

**068 Stuart Schoenfeld**

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

[0:00:00]

**Respondent:** Okay. So I'm Stuart Schoenfeld. I live at 210 Robert Street. My wife is Joan Schoenfeld, and she lives with me, and we've been there since 1973. We had two daughters who are born – no, they weren't born there. Our older daughter was born when we lived on Madison Avenue, and she was born in July '72, so she must have been eighteen months [0:00:30] when we moved to Robert Street. And then our younger daughter, Rachel, was born on Robert Street in 1975.

**Interviewer:** When you look back, do you have any – first of all, I want to say thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed.

**Respondent:** Oh, you're welcome.

**Interviewer:** You're on the board of directors for Harbord Village Residents' Association, so you're familiar with this project of ours.

**Respondent:** Mm-hm. Right.

**Interviewer:** But thank you very much. Was there anything significant [0:01:00] that brought you to Robert Street, choosing this part of the city?

**Respondent:** Oh yeah. I'll keep the story short.

**Interviewer:** You don't have to.

**Respondent:** But it's really an important story for us. We moved here from the States, from Cleveland in 1970 and in that time the central cities in the US were disaster zones. It was right after [0:01:30] there had been riots in city after city, and Toronto was amazing because it was a city with a livable downtown, which was something that we liked, and so we were very interested in looking into what it might be like to live in an older downtown neighbourhood. And we had

friends of friends, they were the only people we knew, and they said, "Out of the question. You can't live downtown. Nobody lives downtown. [0:02:00] I mean if you want a Jewish community, the Jews have all moved away." You know, so we didn't – so he took when we arrived up Bathurst Street, beginning of Eglinton Avenue...

**Interviewer:** [Laughs] That was the south end.

**Respondent:** ...and then head north. [Laughter] And so we took an apartment at Finch and Bathurst, which actually was not a bad place. The Goldfinch Court, it's not a place that I would want to live in [0:02:30] now, but it had a lot of young couples, had a lot of children. The setting was back off the road. There was a nice interior park-like area, so there was green. But it was not really what we wanted. We didn't like the idea of getting into a car and driving if we ran out of milk.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** It just was not – you know?

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So it was practical in terms of family living.

**Respondent:** Not even that. It was – but it was [0:03:00] okay. But after a few months there we thought maybe we should rethink this and see if we can find out something else, better information. So we had lived in Cleveland in the Hillel House on the Western Reserve Campus, and so we were comfortable with that setting. I said, "Well let's look up the Hillel Director at the University of Toronto and he'll know what's downtown." So that's what we did. [0:03:30] And the Hillel Director, we told him our story and he said, "You know, you want to move downtown? Here, I'll show you." And he had a little Volkswagen Beetle. He said, "Get in the car," and we drove this around Harbord Street and down through Kensington Market, and he said, "Here's a shul, there's a shul. There's the – here's Greenspan's kosher butcher, here's Tennenbaum's kosher poultry. Here's the Harbord [0:04:00] Bakery." You know, and Kensington Market. Then there was Lotmans, and there was another Jewish bakery still there, and he says, "There's stuff here if you need to

have Jewish facilities," which has always been important to us. And I go to synagogue on a regular basis, so it was important to me when I was moving anywhere that there be a synagogue nearby.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** So he said, "You have your choice." Like there's at least six functioning [0:04:30] synagogues. So we said fine. And that looks good, and we looked for a place and he said, "If you're looking for a place, by the way I'm moving out. I'm going to medical school." He was a Hillel rabbi and he decided he wanted to go to medical school. "I'm going to medical school, and my landlord is the kind of landlord who doesn't like to advertise. He likes his tenants to come by word of [0:05:00] mouth, so come and see my place. If you like it, we'll talk to the landlord." We saw his place, he was on Madison Avenue – he had the full second floor of a very large house, so it was – you know, it was a large, perfectly adequate space for two people, and then for our daughter, we were very happy there. Had fireplaces, you know, window seats, you know, lots of light. It was very pleasant. [0:05:30] But we began noticing after living there for a year or two that housing prices in Toronto were going up, and my smart wife said to me, "You better move – buy a house now or else we'll be priced out of the market," because we were then, you know, not well – we were not wealthy then.

