was about sixteen or seventeen. So it was definitely designed for two families initially because they just couldn't afford to maintain it.

**Interviewer:** How many bathrooms did you have?

**Respondent:** We had one real bathroom upstairs and one god-awful toilet in the basement, and believe me, you did not want to use it. But as the owners of the house and the landlords, that's what we had to [0:04:00] use when we were kids was the toilet facility down there, and then come upstairs and wash our hands.

**Interviewer:** But at least it was a second toilet.

**Respondent:** It was a second...

**Interviewer:** You didn't have to stand in line with half a dozen other people.

**Respondent:** Right. It was a second toilet, but I don't think you want to use it. My mother kept it clean. That was definitely her forte, was keeping the place clean.

**Interviewer:** Was that downstairs paved? I mean the basement or the cellar, was it a paved floor?

**Respondent:** It was like a concrete [0:04:30] floor, and there was a laundry room facility, and it had the tubs, and it had a hosed shower because my father, being the landlord, couldn't go shower daily so he had to shower in this laundry tub facility downstairs. I mean we really treated the tenants, or I guess my parents treated the tenants, as royalty. They needed the income.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Respondent:** And when I was older, they took one of the rooms [0:05:00] and did make it into like a little recreation room, but – and I don't have a memory of this, but the dining room – what would have been officially the dining room, was their bedroom. Had beautiful French doors, and I must have slept in a crib in that room until my brother was born when I was three. And then I moved upstairs to [0:05:30] my own bedroom, and...

**Interviewer:** So your parents were on the main floor in what we would use as the living room or dining room or something.

**Respondent:** Right.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And you slept with them, and then you moved upstairs and your brother slept with your parents?

**Respondent:** In the crib downstairs.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** But my uncle lived with us and the kitchen was like in tandem with probably the eating area, but we didn't use it as an eating area. My uncle slept on a pull-out couch, and my memory [0:06:00] also is my mother's sister used to come from New York every summer, and everybody somehow piled into our house. I don't know how we did it, but I slept with my cousin and my brother had to crawl in with us. He was the filler of our sandwich. The three of us in one bed as kids. Linda, my little cousin, the living room also had a dining room, a big dining room set in the centre, [0:06:30] and the couches were around it, so they somehow had a crib for her because...

**Interviewer:** Oh my gosh.

**Respondent:** So we were there, and nobody complained. And my grandmother would come and sleep with us over shabbos. She'd sleep with me. So I don't know how my mother did it, but it was always fun, and my cousins and I still have wonderful memories of spending our summers together until my grandmother died.

**Interviewer:** And the tenants [0:07:00] upstairs, did they come and join your family at all? I meant is sounds like you had friendly relationships with them.

**Respondent:** Except for the later ones, our friendships were for as long as they lived. The Dobiners, who were the first tenants – Freda and Jack – actually attended my mother's eightieth birthday party. The Gershuns moved to Vaughan Road. [0:07:30] They had no children. They were a family from Montreal, a couple from Montreal, and we visited them until they died. They were at my wedding for sure, they may have been alive still when my brother got married, and they would have still been at my brother's wedding, and I remember them vividly. I loved them. And the Abels, Abellises, who were from Czechoslovakia, moved out when I was still four years old because [0:08:00] the Gershuns were living at the house when I was five. I can remember that. And Anita, their daughter, the Abellises daughter, was a teenager. I loved her. And about five years ago, I found her living in South Carolina and we've been in touch ever since. One of our street neighbours, who was her

contemporary, found her, phoned me, gave me the phone number, and we've been in touch ever since.

**Interviewer:** [0:08:30] So those early tenants were really like good friends.

**Respondent:** Good friends.

**Interviewer:** And family. Yeah.

**Respondent:** Good friends, and maintained a relationship with my parents until they all died.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Do you have any idea what prompted your parents to buy in this neighbourhood?

**Respondent:** This was the Jewish neighbourhood. This is where everybody lived, and my mother actually lived in two other houses on Brunswick Avenue. She lived with her parents [0:09:00] at number 42. I know that because they always spoke about the fact that their wedding was at 42 Brunswick. And then they moved with my – across the road to 55 Brunswick with my uncle, and aunt, and my two cousins, and my aunt's sister-in-law and brother-in-law, who also lived on Brunswick were childless, and I adopted as my aunt and uncle. And [0:09:30] I actually found my father's business cards with the 55 Brunswick Avenue address on it when I was cleaning up my mother's house about ten years ago. So I've actually framed that with my father and uncle in their van, the two Petroff brothers, electricians. My father and my uncle were electrical – electricians, and they actually were hired to do the electrical work at [0:10:00] 177 Brunswick, and at that point, my mother must have realized she was pregnant and they decided to buy the house.

**Interviewer:** So your family was living on Brunswick. That was north of College, and then the house they bought is north of Harbord.

**Respondent:** Right.

**Interviewer:** But they were living on Brunswick long before 1940 when they moved into that house.

**Respondent:** Right. Before 1935 when they were married even. I don't know what year they moved into 42 Brunswick.

**Interviewer:** [0:10:30] Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** But they would have moved to 55 probably in 1935 after they were married at some point.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** And 55 Brunswick had all these people plus a little arts studio at the top because my uncle was an art student at the time, and he had this little studio that I've heard about – you know, it's family lore – at the top, [0:11:00] and it was with the woman who was the sister to the Creeds, that fancy Creeds store was one of the artists, and another one was a guy who ended up in England and did very well, and his name was Sid Newman. And all of this was – what's the word? Was told to me again by the parents of a [0:11:30] friend of mine, who I happened to see in Florida, and they were my uncle's groupies. They would come – and they were younger, and they were sort of in awe of this group of, quote, artists.

**Interviewer:** To come back to your childhood in this neighbourhood, you said your parents were attracted to this neighbourhood because it was Jewish. What are your memories of who made up the neighbourhood?

**Respondent:** [0:12:00] There was a mix of people. There were Jews and non-Jews on our block. There were little synagogues. Apparently the Narayever when – I don't remember this, but the story is it was a church until I was about three.

**Interviewer:** So that would have been about 1943.

**Respondent:** Right. And the minister actually lived next door to us, and that would have been 181.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** And my mother was quite friendly with them. She always said he was a good-looking man. [Laughter] So she [0:12:30] had her eye out on good-looking guys.

**Interviewer:** Don't we all?

**Respondent:** And I guess about 1943 they sold it and it became the Narayever, which was a, you know, typical Orthodox shul, little shul, with a [indiscernible 0:12:43]. And we would – you know, my parents had no affiliation to any synagogue, but my mother would often go in there for, you know, for shabbos or for the holidays especially, and so my memories of the Narayever are from when I was very, very young [0:13:00] going there. My father for whatever reason didn't go there, and he would go down to the Londoner, which was a big – the Hebrew Men of England on Spadina, and he sometimes dived there. My grandmother and my uncle dived at a place called the Lebovic, which I think was somewhere around Dundas, and I have no recollection of where it was.

**Interviewer:** So you had this...

**Respondent:** We had these little shuls all over the place.

**Interviewer:** But only your mother went to the one that was [0:13:30] next door.

**Respondent:** Until I was a teenager, or later on where the shuls started to close down because people were moving up north in the late '50s. So the shuls started to close down, and my father was forced to become a member of the Narayever, and then he became really active. And he did a lot of help in the – you know, because he was an electrician, he – and he was very hands-on, he did [0:14:00] – he would help with the maintenance and the electrical work, and they actually had the key to the shul until they changed the format and put in the lock system.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** So we always knew where the key was.

**Interviewer:** Let's come back to who made up the population.

**Respondent:** Okay. There as a mix. There were some Jewish families. Not too many kids my age, but a few who were older, and I'm still in touch – see one or two of them. [0:14:30] And then there were families where there was a bit of anti-Semitism. I mean we were called "dirty Jews" a number of times. They made us uncomfortable. The – it wasn't like today where your kids played and the families, parents became friends. People were friendly. "Hello. How are you?" Blah, blah. But there wasn't any going in and out of sharing cups of coffee or cups of tea [0:15:00] among the parents. It was simply the kids played on the street, the parents were friendly, and that was how it seemed to be in our neighbourhood. We knew all the parents. The kids knew everybody.