**Interviewer:** As wealthy as you are today, Stuart. [Laughs]

**Respondent:** You know.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** We – it was – buying a house, any kind of house [0:06:00] even at a lower price was a stretch, but we began to look, and Joan found the house on Robert Street. And so it is. And so we purchased that house and moved there in '73, December '73. I was not all that happy. The house was a wreck.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** [Laughs] It was. And if we [0:06:30] bought it six months before, we could have gotten it for seventy-five percent of the price. Like in six months it had gone up, you know, in value.

**Interviewer:** So Joan was right in terms of prices getting higher.

**Respondent:** That was, you know, the – the inflation in real estate was clearly happening. So the house had been [0:07:00] partially redone, so some of the things that make the interesting character of the house had been taken out, but not enough to destroy the house completely. But the old kitchen was taken out and a new kitchen was put in, which was not very nice, but it was functional. It was not very nice. And the person who had done the renovations had sold it to a doctor, and the doctor just bought it for investment and was [0:07:30] like living there while he was in – like while he was in residency, so he was basically sleeping there. He was married, his wife was there. I think his wife was a nurse, but they were just never home. It was just basically for them a place to sleep while their bank account went up because the value of the house went up. And then they were ready to move, and then the house was in the market. So they sold it, like, within six months after they bought it...

**Interviewer:** But it didn't take much...

**Respondent:** ...for a nice profit.

**Interviewer:** Wow.

**Respondent:** But it was, you know, it was [0:08:00] kind of a neglected – you know.

**Interviewer:** That's clear.

**Respondent:** And you know, it was the early '70s, so you can imagine the colour schemes. Purple and orange, and you know. So that's – but we saw the potential in the house, and the – we really didn't know how the neighbourhood was going to evolve, but we took that risk.

**Interviewer:** Let me [0:08:30] interrupt because...

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So you did answer my question what brought you here.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** What was the neighbourhood like in 1973?

**Respondent:** When we moved in, our neighbours to the north were Italian, who had a garden in their backyard, and one of the things we had to deal with was the manure that they used to spread on his backyard in the spring in order to encourage his tomatoes.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** But you know, [0:09:00] that's – the neighbours to the south were Portuguese. They did not have a garden. Their space – they didn't have actually a garden spot in the back. The neighbours were nice. They were nothing to complain about. They were not people that we would, you know – over time, you know, we would have good relations with, [0:09:30] but not be friends with.

**Interviewer:** Did that represent the neighbourhood?

**Respondent:** Well I'm thinking.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** There were rooming houses up and down both sides of the block, and we were young enough in age and lifestyle to the varsity students and graduate students, were living in the rooming houses that we were not put out by the rooming houses. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** [0:10:00] You're saying now it might have a different attitude.

**Respondent:** Well also I think that the attitude towards living at a rooming house is different. The people, the kids in that generation were a little more sedate and a little more reigned in.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** You know, we get the sense now that for a lot of the kids who are in the [0:10:30] rooming houses that it's like, you know, "I'm free of my parents. I'm going to go wild." You know? And it's really fairly – you know, you get – and undisciplined element. There wasn't any sense that the people in the rooming houses, you know, were undisciplined and not nice people.

**Interviewer:** So it's not only that you were younger at that time, but they were different.

**Respondent:** Yeah. The times were.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** And there were [0:11:00] a couple of other young families who were moved in on the street, so it was already, you could see the gentrification starting, and a number of houses had been redone. But you know, it was mixed, which was also fine with us. We didn't want to live in – one of the reasons why we didn't want to live in the suburbs, or we didn't want to live on the street where everybody was the same cohort, with the same kids, went to the same schools, and living the same lives, and you know.

**Interviewer:** [0:11:30] So you did want some kind of diversity.

**Respondent:** Absolutely. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** But it was clear to you too that which of the people in the neighbourhood you would become closer with, and which you would just enjoy nice neighbourly relationships with.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Well you know, I mean we're – we're easy to get along with. We're happy with all our neighbours of whatever kind, but you know, you have – [0:12:00] you have people that you relate to more than – so

it wasn't really a sense that we felt uncomfortable with any of the neighbours, but there was also a sense that we weren't sure whether this would be the community for us. As I said, you know, I'm used to going to synagogue on Saturday morning. I grew up that way. I have nice associations with [0:12:30] that. It's still – it's a good time of the week for me. And so I need not just a synagogue, but I need to have a synagogue that has the right kind of atmosphere. And it wasn't clear that the ones that were downtown were actually going to, you know, to survive. When we first moved in, actually when we moved into Madison Avenue and [0:13:00] I started to go to the synagogues here, I remember going into the first Narayever congregation.

**Interviewer:** Oh it was there. Do you know when it opened?

**Respondent:** Oh it's been there since 1938, 1940.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Okay. So you tried that one.

**Respondent:** Yeah. And the – there were two things that I noticed. [0:13:30] First, there were a bare handful of other young couples who – one was a professor at the University of Toronto who had just moved, just taken the job and moved to the neighbourhood, and a couple of graduate students. And so that was a sense that there were people who had the same interests in maintaining the institution, and that there was some, you know, possibility that you would build something there. But aside from that handful of [0:14:00] people, everybody else was thirty years older than me.

**Interviewer:** That's a lot. They're at a totally different stage of life.

**Respondent:** Well they're also Yiddish-speaking immigrants whose English was not very good.

**Interviewer:** Oh another huge, huge difference.

**Respondent:** [Laughs] But they were very interesting, and it was more comfortable for me. I'm the shul-goer of the family. It was – you know, then it was an Orthodox congregation. Men went, and a few [0:14:30] women, but the – it was – no, it was – everybody who'd

been left behind when their synagogues left, actually the people who were members, or not members who were attending the synagogue at that time were not members because there used to be dozens of synagogues down here.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** And they moved away one by one, but not all their members moved away. So the ones who were left from **[0:15:00]** the synagogues who moved away went to the synagogues that were still here.

**Interviewer:** So the stragglers all went...

**Respondent:** So the stragglers all congregated [laughter] at the Narayever, and...

**Interviewer:** But they didn't join.

**Respondent:** ...of those who were regular tenders, there were two members of the congregations. One was the president and one was the **[indiscernible 0:15:21]**, and they were both very nice guys. I don't know whether you know there was also a history project at the synagogue.

**Interviewer:** No, I don't know.

**Respondent:** Okay, so you know, **[0:15:30]** that's a whole side of things we should talk about after the interview...

**Interviewer:** Good.

**Respondent:** ...about how these things connect because the synagogue was founded in 1914 on Huron Street, and then moved up here in 1930. So it's approaching it's a hundredth anniversary.

**Interviewer:** Okay. We will talk about that.

**Respondent:** So they're planning something retrospective to celebrate the hundredth anniversary. So the president and the **[indiscernible 0:15:57]** lived in the neighbourhood, and everybody else, **[0:16:00]**



you know, was – they were looking about thirty to thirty-five men who would come on a regular basis. Everybody also remembers some other congregations that moved away. So I remember one day there was a visitor from out of town, not that I know personally, but that showed up. And we were walking together after shul and I – and you know, I told him where I lived, and he said, "You know, why are you living here?" [0:16:30] You know, he said, "You know, in five years, ten years, you know, the shul will be gone." And that was 1970-something, and now it's 2012. And so he was wrong.

**Interviewer:** Oh was he ever wrong.

**Respondent:** Right.

**Interviewer:** And you know, I go there sometimes.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** It's thriving.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. So a lot of my story in the neighbourhood is how I got pulled into that congregation, and [0:17:00] recruited other people and we, you know, made it into a place that has survived, so that's...

**Interviewer:** So one of the things, you came because there were some shuls in the neighbourhood.

**Respondent:** Yeah. And we tried out others.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** Because it wasn't clear – there were – you know, you could – there was incipient gentrification, you know. You know, younger people [0:17:30] whose jobs were downtown, who were university educated, and who didn't want to leave the downtown area, and so a number of the synagogues had, you know, people kind of looking and feeling them out, and some places thrived and some places didn't, and eventually, you know, the Narayever became the place

that was kind of the address for the next wave of Jewish life downtown.

**Interviewer:** Well...

**Respondent:** But it wasn't clear that that was [0:18:00] going to be the place. There were – some other places could have done it, but they didn't.

**Interviewer:** Well it speaks for itself when you see what's happening there.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** You know, now we're on the topic of Jewish.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So I'm wondering whether you might talk a little bit about your wife, Joan's, school.

**Respondent:** Oh sure.

**Interviewer:** Okay. If you'll just introduce what the school is and what happened.

**Respondent:** Well there's a back story here, also about the neighbourhood. The [0:18:30] – we hadn't been here very long, until – I'm trying to think of what the contact was. Or maybe it was even door-to-door. We had a contact from the Jewish Family and Child Service. The Jewish Family and Child Service had opened up a branch inside the Bloor JCC. Officially they called it the South Branch.