**Interviewer:** But there were some problems with anti-Semitism.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Were some of your friends – were all your friends Jewish or some not?

**Respondent:** On the street, all my friends were Jewish. We were uncomfortable. Like we had a kid next door. He wasn't too [0:15:30] bad, the Legers, but we had the Marshalls at about 180, 190, a family of thirteen kids. And this is the honest to goodness truth, they were either in reformatories, in jail. There was a lot of alcoholism, and they had their sidekicks, their cousins, the Kyles. And they made us all uncomfortable.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm. And scared.

**Respondent:** And a little bit scared, yeah. Because they would sometimes give you a punch or whatever. Yeah. [0:16:00] But it turned out we had a driveway, because originally 177 was originally 177 and 179. Family lore. And so what had been a second property, a small property, probably like the ones that are next door to the shul, there are two small properties at 183 and 185. May have been what the two properties were like where our house was. So we had a driveway and it was [0:16:30] a long driveway with the garage in the back.

**Interviewer:** Seen it. Yeah.

**Respondent:** So that was sort of a gathering place for the kids on the street. This is where we played ball, where we did our skipping because it was a safe place, and nobody was going to bother us. You know, you didn't have to move out of anybody's way to kick a ball, or to turn down your skipping ropes. You could just play until you were called in, and so it was sort of the local spot where the [0:17:00] whole neighbourhood gathered to play. And that, I guess, is fun because I never thought about it, but that's where we were...

**Interviewer:** Because everyone came to you.

**Respondent:** Everybody came to us.

**Interviewer:** What school did you go to when you lived there?

**Respondent:** I went to King Edward. We were right in the middle between Lansdowne and King Edward, and my parents chose to send me to King Edward, which was fine, and then of course I went off to Harbord Collegiate for high school.

**Interviewer:** Was Central Tech there at [0:17:30] the time?

**Respondent:** Central Tech has always been there. It's a very old school, and actually my uncle, this artist, he actually was a student at Central Tech, and Arthur Lismer was one of his teachers.

**Interviewer:** Whoa. At Central Tech?

**Respondent:** Yeah. And my uncle had one of his paintings. Ended up at the national gallery. We now have a reproduction of it.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Who went to Central Tech?

**Respondent:** Mainly guys, and like, [0:18:00] it was interesting. My class at King Edward was not an academically oriented class of kids. So a lot of the boys who were not academically oriented, but were going to be mechanics or whatever, ended up at Central Tech. There was also

Central Commerce, which was down near Ossington, and many of the girls in my class ended up at Central Commerce. There wasn't a drive to get a university education that [0:18:30] people have today. My parents always were, you know – encouraged us academically, and so there was no question about where I was going to go. And I remember, I think there were only about two girls from my class. Yeah, one is Raymonde, who was a French Holocaust survivor, and I was her first friend. She now lives in Montreal and she was a Member of Parliament for the Liberal party. So the two of us and [0:19:00] maybe one more girl ended up at Harbord Collegiate, but when we walked into Harbord, we really knew nobody, and maybe about three of the boys. Most of the boys in our class went to Central Tech, or the girls went to Central Commerce.

**Interviewer:** So Central Tech was similar to what it is now.

**Respondent:** Right.

**Interviewer:** A very practical, go to school, learn a trade, and get a good job.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So you were more academically oriented and you went to Harbord.

**Respondent:** Right. And also, my parents [0:19:30] felt it was very important that I get a Yiddish background.

**Interviewer:** So how did that happen?

**Respondent:** So at that time in the '40s, the focus wasn't on Hebrew schools, even though the Talmud Torah, what is today the Associated, had just opened a day school at the corner of Brunswick and College. Now that was a really pivotal area in the city. Brunswick and College. And so at that corner, there was the original [0:20:00] YMHA, which is now the Miles Nadal, which was built in 1953 or 1954. There was the Talmud Torah, which is today the Associated, which moved up to Neptune in the late '50s, and then slightly over to the west above a store was the [indiscernible 0:20:22], where I went, and that was a Yiddish [indiscernible 0:20:27]. My parents

spoke Yiddish. Yiddish was **[0:20:30]** my first language, or English was my first language, but it was my other language.

**Interviewer:** But you spoke – your parents spoke Yiddish.

**Respondent:** I spoke Yiddish because as a child, I had two grandmothers who really didn't speak any English, and I saw my mother's mother come every day. She lived on Henry Street near what was the Henry Street shul, which today is a church, but she came every day, and so the only way to communicate with her was in **[0:21:00]** Yiddish. And I always thought this is quite funny. You know, from a child's perspective, that I had an English Bubby and a Yiddish Bubby because I always thought that my English Bubby spoke English, until I was – my father's mother. But it was only when I became an adult that I realized her vocabulary in English consisted of maybe four or five words, but that was enough to make an impression on a one-year-old or a two-year-old to say I have an English Bubby and a Yiddish Bubby. But **[0:21:30]** Yiddish was the language that was really spoken in our house, and so I was sent to the **[indiscernible 0:21:35]** and my parents felt that I would learn how to communicate in the other language. And I realized just a few years ago, because I am a language teacher now, that I never had trouble learning how to read and write Yiddish because it wasn't like the kids we send to school today to the Hebrew schools or the Yiddish schools, where they were learning a **[0:22:00]** second language. I was learning how to read and write my other language.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** And I was expanding in Yiddish as the same way I was expanding in English.

**Interviewer:** So you were becoming literary, but you already spoke the language.

**Respondent:** I had no trouble understanding what it was all about. I was just learning two alphabets simultaneously, and how to read and write. And I still – my mother, god bless her, kept **[indiscernible 0:22:26]**. Those are your notebooks. And I **[0:22:30]** really wrote

beautifully. My handwriting is still – was gorgeous. It was really beautiful, and my mother kept those notebooks and I have them.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** My mother was a wonderful collector.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** And so I learned Yiddish, and when I was in about grade three, the **[indiscernible 0:22:50]** bought its own property, which was on Lippincott, and today that's part of the Central Tech schoolyard. **[0:23:00]** They ripped down a whole street of small houses, plus the **[indiscernible 0:23:06]**, as it was called. And then the **[indiscernible 0:23:10]** moved up to Codsell and Wilmington where it is today.

**Interviewer:** So really way up north.

**Respondent:** And everybody was moving, shifting.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** By the '60s, everything was gone in that area.

**Interviewer:** But you're saying that College and Brunswick, College and Lippincott, very major Jewish **[0:23:30]** institutions.

**Respondent:** Absolutely.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Bakeries, grocery stores, movie theatres.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So you know what? Let's talk about College Street, please? What was there?

**Respondent:** I didn't know it all that well, but you'd walk down the street. There was the Home Hardware, which was Weiner's Hardware. It's still

there at the corner of Major and – or Robert and College. There is still a hardware store there.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. There's a hardware store. Right.

**Respondent:** It was always there. There is [0:24:00] – there's – you can see the marquee of what – I always test my students today. I say, "What was – what do you think that building was?" And today there's – I think they sell computers and all kinds of stuff in there, like a Future-type Shop. That was one of the theatres, movie theatres that you'd go to on a Saturday, and it was actually owned by somebody who was Jewish because they happened to be my uncle's friends.

**Interviewer:** So that was College [0:24:30] near?

**Respondent:** Near Spadina.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** Okay?

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** They had some restaurants, they had little shops. There was Colman's, Colman Greenspan's butcher store right at the corner, which was a kosher butcher shop. Again, we didn't shop there because at Brunswick and Harbord every corner had its own little shop.

**Interviewer:** So you didn't go that far south.

**Respondent:** No. No, you didn't. My mother never shopped in the Market. Like one of my friends said, "You must have known the Market," [0:25:00] and I said, "No, I didn't." Because everything...

**Interviewer:** Because everything was close to Harbord for you.

**Respondent:** ...was – my mother had a grocery store. It was Platt's. There were two kosher butcher stores. Colman Greenspan, who had a butcher

store at Harbord and – I mean at Brunswick and College right beside the Talmud Torah, also occupied the butcher store at Brunswick and Harbord, which today is the pottery store.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** And next to the [0:25:30] butcher store was a little shoemaker, and at the corner was – on the southeast corner where we lived, right at the corner, was Feld's Pharmacy. There was a pharmacist who moved across the street after, and there was a bakery. So we didn't even use the Harbord Bakery because you didn't have to go that far.

**Interviewer:** So you were very close to Harbord, and that's really where your life happened. [0:26:00] You played there, you shopped there.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Except for school, which was close to College. But otherwise we really, really just stuck to our block basically.

**Interviewer:** As I meet people I see that if they lived near Bloor, that was it. You live near Harbord, that was it. People near College. So you really stuck to that neighbourhood in terms of friendships, and commercial, and...

**Respondent:** Right. Don't forget, people didn't have cars.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** And so you [0:26:30] shopped on a very regular basis. There was the Harbord Fish Market, which originally was behind Greenspan's, and they eventually moved to Major and Harbord, and that was where you went for your fresh fish on Thursday and your smoked fish on Saturday. Your lox, and your carp, and your herrings on Saturday. And it's interesting because they later became – the Kushner family, they later opened up a major place that [0:27:00] finally was taken over by their grandson called York Fish, where they were at Steeles and Dufferin, and I still bought my fish for my gefilte fish from the original people, from the grandchildren.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. But there was...

- Respondent:** Like there was such a connection, you know, from one family to another, and you just stuck around your neighbourhood. You didn't have to go far.
- Interviewer:** So it was one family to another, and [0:27:30] one generation to another because you stuck with this grandson.
- Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah. Like you know, if you liked the service, you just stuck with it. Now I have to tell you about Mr. Feld, the pharmacist.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** We still have a good laugh when we meet each other, you know, meet one another – people who grew up on the block, and we all say, "Well, we're still alive," because Mr. Feld was a chain smoker, and he would prepare all his little [0:28:00] prescriptions with a cigarette dangling from his mouth, and we'd go in there and we would hold our breath to see how long the ashes could stick to this cigarette. [Laughter] I'm not making this one up. And his wife was the same, so the two of them with their cigarettes – I don't know, maybe the ashes protected us because most of us are still alive. [Laughter] And our parents lived to ripe old ages. And then at Bloor Street, now this was another one. There [0:28:30] was another pharmacy and it was Mr. Allen. I always thought his name was Mr. Allen because when I moved into my new house, he was the local pharmacist, and I used to go to him and say, "I remember you from when I was a little girl."
- Interviewer:** I can see as I'm watching you and listening to you, the pleasure you have because these are happy memories.
- Respondent:** They were. They were. They were really good memories. We were protected kids. I guess loved, encouraged, very [0:29:00] family-oriented. We had our aunts, and uncles, and cousins, and we were all in the neighbourhood, and it was a fun place to grow up.
- Interviewer:** Well, and you talk about aunts, uncles, cousins, but you also know the names of the owners of these stores. I assume that they knew your names too.

**Respondent:** Absolutely.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So it was even the people who owned the stores were part of the community.

**Respondent:** Well their children were the kids we played with. Like for [0:29:30] the Greenspans, for instance, Colman Greenspan, today I'm a very close friend of his granddaughter, whom I didn't know at that time. But the person who managed the store at Brunswick and Harbord, Herschel, Harry, his daughter, Sharon, and I – she was my first friend. Her sister took us to school to King Edward. You know, she was the person who took us to school. We were friends until the day she got married and moved to Hamilton. You know, we were just – we grew up together. We [0:30:00] belonged to youth movements together, and this was part of being – you know, part of your growing up. And our memories were of the street and everybody knew each other and played together. We don't always run into one another anymore, but when we do, it's always with, you know, wonderful, wonderful warm memories. Oh yeah, the other one is Charlie Kaproff. Charlie had a body shop. Not [0:30:30] sexy bodies. [Laughter] It was an auto body shop.

**Interviewer:** Where was that?

**Respondent:** It was across the road. It was on Brunswick where the little parkette is today.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** That was an auto body shop.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** And he was – who knows? I guess you didn't need licenses, but he ran it, and every so often there was a fire and the fire engines would come and put out the – you know, small fires [0:31:00] from all the gasoline and whatever. Anyway, Charlie had three kids, and Mrs. Kaproff was Mrs. Kaproff, but Charlie was Charlie. And the three kids. So one was David, and he was my age, but I understand

he's in California. And the younger one, I think she sent her kids to Bialik, so I think I bumped in – he used to bump into her. And the older one is the one I [0:31:30] remember because Mariam is a little bit older, maybe five or six years older, so she was obviously taller than I am. And she had beautiful brown hair that would swing as she'd walk down the street with her high heels, and I always looked up to her. And she got married at a young age, and disappeared. Many, many years later, I decided to take pottery. I was going to put my hand to the clay and I came in, and there was this little blonde woman, [0:32:00] who I towered over. And I registered and we took the class, and the following week she looked at me and she said, "Are you Hindy Petroff?" And I said, "Yeah." And she said, "Well I'm Mariam Kaproff." She's Mariam Casham. She's a well known potter, and now I tower over her. [Laughter] She no longer is clomping down the street.

**Interviewer:** So she grew at a young age.

**Respondent:** Yeah. She left because she's older and she got married, and [0:32:30] moved on and became a well known potter, and taught me at the – up on Bathurst and Sheppard. So I do cross her path every so often now, but I would never have recognized her. No. You know, had it not been for the name Hindy...

**Interviewer:** Oh, it was the name Hindy.

**Respondent:** The name Hindy that was, you know – people recognized.

**Interviewer:** But there was such a strong sense of this is our [0:33:00] community.

**Respondent:** Right. Right. Right. Whether you liked people or not, that was it. That was it. You know?

**Interviewer:** Before I move on to any other topics, you were talking about what I'll call the commercial part of a little bit of College, a lot on Harbord.

**Respondent:** There was a lot on College, but our area was Harbord. And even then it was a laundry so that, you know, the heavy-duty laundry because you didn't have, you know, the modern washing machines.

So my [0:33:30] mother would, you know, either do stuff by hand, or she later got one of those roller machines, but she took the laundry around the corner on Borden Street, right at your corner here.

**Interviewer:** Oh, there was a Laundromat there, because there's a Laundromat now, but it's a...

**Respondent:** No, it wasn't a Laundromat. It was a laundry and they did the laundry for you.

**Interviewer:** What about using – oh, before I move on, I want to stay on commercial. What do you remember about Bloor Street in terms of stores, theatres, [0:34:00] anything at all. So we'll stay with the commercial for another minute or so.

**Respondent:** So I said College Street had two theatres, but Bloor Street is where we went to the movies basically. Sometimes College Street, but generally on Bloor. There was a place that's all graffiti today, which was the original Bloor Street Theatre, and they played all the musicals, so that's where you went to see Doris Day, and you know, and "Oklahoma!," and all that stuff. And you'd go and you'd [0:34:30] sit for hours, and you'd see reruns for twenty-five cents. You got your ticket, your chips or your chocolate bar, and your Coke. And across the street, what is today's Bloor Street theatre was known as the Midtown, and I'll come back to that one. And then on the west side, the northwest side of Bloor Street was the Alhambra, and that was another theatre. And when [0:35:00] you went to the theatre, you know, you didn't have television at that time, so they'd run cartoons, they'd run the newsreels, and they always had another – like a short. So they ran cowboys, like "Hop Along Cassidy," and "The Lone Ranger," and the "The Durango Kid," and you know, you loved those guys because the good guy always – you know, they'd come in on their horses with their Stetsons, and that was cool. But then you saw the movies. What's the current Bloor [0:35:30] Street theatre, which was the Midtown, was a really neat place to go if they had a movie you liked because in the '40s, I told you about my father working for the – doing the electrical work for the Cheerio Toy Company, and they manufactured the Cheerio Yo-Yos. So Sam Dobiner used to run

Yo-Yo competitions, and they'd have kids at an intermission doing all kinds of tricks with their [0:36:00] Yo-Yos, and there'd be eliminations and then there'd be one Saturday where a kid every year would win a bicycle, and that was sponsored by the Cheerio Yo-Yos.