**Interviewer:** The South Y.

**Respondent:** And the – they had a client list downtown [0:19:00] who were largely poor, elderly, and the isolated Jews. And so rather than have their social workers work out of an office, you know, half an hour away, they rented space so their social workers could serve this clientele. So when they opened up that office, the director of that office, and I think I'm remembering this right, went door-to-door, or asked their staff to go door-to-door [0:19:30] looking for mezuzahs.

**Interviewer:** [0:20:00] Oh. [Laughs] Okay.

**Respondent:** And why?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** She said, you know, "We're new in the neighbourhood, we're serving an elderly isolated clientele, by and large, but we're also aware that there's – you know, that there's other things happening. So we want to – so we feel like if we're going to establish ourselves here as a social service agency, [0:20:30] we need to know the community. So we want to convene a focus group of Jewish families in the neighbourhood, and just see how they can relate to us." So they, you know, went knocking door-to-door, then showed up on our doorstep.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** So yeah, that's one of the – this doesn't happen, you know, in the suburbs, right? In the city, you know, the blocks are small enough. You can go [0:21:00] door-to-door and knock, right? So they showed up on our doorsteps and they explained what they were, and I said, "That sounds like us. We'll be happy to attend, you know, the meeting you're setting up." And then we met a network of people there, but it wasn't a network. It was a bunch of people. And the question that was in our minds and in the minds [0:21:30] of some others was that now that we have children, we need a school for our kids.

**Interviewer:** There were other families who felt the same way?

**Respondent:** Other Jewish families, yes.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** So the parents said to each other, you know, "Let's make a parent co-op and design [0:22:00] something." This was – I'm trying to remember exactly what year this happened in. I don't remember exactly what year. These – more than thirty years ago. But in any

case, the – Joan, who's very good organizationally, became the central person in that group, and [0:22:30] when they decided to go from planning it, from planning to actually open the school, she was – it was a parent board, Jewish chairman of the board. They announced openings and said, you know, that they could have three classes of fifteen kids each, and they were immediately fully subscribed with a waiting list.

**Interviewer:** Now this was a Sunday school? What was this?

**Respondent:** Began as a Sunday school...

**Interviewer:** [0:23:00] Okay.

**Respondent:** ...with plans to have an additional hour of Hebrew school in the middle of the week when the kids were older.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh. And was Joan an educator or she just...

**Respondent:** She's a trained teacher.

**Interviewer:** She is a teacher. Oh okay.

**Respondent:** And she subsequently has her master's degree in educational administration from OISE.

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

**Respondent:** So that was a part of...

**Interviewer:** But she just rose to the top right away in that...

**Respondent:** [0:23:30] The first...

**Interviewer:** ...group of people.

**Respondent:** The first year the school was in existence, she was chairman of the board. It was clear since that – the school's over-subscribed that there's A, a lot of work to do and the school had to grow, and so she became – she went from a volunteer to staff.

**Interviewer:** And it was clear that there was a real interest.

**Respondent:** So the board hired her as principal, and then she subsequently careered the school.

**Interviewer:** **[0:24:00]** So that would have been around 1975?

**Respondent:** No, it would have been later than that. Also around '79.

**Interviewer:** So that's a lot of years ago.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah. So...

**Interviewer:** So but it didn't exist...

**Respondent:** The story of the school, it's better to talk to her directly, but she'll remember this more accurately than I will.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. **[0:24:30]** So you came into the neighbourhood, there were synagogues here, you found the Jewish community...

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...and then Joan created the school.

**Respondent:** Well she and a bunch of other parents...

**Interviewer:** Right. Yeah.

**Respondent:** ...and the school is downtown-wide. There was the – there was never a large cluster of kids within walking distance of the JCC, but the next closest school was, you know, Holy Blossom **[0:25:00]** Temple, and for a variety – and there were issues not only of distance, but other kinds of issues that made people not interested in sending their kids to the Sunday school there.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** So we had parents from the Danforth, from Rosedale.

**Interviewer:** Whoa.

**Respondent:** From the Annex, from our neighbourhood, from further west, and from as far west as High Park in the school.

**Interviewer:** [0:25:30] And they all came to Bloor and Spadina...

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...to the Sunday school plus afternoon school.