**Interviewer:** And that all happened at what we now call the Bloor Cinema.

**Respondent:** The Bloor Street theatre. Yeah. The Bloor Cinema. That was the Midtown.

**Interviewer:** So they had Yo-Yo competitions during the intermissions?

**Respondent:** Yeah. And that was the Midtown theatre. Honest Ed's hadn't come in there yet, so there were a series of little stores and [0:36:30] the one I remember was that there was a shoe store, so if I didn't get schlepped down to Eaton's or Simpson's for shoes, my mother would just buy my shoes at this little shoe store. She tried to, you know, shop at local places. Now if she couldn't pick up anything at the local grocery store, so she would go over to Bloor and Spadina, and it's just around where the Fresh restaurant is.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** [0:37:00] There was a Dominion store. So occasionally she would go to the Dominion, or on Bathurst there was like a Loblaw's or Power store just around where one of Honest Ed's spots is. So sometimes she'd go there, and my father had trucks, you know, for his electrical stuff, so he would take her sometimes so that she didn't have to carry. The other thing that was interesting is – because we never went to the Market. You know, you didn't get your cottage [0:37:30] cheese, which I still eat today. My sour cream, which I still use the same brand today, was produced by – and milk. Milk was delivered to the door, and when I was really little it was Silverwoods Dairy that would come with a horse and buggy. And so you left out your bottles, and Saturday morning you left out your money, and my mother would get her butter, her cheese, her cream, and milk, and every Saturday she just left it out and it would be the cottage cheese. [0:38:00] So we never ate Daiter's because we grew up on Silverwoods. Well today, that's the Western

Creamery, and it still has the same – must have the same recipe because I've been eating it all my life and it hasn't – the recipe hasn't changed.

**Interviewer:** And it was a horse and buggy..

**Respondent:** A horse and buggy. And the guy's name was Harry and he used to come and deliver. So you didn't have to go for your – you know, those bottles are heavy. So she didn't have to – she would sign in, and [0:38:30] she didn't have to carry that. And my mother was used to preserving stuff. We must still have a hundred of the bottles in the garage on Brunswick. There's still bottles there, and she would make the most wonderful preserves, and of course she would buy almost by the bushel and baskets, but she had peddlers in the summer. There were these two men who would come with their horse and buggy – it's like "Lies My Father Told Me," you know, the movie...

**Interviewer:** Yes, yes.

**Respondent:** ...and these two [0:39:00] peddlers would come until maybe I was about twelve or thirteen years old...

**Interviewer:** Just selling fresh...

**Respondent:** ...and they would be selling fresh produce, and they knew what my mother wanted, and they would come and she'd order up a bushel of plums, prune plums, a bushel of pears, a bushel of peaches, and baskets of cherries...

**Interviewer:** And make what? Jams, compotes? What?

**Respondent:** No. She did preserves. Jars and jars of fruit. So [0:39:30] we always had desserts all...

**Interviewer:** All year long, tasting so fresh.

**Respondent:** ...year long. Yeah. Yeah. And she would make the most wonderful jars of cherries, and the plums, and she'd make these sweet and sour ones as well. I mean she was really, really good at that.

**Interviewer:** She probably enjoyed it knowing that all winter long you'd be eating this delicious fruit.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah. She was very good at that, and she made – in the winter, she would pick up things like pineapple, which a lot of people didn't even know, [0:40:00] but she always had the fresh fruit. We always had fresh. And in the winters, she would get the pineapple, and I don't know what she did, but she'd make her own pineapple juice. She was pretty creative, this lady. And you know, so it was – everything was there. Oh yeah, I mean the meat was – we had a poultry shop, and we had a butcher.

**Interviewer:** On?

**Respondent:** On Brunswick, right at the corner. So directly opposite us was the [0:40:30] poultry shop, Tennenbaum's, and it was Goldie Tennenbaum who found me Anita, the tenant. They had a poultry shop where they sold chicken, eggs, turkey, ducks, geese, and so my mother would just go across the road and get her poultry.

**Interviewer:** So Brunswick north of Harbord.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So it's right near this body shop.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Like two doors from the body shop. You know where Michael – where what's his name? Shelly Wagner lives?

**Interviewer:** [0:41:00] I know who you mean. Yes, yes.

**Respondent:** Okay. So next door, it has sort of like a strange – like an added...

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** ...front, that was the poultry shop, Tennenbaum's. And...

**Interviewer:** How convenient is that?

- Respondent:** Yeah. And they did their own shechting, their own slaughtering there.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** Yeah. I think they ended up having problems many years later and had to close down for health reasons, but those days, who cared? So we never had to shop at Kensington [0:41:30] for things like fresh meat, and fresh fish was at the Harbord Fish Market.
- Interviewer:** And the fresh fruit that came...
- Respondent:** And the fresh fruit that came with big, big stuff. And for small stuff, my mother went to the – butter and cheese was delivered.
- Interviewer:** Was delivered.
- Respondent:** You know, the other thing we knew about cheese, who knew about cheese? We had Kraft slices and that was about it. You know? I mean who knew about cheddar and all that, you know? We – you know, we didn't know about anything, and they didn't know [0:42:00] about anything. They weren't French. [Laughs] They came from Russia and Poland.
- Interviewer:** So everything was right here.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** You barely had to go north or south.
- Respondent:** Very, very little.
- Interviewer:** You talked about using this driveway, you and the kids, this long driveway. Would you talk to me a little bit about front porches, back lanes? Was there a lane behind where you lived? Or nobody there?
- Respondent:** No, no. We back onto backyard neighbours, but people did have [0:42:30] back lanes.
- Interviewer:** Okay. So...

- Respondent:** For their alleyways. I think maybe further north there might be some alleyways.
- Interviewer:** Oh, there were some in the neighbourhood.
- Respondent:** No, no, no. But I'm saying even Brunswick.
- Interviewer:** Right.
- Respondent:** But behind our house, we always had a garden from Major Street.
- Interviewer:** Okay. So talk about your garden. How did you use it? What did your family do with that piece of land?
- Respondent:** My mother was a wonderful gardener. So we always had tomatoes, and lots and lots of tomatoes. We had fruit. We had a couple o fruit trees. **[0:43:00]** We had a plum tree, a couple of plum trees in there, lilacs which still grow. She had beans, maybe some cucumber, and lots of flowers. She loved her flowers and loved her plants, and so....
- Interviewer:** Did the family use that spot, that place for sitting outside at all? Or it was just...
- Respondent:** Oh, no, no, no. It's a huge garden. You can put a pool in that. I'm going to take you there later, Ellie. We're going for rhubarb. There was rhubarb, so it's still there.
- Interviewer:** **[0:43:30]** So it's a large piece of land, and so you used it and it was beautiful.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** With flowers and lots of food.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. Oh yeah. And the front part, which you know, was where the house is, we had one of those big swings.
- Interviewer:** Oh, those double-swings?

**Respondent:** Some of those double-swings. I always got nauseous on it, but we had those swings. And so...

**Interviewer:** I haven't seen those for a long time.

**Respondent:** ...the kids would come and people would swing on it. And we used our backyard. We have a very small porch, so [0:44:00] we really didn't use that. The only thing we used it for was when we were kids. I don't know what happened, but at some point my father had it changed, but my brother was trying to reconstruct it. We had the pathway to the street – had these diamonds in the concrete, so we used to stand at the top of the stairs and play hop, skip, and jump into these diamonds. You know? And we also had these bars, like tubes. I don't know where they came from. [0:44:30] Probably one of my father's contraptions – to sort of fence off the property, so as kids we used to play balancing, you know, circus acts. We would test ourselves to see how far we could balance on these bars, or flip over on them, so...

**Interviewer:** So there was a lot of playing in the front of the house.

**Respondent:** Oh yeah.

**Interviewer:** And in the long driveway of yours.

**Respondent:** Played cowboys and Indians a lot. Bad stuff. [Laughs] And we had roller skates, [0:45:00] so we'd put on our roller skates and we'd skate around the block.

**Interviewer:** But those aren't what they use now. They were the skates you attach to your shoes.

**Respondent:** Yeah, you put them on your shoes, and you strap them on with four wheels, and you just skated around the block about fifty times.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So a lot of playing on the street.

**Respondent:** Absolutely.

**Interviewer:** A lot of kids.

**Respondent:** Absolutely. It was only later when I was about ten or eleven, I had a bike by the time I was nine, but the other kids didn't get theirs until a little later. **[0:45:30]** When we got our bikes, we discovered north of Bloor because there were a few parks north of Bloor and north of the convent, and so we'd go and play – disappear on our bikes with water guns because then you could load up at the water fountains and come home pretty wet.

**Interviewer:** So what age – like what you're talking about now, approximately how old would you have been?

**Respondent:** With the bikes? Probably about twelve when we'd go north.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** **[0:46:00]** But going to the movies, we were just – we went off when we were really little, and I know for a fact that I was eight years old and took my brother to the movies. Just the two of us with our friends, and I resented it because who wants to take a five-year-old, schlep a five-year-old brother to the movies when you've got your seven- and eight-year-old girlfriends to go with? But that was the condition, and I know I was only eight because I still vividly **[0:46:30]** remember my grandmother would come every shabbos. My mother's mother. And I said goodbye to her, and it was the last time I saw her. She was rushed to the hospital, and she died over that weekend.

**Interviewer:** And you were eight.

**Respondent:** I was only eight. And so I still had my braids, which made her very happy. [Laughter] So I still remember coming home and not finding my grandmother, and that, I guess, was very traumatic because I still remember that, and I know **[0:47:00]** how old I was.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** And I know it was a Saturday.

**Interviewer:** So there are two stories in that one. One is the sudden death, unexpected, terrible loss, and the other is you know that you were eight because now there are no eight-year-olds going to the movies and taking a five-year-old kid brother.

**Respondent:** I also took him to school. You know, I was responsible for taking him to school when I was eight. He was in kindergarten. And not only that, he was cute as a button, and he's bright, and he's brilliant, and he's a wonderful musician, so he [0:47:30] had all these little girlfriends, and I still find them today. They're still in my life today, some of his girlfriends. And one of them became one of his girlfriends later on. I mean just recently they were a couple, just recently, but they're friends today. It didn't go beyond that, but he met her at a reunion at my place, so two in particular – one I dance with, I do Israeli dancing with. One of the women, she's a grandmother today, was in [0:48:00] his class in kindergarten and I remember her from then, just about, you know?

**Interviewer:** You have a long history with her.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah. We have some long histories. My friends are still – not from elementary school, just one who lives in Montreal and we really don't see her, but the friends I have today are from Harbord Collegiate. From the time we were in grade nine.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Those are your close friends.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** In terms of class structure, I mean you talked about your house. It seemed to me there were bodies all over the [0:48:30] place.

**Respondent:** There were.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Right. To help pay the cost of it. How would you describe what the socioeconomic situation was at that time, and as you see it now?

**Respondent:** I'm not in this area where I see people who are tenants today, and immigrants who are coming in. I'm an ESL teacher. I teach adults, and I taught in one location where it's a really different scene from what [0:49:00] I grew up with. We grew up – I was a child of immigrants and there were shared dwellings. Everybody was a tenant or we were the lucky ones to own the house, but we had to share that house. So it wasn't like it was yours until I was about seventeen years old, or sixteen, and at that point we looked at my mother and we said we had enough tenants in this house. Can we afford to do it on our own? And they had a discussion and thought yeah, they were also tired of [0:49:30] it.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** But we all – my friends, I have most of my friends are Holocaust survivors. They came, they were tenants in the house until they were able to move on, and so everybody was in the same socioeconomic...

**Interviewer:** Which was hardworking, blue-collar...

**Respondent:** Hardworking...

**Interviewer:** ...immigrants.

**Respondent:** ...blue-collar immigrants, where education was to be the future of our children, but we were denied [0:50:00] that, except for one friend whose father was a doctor, but she never knew him. He was wiped out in Katyn, and her mother who had a university education and was determined that she would become a doctor, and she did. But she was a tenant on Brunswick, and she was a Holocaust survivor.

**Interviewer:** But at the same time, your parents did not send you to Central Tech. They sent you to Harbord Collegiate because...

**Respondent:** Absolutely.

**Interviewer:** ...they wanted you to become an educated person.

**Respondent:** I also was motivated to go [0:50:30] there. I think my cousins had gone there, so they were motivating. You know, motivators. And it just wasn't even considered. I mean that – Harbord Collegiate was the word that was spoken. You didn't even think about not going there. And education – I mean I was a very competitive student. I was very competitive, and I could only stand second in the class because they used to give you your standing.

**Interviewer:** [0:51:00] I remember.

**Respondent:** And I was very upset that I couldn't get to the first spot because it was Bernie Mandel, and he'd always get a hundred in geography, and I couldn't give a hoot about what was where until I started traveling because maps and direction are not my forte. [Laughter] So he always got there by a few marks, and I was second, and I know that it was really important for me to be at the top of the [0:51:30] class. Always.

**Interviewer:** So not just your parents. You...

**Respondent:** Oh absolutely. If I came home with less than, I was crying. Also, I have to tell you that, I guess, they tried to get rid of me from that school at a very early age because I accelerated and really don't have any memories of grade one. I pretty well went from kindergarten to what I thought was grade two. There was no pre-reading. I think it was because I didn't like the beadings that they thought that they'd better get rid of me. I hated beading, but my [0:52:00] daughter is a wonderful beader.

**Interviewer:** Oh, beading. I thought what are you talking about?

**Respondent:** Beading. Beading. Like you know, making necklaces. They'd give us the straws and stuff, and I hated it. So I think they wanted – but it was interesting. And again, memories. They didn't inform – the school never informed the parents about what the heck was happening to their kids. Today, it would be like you'd be taken to

court for it. So there was an [0:52:30] incident, and again I can still remember – like you know, my memory is clear about certain things. I was in kindergarten and I can't remember how I got there, but I remember coming in to Central Tech with a lot of people in an auditorium, and I was there with one or two other kids from our kindergarten class, and we were demonstrating stuff at the blackboard. What it was, I can't remember, [0:53:00] but I was pretty good at art, so maybe I was doing some little basic drawings. A little bit maybe more fuller than a stick figure. Well what was very sort of unusual and interesting about this was that I didn't get home at the normal hour. My mother was ready to call the police. She had no idea as to where I was. And what happened was they forgot [0:53:30] to inform her that they were taking me to this teacher's conference. You know, as one of the little prize students.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** So that was one thing that I recall.

**Interviewer:** Well, and I'm interested in how things have changed, and that's a very good example. That wouldn't happen today.

**Respondent:** No. And then there was a second example. We're talking about my competitiveness – was I was put into a grade one class, and the teacher was a wonderful, [0:54:00] gentle, lovely, lovely woman. Laura Kinrade. And after about three weeks, the principal came in and removed me with about seven or eight other kids and moved us into another class, and the teacher must have been very busy to get ten new kids all of a sudden. And you know, she didn't seem to be too happy about this. And I remember coming home and crying, thinking I had done something wrong. So my [0:54:30] mother rose to the occasion and came to school with me instead of sending – because remember, we had to go home for lunch. So we went to school, walked back for lunch, walked back to the playground, and then walked home again. So she came with me to the school and she went in to speak to the principal, and he said, "Oh, we're accelerating her." Now you would think that parents would have some idea about what was happening to their [0:55:00] children, and she didn't. And you know, and I remember having trouble with math, so my mother sat down with me and I can still remember her

– because you got a column – I was going back to the first number, so I wasn't carrying the whole thing through, but I did learn quite quickly once my mother sat with me. That was the end of that, and I was pretty well a good math student right there.

**Interviewer:** So you're saying the communication between the institution and the family...

**Respondent:** The school and family was really, [0:55:30] really not good enough. And Laura Kinrade, the following year, had polio, but she came back and she coached the volleyball teams, and I was on her volleyball team. She was just a wonderful woman. Okay, the other thing that I remember was how they used the students very creatively, and what motivated me to get into teaching was, I think, Laura Kinrade. And they [0:56:00] would send me sometimes as her little assistant because if I finished my work and my marks were good, they figured, okay, she doesn't have to be around, and they would send me off to Laura's class, Laura Kinrade, Miss Kinrade, to help her. And I just loved this woman. And also, they would test the kindergarten children, and I guess I didn't have to take exams or whatever in grade eight because I must – and I [0:56:30] played the piano. So they must have sent me with somebody else to manage the kindergarten for a month while the teachers were testing groups of kids.