**Respondent:** And another important part of this story is the role of the JCC. At that time, the JCC in the early 1960s, and I don't know exactly the date, opened up its brand new building, which has since been destroyed, literally. It has been – they're planning to build something else there. And opened up their brand new building, and the JCC was debating what to do with the old building at Bloor and Spadina. And there was a rump of people at Bloor and Spadina who said, "You know, we really want this building. You know, it's convenient to us. We have our memories here. You know, we [0:26:00] want to keep this building.

**Interviewer:** And this is 1969 you're talking about?

**Respondent:** This was – when we moved in, this group was – what happened was the JCC had moved and they'd left this rump of guys, you know, to maintain the JCC down here because they were so strongly committed to it.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Respondent:** But the guys who were running it down here were worried, they said. "We're going to be, you know – we're going to get old, and what's going to happen to the building, right?" [0:26:30] Things happen, you know? "We're not so young anymore already, and,

you know, we'll lose energy and, you know, and what will be." So when Joan came to them, or Joan on behalf of the Downtown Jewish Community School came to them and said, "You know, we need space for a school, and we'd rather not go into [0:27:00] a public school after hours," which was then an option, "We'd rather, you know, use the JCC." They were very happy to see her.

**Interviewer:** Oh good.

**Respondent:** Yeah. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** So they were happy to have some young blood come while they still remained their Y.

**Respondent:** The director then was Irwin Soren.

**Interviewer:** I remember Irwin.

**Respondent:** Okay. So Irwin – you know, Irwin if I recall correctly, was not a [0:27:30] trained administrator. He was a member who felt deeply about the Bloor JCC, and that was the culture then, that they didn't have – they weren't professional, and they had maybe one trained professional who ran, who was the top of the whole outfit. But the JCC wasn't about to hire somebody with a professional salary to run the Bloor building, so they could hire Irwin, [0:28:00] you know, because he cared about it.

**Interviewer:** He cared about it and he wouldn't charge a lot for his services.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah. And so he was – you know, he took it to the JCC board, and the JCC board was very welcoming to provide a low-cost home for the school when it was first getting started.

**Interviewer:** It sounds to me as if they were thinking, "We're not going to get turfed out, we're not going to be the altacocks necessarily, and we'll bring the young blood [0:28:30] in and keep this place vital."

**Respondent:** Yes. That's what – what Joan said he said to her, because I wasn't in the room, was she said, "You know, you're the future of the building."

**Interviewer:** So it was a happy marriage, so to speak.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** You know, it's interesting, I hadn't thought I would get emotional about it, but it was...

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Well I'm grateful to Joan.

**Respondent:** Yeah. It was one of those moments when somebody saw an opportunity and took it, you know? **[0:29:00]** So for – you know, what was in Irwin Soren's mind was is I'll get used to coming into the building, so it won't just be that they'll have their school here, but once they're here, they'll become members and then it'll be their place.

**Interviewer:** He was right.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** He had a vision and he was right on, and Joan luckily for – the timing was good.

**Respondent:** Mm-hm.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah. **[0:29:30]** Mm-hm.

**Interviewer:** That's a wonderful story.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So you've been in this neighbourhood for many years.

**Respondent:** Right.



- Interviewer:** And you're talking about the shul and the day school. What changes have you seen in the neighbourhood in terms of the population of the neighbourhood?
- Respondent:** Oh. The Italians and the Portuguese have by and large, you know – their children have not stayed here. We have a few families [0:30:00] who are still here, but I don't think their children are here, so that's transitioning.
- Interviewer:** Are some of the old-timers still here? Or have they died, or moved out? Or what...
- Respondent:** We have an Italian family across the street that was here when we moved in, so they're still there. I don't know for how long.
- Interviewer:** Did they speak English?
- Respondent:** The husband died...
- Interviewer:** [0:30:30] Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** ...about five years ago. And the wife has been in deep mourning ever since. Yeah. She's in deep mourning and she has health issues. You know, it's one of those stories, you know. So her son and daughter who grew up in the house, I think come to visit, but I see no sign that they live there.
- Interviewer:** I have a similar observation...
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...that [0:31:00] they – a lot of those young people are happy to move into newer homes, bigger homes.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. It's not what's happening, you know, for, you know, for their reference group. What else has happened? Fewer rooming houses.

A bunch on our block, a number of the rooming houses were converted into either duplexes or single-family homes. Are there any rooming houses left? I don't think there [0:31:30] are actually. I think we're, you know – I don't want to say rooming-house free, because that's a pejorative, but we now no longer have rooming houses on our block. The population is still mixed and it's still largely mixed in the way in which it was when [0:32:00] we moved in. There are – let me think about this. I'm thinking of our immediate neighbours. It's probably – no, not probably. For sure it's a better educated group.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** [0:32:30] We have professors, retired professors, they don't dominate the block, but they're clearly present. Our block is tending in the past few years to become more upscale. It feels like a tipping point has been passed when I [0:33:00] look at the very recent people moving in. The very recent people moving in are people with money and people who renovate, and renovate to a high standard.

**Interviewer:** Well I think also the prices are so high that they're buying those homes at high prices, and then renovating.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And it seems to me that it decreases as you move towards Bathurst, like Lippincott, and Borden perhaps have fewer of these homes.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** [0:33:30] It's moving west, but slowly.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** But I think that Robert Street and Major, Brunswick, and a little less as you get...

**Respondent:** And you know, by accident our section of Robert Street – I say by accident for us. Our section of Robert Street is a very nice micro-

environment, or far enough away from Bloor Street. We don't get the Bloor Street noise, we don't get these problems that people have with the Brunswick [0:34:00] House. We're far enough away from College we don't get the problems from that end.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. That describes where I live too.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. We have one bar that opened up that's starting to be a nuisance, but you know, it's only so far only one bar. Rather, you know, with the Harbord Street strip between Spadina and Brunswick has undergone major transformations since we [0:34:30] moved in. None of those fancy restaurants were there when we moved in, and now it's a very – what's that word? But there's half a dozen really good restaurants that people come from all over the city to go to.

**Interviewer:** And those will never be noisy. It's the bars that are noisy, so just that place on the corner of [0:35:00] Harbord and Robert, but the rest will never be noisy.

**Respondent:** Right. But that is a change. I mean, where Messis is now was Poretta's Pizza, and it was a local pizza shop, you know?

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Okay. You're moving us along and I would love you to continue talking about Harbord Street and the changes that you have lived through.

**Respondent:** Right. Along Harbord Street the [0:35:30] – oh, the other thing that's different about the neighbourhood is the tree variety. You took a picture of the tree.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** So that's – when we moved in, there were some of the horse-chestnuts that are still there, but some had died off and been cut down. And on our end of the block was vacant of trees. [0:36:00] There were no trees in the front yard. And I don't remember who told us, but someone explained to us, you know, "Your property is only partly your property. About a quarter to a third of your front yard is road allowance that belongs to the city, and the city has a

forestry department. The forestry department will plant trees on city property." So if you would like a tree in the front of your house, call up the forestry department and this is – you know, and they have a [0:36:30] list. They keep a list of people who want trees planted. So we wanted to plant a tree in front of our house, and we wanted the shade, and we wanted, you know, the feel of a tree-lined street. So we got on the list and the – [0:37:00] this was, you know, early '70s, mid-'70s, so we were being patriotic. We asked for a red maple, [Laughter] not knowing the problems that you have with red maples in your front yard. But they're lovely trees, but you can't grow grass under them. So anyway, we asked for a red maple and then we encouraged our neighbours to make the same requests. So there were [0:37:30] three trees planted in front of three adjoining houses within a year or two of each other, and those trees have matured, and they've changed. There's a treescape at the end of our street. You know, there's a wonderful tree canopy where we are now that provides shade, it provides shelter from the wind. It cools in the summer, keeps – you know, so we're very happy to have [0:38:00] been part of that greening. I remember when we asked about this, we might have asked who to call. I might have asked Ron Kanter who to call. Ron Kanter was then the – our city councillor.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** And Ron said, he said, "I get calls like this all the time, but they flip depending upon where you are. [0:38:30] The Italian and the Portuguese people call and say, 'Can you cut down the trees so I can plant a garden?' and the people who are gentrifying say, 'Can you come plant trees because we want shade?'"

**Interviewer:** Yeah. [Laughter] Well and as you mentioned, I took a picture of your tree when it was very young, and I'm going to your house and I'm going to take a picture of it thirty years later.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** How many years later? Thirty?