**Interviewer:** You were in grade eight?

**Respondent:** I was in grade eight, and I was the teacher...

**Interviewer:** Whoa.

**Respondent:** ...with the piano, because I played piano.

**Interviewer:** So you played the piano and conducted whatever...

**Respondent:** Whatever, and I did my lesson plans and whatever, and the teacher would tell us what to do and they left, and I was in charge. And I [0:57:00] guess that's what made me want to become a teacher. When I was at OCE, the Ontario College of Education, God was

definitely on my side and sent me back to King Edward as a student teacher to Laura Kinrade.

**Interviewer:** Oh my god.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** She was still teaching. [Laughs]

**Respondent:** Yeah. And she taught for many years. She was at my wedding.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** She came to my wedding. I absolutely – I still have the wedding gift she gave me.

**Interviewer:** And what was it?

**Respondent:** **[0:57:30]** It was a little crystal creamer and sugar, and I still have it. And oh, so the other story was that my first job was to teach French, and I was sent back to King Edward as the French teacher. And I had memories of some of these teachers, and I have to say some of them were really not very inspiring people. I was lucky. **[0:58:00]** I loved my teachers, but there were a number of them in the school that I would pray to God that God would answer my prayers, and did, because I never had them as teachers. So an acute incident was I was teaching French to a bunch of hooligans. They were Italian. But because French was such a close language to Italian, this was the only class where they could get nineties. So they were my little pets. They loved me. And one day, I **[0:58:30]** tried to dismiss them, and they were hanging around the class, and they were talking about the librarian, and I have to say I always prayed that Miss Smith would not be my teacher. God answered it because when I came back as an adult then had to take Laura Kinrade's grade one class up to the library, I was more terrified of Miss Smith...

**Interviewer:** Still? [Laughs]

- Respondent:** ...as an adult than I ever had been as a kid. She was pretty awful. So these students didn't want to go to her library class, so [0:59:00] they were hanging around gossiping. I have to admit, I wanted to hear what they had to say. It duplicated everything that we used to say about her.
- Interviewer:** So no change.
- Respondent:** No change. And finally I looked at them very diplomatically, didn't know how to get rid of them and said, "Well you know, I am a teacher and it really isn't appropriate for me to be listening to your comments," though I really did want to hear more.
- Interviewer:** And you also wanted to tell them that you agreed with everything they were saying.
- Respondent:** No, I couldn't do that. No, I couldn't do that.
- Interviewer:** But you did.
- Respondent:** But [0:59:30] they did listen to me and leave, and the other funny story was there was one Jewish teacher in the school when I was a kid, and his name was Israel Gang. And he taught our class music, but he taught my brother, and he loved my brother. So here, I'm back again now as a French teacher, and he would have lunch with me. And he had his lunch – I mean it's a story on its own. He would have his mug with these – little enamel mugs that my mother used to warm things [1:00:00] in, and he was eating vegetarian and vegan stuff long before we knew what it was about. And one day he looked at me and he said, "Are you betrothed?"
- Interviewer:** Oh. Very forward.
- Respondent:** And I looked at him and I was dating Maury at the time, and I sort of said, "No." And he says, "Well, I have a nephew," and I thought, "Oy vey. I don't want this Mr. Gang as my uncle." But that night I became betrothed. So when I got my [1:00:30] engagement ring, I made sure it was visible.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

- Respondent:** Chapter two is that many years later, we were at a wedding sitting with a lovely couple who we didn't know, and we said, "Where are you from?" "Toronto." "Where did you go to school?" And he said, "Where did you guys?" And I said, "I went to King Edward." Said, "Was Israel Gang ever your teacher?" And I said, "No, but he did teach us music." I said, "Why?" He says, "He's my uncle." And I was sort of a little bit hesitant, but I did tell him the [1:01:00] story, and we did meet through mutual friends a number of times. He was a lovely man who married a lovely lady, was a professor at the university, and we had a couple of good laughs.
- Interviewer:** I'll bet you did. [Laughter] That's great. Great.
- Respondent:** But the other thing I should tell you, we had – we didn't have the day schools, so we went to afterschool programs. Did you want to know that?
- Interviewer:** For Jewish education, you mean.
- Respondent:** For Jewish education. And I went every day.
- Interviewer:** To where?
- Respondent:** [1:01:30] To the [indiscernible 01:01:30]. I told you it was on College Street. Initially, it was on College Street and it was over a store, and again, I accelerated. And so you know, I was motivated.
- Interviewer:** A smart kid, yeah.
- Respondent:** But no, I was motivated as well, and again, then we moved to Lippincott. And again, this was one of the areas that really was very, very formative in my life. The teachers were wonderful, they were [1:02:00] very, very inspiring. I can still remember Mrs. Minohovsky teaching us about the Spanish Inquisition. I was maybe seven or eight years old and sobbing as she told us that bit of history. We moved on and I graduated, and when I graduated what would have been like six years, you went to what was called [indiscernible 1:02:24], and I always say if you could pronounce it, you obviously were a student [1:02:30] there.

**Interviewer:** So that was grade seven or something like that?

**Respondent:** Seven or eight. And at that point, it was the **[indiscernible 1:02:36]**, meant it was an amalgamated high school program for three years, and the kids who went to **[indiscernible 1:02:44]**, and the kids who went to the **[indiscernible 1:02:47]** – because there were not enough within each school to continue, they formed one program for the kids from these schools. And by this time, **[1:03:00]** one of the students, my friends in my **[indiscernible 1:03:04]** conned me into joining what was then called **[indiscernible 1:03:08]**, which today is Dror Habonim.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** And I was very comfortable with this youth movement, and when we joined into the **[indiscernible 1:03:22]**, there were a couple of people in the class who became our friends, and we conned them into joining this **[1:03:30]** youth movement. We are still best friends today. It was a very, very important part of our life. So once we got into the **[indiscernible 1:03:40]** was in 1950s, Israel was already a strong...

**Interviewer:** Influence. Yeah.

**Respondent:** ...influence. So Yiddish was dropping and the Hebrew program started, and I have to admit the first year, it was very uninspiring. I think we got rid of six Hebrew teachers in **[1:04:00]** one year. We were really a wonderful class. But the following year, from the youth movement, they had sent a Shaliach called **[indiscernible 1:04:09]** who was **[indiscernible 1:04:10]** nephew. Now this guy scared the heebie-jeebies out of everybody, but he was probably one of the most incredible teachers I ever had. He was also our Shaliach. He was with the youth movement, and to this day, I am connected to **[1:04:30]** his family. He's subsequently – we visited him just before he died. I stay at his kibbutz, I...

**Interviewer:** Which kibbutz is that?

**Respondent:** It's kibbutz Beit HaShita. He was a renowned educator in Israel who won awards for his creative approach to working with holidays, and one of the things he did in Toronto, which was astounding, was set up what was called the Third Seder during Pesach. **[01:05:00]** And Tammy Kernemann, who you know, who still teaches dancing today, is still on the dance charts in Toronto, was just starting at that point. She was Tammy London, not married yet, and she would come in from Habonim to choreograph us as dancers, and Bela Chaikov, who was Bela **[indiscernible 1:05:23]** at the time, she also wasn't married, did the choir for us. And I have to admit, we still **[1:05:30]** run away from her, but we're very close friends today. And my little brother, who was about eight or nine, accompanied her because he's a brilliant pianist. And so we would do this Third Seder as an annual event at the **[indiscernible 1:05:43]**, and it really, really brought in a crowd. And it was a very, very beautiful evening that had a lot of memories, and we also – you know, as we grew we'd have an **[indiscernible 1:05:56]** at the **[indiscernible 1:05:59]**. **[1:06:00]** Again, none of us drove, so we'd walk everybody home. And again, this was the bakery which was not the Harbord Bakery, but because I used to shop in there on a daily basis, I remember especially in the winter my girlfriend Rivi lived out in Roxton, which is just around Ossington. We'd go in that direction first because one of the guys had a girlfriend on Brunswick, and so that was the last drop-off. We'd all go that direction, but before we went, we used to go into the bakery, the **[1:06:30]** side door, and about eleven o'clock at night where they would just start baking, and on a freezing cold winter night, we'd buy these little buns, challah buns. There's Kaiser rolls. They were just coming out of the oven, and you'd open them up and they'd steam as we'd walk along Harbord Street, walking each other home and eating those hot rolls.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. And that's so different from anything you'd find now. I mean no place would let you in at nine o'clock or eleven o'clock at night and sell these things to you.

**Respondent:** You know, **[1:07:00]** they were a nickel or whatever, but we were a bunch of kids and the bakers would sell them off to us.

**Interviewer:** That's part of the community, because we talked before about having the community with family and friends, but also the stores. The store owners.

**Respondent:** The stores. They knew you.

**Interviewer:** They knew you, you knew them.

**Respondent:** Well even with Greenspan's, many years later, No Frills on Wilson – what was Power Store or whatever, had a kosher butcher counter. And [1:07:30] I – the butcher shop started closing down. Greenspan's, which was still open when I got married, used to – my mother used to pick up my meat, and then later they would deliver it to me. I mean this man – really, he was wise. I'm going to tell you a little story. He said to my mother, "Mrs. Petroff, why are you shopping for Hindy? I'll deliver." And she'd say, "Well, it's just the two of them." And he says, "One day, she's going to have a family. I'll deliver to her today. Because [1:08:00] one day she'll have a family and she's going to have a big order." And he says, "I don't care what she orders today. And I learned that you treat a customer properly, they're yours for life."

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** And anyway, so what was I going to say? It was about the butcher store with this.

**Interviewer:** But he insisted on delivering to you.

**Respondent:** Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Anyway, so he later – many years later, when they closed down and I was [1:08:30] looking for one butcher to another, the kosher butcher's because I still keep a kosher home, I went where No Frills is. They had their own counter, and I walked in and this very handsome man behind the counter with beautiful blue eyes looked at me and he said, "Aren't you Hindy?" And I said, "Yeah. How do you know me?" He said, "Well, your mother always bought meat from Greenspan's." And I said, "How do you know?" He said, [1:09:00] "Because I worked in the butcher shop, and I'm a relative. I survived the Holocaust, and they brought me, and I used to work there. But you always dealt with Herschel." His

relative. And he treated me like a princess until he closed down, but he always, always treated me like family whenever I came in many years later as an adult. So there was this continuity.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. [1:09:30] For sure. For sure. Okay. We're going to move – so when you think of the neighbourhood then and what – you're not living here now, but any general comments or observations about what you see this to be now compared to what it was in the '40s, in the '50s, in the early '60s when you lived here?

**Respondent:** Okay. So you know, I lived on this street with my grandmother. Lou Jacobi, the actor's, parents lived down the street. They were my [1:10:00] grandmother's best friends. His aunt used to have to come to us. People knew you and they responded. From what I understand, because my daughter at one point lived in the house, she loved living in the neighbourhood. She said it's a very connected neighbourhood. She said, "People look out for one another."

**Interviewer:** When she lived here, say, ten, fifteen years ago?

**Respondent:** Yeah. And even when my mother continued to live here, you know, as a member [1:10:30] of the shul, the members would knock on her door and bring her to shul. People were concerned about her, would help her carry her – she always went – when all the stores closed down, she was forced to Kensington Market or to Honest Ed's, and people would stop her and take her parcels, and bring them home for her. We felt that she was looked after. Dick Moore, her next door neighbour, the trade-off was he could park his [1:11:00] car, but he'd shovel the driveway. Shelly Wagner could park his car. He shoveled the driveway. They'd do her lawn. They looked out for her, and that wouldn't happen where I live.

**Interviewer:** So you're saying even more recently – because you left in 1963.

**Respondent:** But I think there's even more community today in some ways from what Ilana told me. We have the house up for rent. When people found that, you know, there was a flier, we're having a potluck [1:11:30] lunch on the street, please join us. And the tenants who live in the house today feel that they're part of a community. So I

think there might even be more community spirit than when we lived because we were kids on the street, but our parents didn't have the same community that I think parents of young kids have today.

**Interviewer:** Well that's very nice.

**Respondent:** I'm not sure, but this is my impression.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. That's your sense. You're saying [1:12:00] that after you moved out, people helped your mother, and then your daughter lived here ten years ago, and she felt that. So people often like to think, oh, the good old days, but it's not that way anymore. And you're saying your impression is those good old days were good, and that things are still good in terms of a sense of community and people being there for each other.

**Respondent:** But you live here. You'd know more about it.

**Interviewer:** I'm very, very happy living here, and I'm very connected with the [1:12:30] community and the board of directors of Harbord Village. I find it very friendly.

**Respondent:** See, and I moved onto a street which has maybe twenty houses. The house is convenient, the house is lovely, it's a big house, it's serviced our needs with a child in a wheelchair. Our non-Jewish neighbours all knocked on our door. There were Jewish neighbours who knew we were moving onto the street because we had mutual friends. None of them, a childhood friend from [1:13:00] Brunswick Avenue, not one of them knocked on our door to welcome us. We were in Florida attending a birthday party of somebody who lived in the neighbourhood, another story. This woman, I looked at her and I said, "You look familiar." She says, "Yes." She says, "I live at 10, you live at 16." And she was a friend of these mutual friends. Today we say hello to each other, but we've never had a cup of coffee, which is interesting because my non-Jewish neighbours have all [1:13:30] – we've had a bit of community over the years. One neighbour, I don't know what they look like. And her – she belonged to National Council of Women. When she had her annual luncheon, my friends parked on my driveway to go attend her lunch, but...

**Interviewer:** And you didn't...

**Respondent:** ...I don't know who she is. I have no idea what she looks like.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Another neighbour who everybody said was a big snob finally stopped after thirty-seven years on [1:14:00] the street, drove up to my place two weeks – about two months ago, and started to talk to me. It turns out she's lovely. A Hungarian immigrant who lent me a book, and I've now seen her twice. I don't know if I'd recognize her in a crowd, but on the street, I've been able to point her out. And we have maybe fifteen or twenty houses on our street. We met the newer neighbours because my kids would babysit for them, but we didn't know the people who were there [1:14:30] before us, and we still don't really know them.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Okay.

**Respondent:** And I find that terrible because when we lived on Betty Ann Drive in the small house before the van unloaded, people were knocking at our door. And we had a sense of community.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. It's a lovely thing to have. But you're saying where you live now, it's not like that.

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** And your sense is that it still exists here.

**Respondent:** I think the younger families are connected, but the older ones [1:15:00] are not.

**Interviewer:** In this neighbourhood.

**Respondent:** In our neighbourhood.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** In our neighbourhood.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** And then the younger family – I mean they did some nice things. The younger families did some nice things, but it doesn't have the sense of community that Ilana felt when she was living here.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well I certainly feel that.

**Respondent:** So it's probably even stronger today than, you know, we were kids. But our parents were not a community [1:15:30] the way you people are, I think. I'm not sure.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Well, I feel very connected. I'm involved with the Market, I'm involved with the Residents' Association on the board of directors, and here I'm doing this history project.

**Respondent:** Yeah. But do you ever get into somebody's house type of thing? Or is it just like on the street?

**Interviewer:** It's on the street. I mean I get into people's homes because I'm doing these interviews.

**Respondent:** Right.

**Interviewer:** I think often younger families, through the children, will do that.

**Respondent:** Right.

**Interviewer:** But I feel – I certainly [1:16:00] know a lot of the people to say hello to. I'm not going into their homes, they're not coming into mine.

**Respondent:** That's how we were. That's how we were.

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

**Respondent:** But the kids went in and out. As kids, we were in and out of everybody's house that we played with.

**Interviewer:** Was it a safe neighbourhood? Did it feel safe when you were growing up here?

**Respondent:** Yes. The only thing that didn't feel safe was the Brunswick House.

**Interviewer:** Oh. That's still a problem.

**Respondent:** And Friday nights we'd see people rolling down the street, and that [1:16:30] was uncomfortable. But that – and the couple of families, but we knew who they were and how to deal with them. But other than that, it was like you never worried about your kids on the street.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** Anyway, I'm going to tell you another funny one. Was I don't know if you know – it's about 187, 188. There's a house and behind the house is what looks like a huge garage.

**Interviewer:** I'll look for it the next time I walk up the street.

**Respondent:** Okay. It's [1:17:00] north of the shul. It's about two over from the shul. So I'm going to go backwards on this story. So a cousin of mine was a real estate agent. She lives in Denver now, but she was doing real estate, and she knocked on my mother's door and she says, "Auntie Annie, I'm selling a house just north of her and it has a coach house." And so we were trying to figure out what bloody place has a [1:17:30] coach house. And she sort of gave us the number, so I go looking, and then I just cracked up. There was a family of tenants, so we don't know who owned the house, but they were living sort of at the ground level, sort of semi-basement type of thing, but it was ground – of a woman – she was a single mother. I don't know if she was divorced or where the husband was, with two kids. And the son was Shia's age, and the daughter, Diane, was my age. And we played with them, but behind the [1:18:00] house was this huge garage, and in the garage were Hearses.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

- Respondent:** And we kids used to go into the garage and play with the chauffeurs of the Hearses and climb in and out of the Hearses, and thought it was the neatest thing to do.
- Interviewer:** They had a business? Or they...
- Respondent:** There was a business. I have no idea, but all I know was that there were about five Hearses, these big, beautiful cars.
- Interviewer:** So that was on Brunswick?
- Respondent:** And the guys were [1:18:30] always in these mourning suits.
- Interviewer:** Right.
- Respondent:** And we would go in there and crawl in. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** So Hindy, that was on Brunswick?
- Respondent:** On Brunswick. So you had all these little businesses going down all over the place.
- Interviewer:** Oh, a lot of businesses north of Harbord.
- Respondent:** Yeah. So how many kids do you know played in Hearses?
- Interviewer:** Played in Hearses. Well, I must admit I don't know any.
- Respondent:** Well here I am. Like you know...
- Interviewer:** Unusual playground.
- Respondent:** Yeah. [Laughs] Yeah. And then the other [1:19:00] story was my grandmother, in her last years, lived just south of Bloor with a very orthodox woman called Mrs. Weinstock, who had a huge family also, and every Saturday afternoon I would go fetch her and I would go fetch Lou Jacobi's aunt, Mrs. Menzelesky, and they would come for [indiscernible 1:19:23]. But by the time I was about thirteen or fourteen, [1:19:30] you know, my brother, Shia – you know Shia, my brother the pianist?

**Interviewer:** Well you talked about it. I don't know him.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Well he's a member of the shul also.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** So he was at that point – we would take piano lessons at the Loretto College at the convent where Meryl Bell was a student actually.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** And because I went to **[indiscernible 1:19:51]** Hebrew school, the only day I had available for a piano lesson was Saturday morning. So I would rush off to **[1:20:00]** my piano lessons Saturday morning, and there was my Bubby and Mrs. Weinstock walking down the street to shul. There was another shul at the corner. It was a Shomrai Shabos shul. It's an office of some sort today, right at the corner of Sussex and Brunswick with a beautiful garden in there. I think it's some art – something to do with the arts or something. Anyway that point, before the Shomrai Shabos built up north, that **[1:20:30]** was another synagogue. Brunswick had a ton of little synagogues, so my grandmother and Mrs. Weinstock used to go very slowly down the street to shul shabos in the morning, and I was rushing to a piano lesson. I would never want to embarrass my grandmother, so we used to wink at each other. So she knew I was going to the convent, but here I'm going to the convent and she's going to shul. I thought it was just a cute aside as well.

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

**Respondent:** You know, as part of the neighbourhood.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. But she...

**Respondent:** **[1:21:00]** She knew where I was going, but I wouldn't want to embarrass her, so.

**Interviewer:** Anyway, but you were saying this was a safe neighbourhood.

**Respondent:** Very, very.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. It's still very much so. It's...

**Respondent:** You know, unless a kid disappeared because somebody invited them into the house and you never thought you had to go tell your mother that you – I remember Sharon Greenspan disappeared once and they almost had the police out, but she was just next door.

**Interviewer:** She forgot to tell her mom.

**Respondent:** She would have, you know – the teenage kids. She was gorgeous, Sharon. So the [1:21:30] teenage kids took her next door to play with her, and that was it.

**Interviewer:** You said that your family really didn't use Kensington Market because you had everything right – so close.

**Respondent:** Or we had the peddlers, and we had the milk, so you had everything coming to your door basically.

**Interviewer:** Did you have any impression of the effect of the University of Toronto on this neighbourhood?

**Respondent:** No, no, no because we weren't in a professional environment.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** It was only after [1:22:00] I graduated from high school that I realized I was living in a wonderful spot because I walked to school. There was no transportation even because it had a streetcar line that went down Spadina. It didn't even have a – you couldn't even get transportation beyond Spadina.

**Interviewer:** So what public transportation was here?

**Respondent:** We had streetcars basically...

**Interviewer:** On Spadina?

**Respondent:** ...on Harbord Street – had a streetcar line.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** And the buses came in later. Once the [1:22:30] subway, I think, came in, then there were maybe some buses. But it just didn't pay to take a – like sometimes to go to Harbord, if you were really running late or it was really, really a lousy day, you know, really pouring rain, we would take the streetcar.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** But other than that, for two stops you just walked.

**Interviewer:** Any impression of when you just look at the facades on the homes, and any impression of changes that way?

**Respondent:** They look better.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** People [1:23:00] – because, I guess – because people, many people – you can almost tell who owns a house and who's renting, and where you see ownership there's such pride of ownership today, and people are into the gardens. I mean I actually think the area looks better today.

**Interviewer:** I agree. These little gardens that people have, they're small and they're beautiful.

**Respondent:** They're beautiful.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Yours is too.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Thank you.

- Respondent:** I mean it's just a prettier, you know, [1:23:30] there's been some, you know – people have renovated, but they've still kept the original facades and just cleaned it up. And...
- Interviewer:** Well I guess they have the time and the money.
- Respondent:** ...with the flowers, and people have more time to plant the flowers. You know, you've got a washing machine, you've got a dishwasher. People do it more as a hobby, and so there's more pride of ownership and pride of place.
- Interviewer:** So we are coming to the end of our wonderful, colourful discussion description. [1:24:00] When you knew that you were coming, was there anything that you had thought of that you thought, well I'll tell her this, we'll talk about this?
- Respondent:** I think I told you all these little, you know, tidbits.
- Interviewer:** Well, and that's what makes it so colourful, and those are your personal experiences, of course.
- Respondent:** I think the only thing, I was thinking about bringing some photos for you but, you know, then I go home, open the fridge, and I can't remember why I've opened the door. So that did pass, but you know – and also you didn't give me that much time. I'd heard from you Friday, we just came back from [1:24:30] a trip Thursday.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** So I will get you those photos though.
- Interviewer:** I would really appreciate that. You know, we talked about – you have pictures of you as a baby on the front porch, so when we walk there now, maybe I'll take a picture of you on the front porch today in 2012.
- Respondent:** I think my favourite picture's with my cousin, Helene, and I think you'll appreciate this one because you know the children. Do you remember Yael Zoretski at all? Ruthie's daughter?

- Interviewer:** No. I remember Ruthie, but I don't remember her daughter.
- Respondent:** Okay. Well anyways, [1:25:00] so Ilana and Yael grew up together as kids on Betty Ann Drive, and Ilana, as you know, has curly, curly blonde hair, a little Shirley Temple, and Yael had pin-straight hair, you know. Dark. And there's a photo of me and my cousin, Helene, and Helene's a year older, and I had the curly blonde, and Helene had the pin-straight hair. And when Ilana and Yael used to look at that photo, [1:25:30] Ilana would point and say, "That's me," and Yael would point and say, "That's me."
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** And I just got such a kick out of that, so I'm going to show you that one because...
- Interviewer:** Well, so sometime in the next month or so, I would love to get together with you and make copies of these pictures. But we will take a picture of you today on that front porch.
- Respondent:** No problem.
- Interviewer:** And then I will – you'll give me some pictures of you on that front porch from...
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...sixty, seventy years ago. [1:26:00] [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Yeah. We still have ownership. I mean we're still the original owners of that house, and I don't think too many people have that tale to tell.
- Interviewer:** Hindy, I want to thank you very much. Your description has been so colourful, so personal. Intelligent for sure.
- Respondent:** That I would question.

**Interviewer:** It's really been a pleasure. It's really been a pleasure. Thank you very, very much.

**Respondent:** Ellie, thanks for including me in this [laughter] because you can see I have good memories.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. I'm just going to turn it off.

**[01:26:27]**

[End of recording]