**Respondent:** It would be more than that. Thirty-five, yeah.

- Interviewer:** Okay. So I'm going to take a picture.
- Respondent:** Yeah. So you [0:39:00] actually won't be able to get a good picture of the house because the tree is so lush that, you know, by the end of the summer after the leaves have grown full-out, you don't see very much else behind it.
- Interviewer:** But you know, you're having this conversation with somebody who loves trees.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** I just love the trees. Everything that they offer, and the silhouette against the sky.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** I just – so I'm looking forward to having this – the comparison of the tree then and the tree as a – [0:39:30] is it still growing, do you think?
- Respondent:** I don't think – well trees grow.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** They grow until they die. They have life cycles.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. So speaking of changes, there was also a significant backyard change.
- Interviewer:** Oh, please tell me.
- Respondent:** Norman Track lives up the block. Norman is a doctor. He...
- Interviewer:** He lives up – now? Or...

**Respondent:** Now. But he's lived here, I think, almost as long as we've lived there.

**Interviewer:** Oh I need...

**Respondent:** When we first moved in...

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** ...our [0:40:00] backyard opened up onto a lane, which was deeply rotted and neglected. And the deed for the property included our part of the lane, so...

**Interviewer:** So the lane belonged to you?

**Respondent:** ...the lanes in the back were all private property owned by the homeowners. And it was the worst lane in the neighbourhood. [0:40:30] It was in terrible condition. It was, you know, bumpy and there were rocks, and there were rocks...

**Interviewer:** So it was not paved.

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** So Norman did a really good thing. He got a petition together and he went up and down the block and he said, "Would you deed your portion of the lane to the city, and if you do this, then the city – it becomes the city's responsibility and the city will install a proper roadway back in the lane." [0:41:00] So that's how we got our lane improved.

**Interviewer:** But you're also saying that everybody agreed to do it.

**Respondent:** Yes. On both sides. He had to get all of Robert and all of Major to agree to give up their part of the lane.

**Interviewer:** Did anybody resist?

- Respondent:** Not that I know of. We just signed the petition, you know, or whatever legal document it was saying – and then, you know, then the lane got fixed. But it was [0:41:30] a – it really was a difficult lane to live with. We didn't park in the back, but the odd times when we did have to pull our car into the backyard and it was just awful. I mean, you know, it was like driving down a neglected country lane where you never knew what kind of – what was going to be on the roadway ahead of you.
- Interviewer:** And you'd get stuck. So what year was it actually paved approximately?
- Respondent:** It's been paved for decades now. [0:42:00] It's been paved for maybe twenty-five years now. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Did anybody put garages back there? Or is there not enough room in the back?
- Respondent:** There are a couple of garages. The – I don't – they're not garages you can pull into. They're garages you have to park sideways. The – [0:42:30] but people did use it for parking. So there would be, you know, typically they'd have their back fence that was a parking space, and then the laneway, so they didn't give up the parking space, they just gave up the laneway to park.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Did the lane begin to be used in a different way after it was paved?
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** How was it used?
- Respondent:** The children would play out there.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** So we have – you know, we have – one of the nice things that we've seen is that we [0:43:00] have seen that other people have moved in to raise kids and so there is – there have always been kids on the block, which in an older neighbourhood you never know

about, especially, you know, a gentrifying neighbourhood where it's often, you know, people who don't have children, or who happened to not have children yet, so our street has maintained kind of a family-friendly atmosphere. [0:43:30] So even amongst the new people who move in, I met one of the new neighbours up the block who just moved in over the summer, and I met this young, you know, little guy about six years old.

**Interviewer:** So you're going to have...

**Respondent:** I don't know if there are any other kids, but there is that sense that there are always kids on the block, which – one of the nice things about the street, as the street evolved, was it became a real interesting street for trick-or-treating.

**Interviewer:** Oh. [Laughs] Okay. Let's go there.

**Respondent:** Yeah, it is.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** The [0:44:00] – as the little kids got to be a little older and they started going in costumes, you know, it's the kind of neighbourhood where because the houses are so close together, it's really easy to go trick-or-treating, and the parents don't have to worry so much about security. The young kids, they would just stand on the sidewalk and send the toddlers up to ring your doorbell. So just, you know, by itself, without kind of any [0:44:30] planning, the – it became a thing for the kids in the neighbourhood to do, to dress up and go – and they could be out there trick-or-treating. Some of the neighbours, you know, do more things with their front yard on Halloween to make it more – you know, to make it more lively and to add to the atmosphere, and of course it always helps that at some point when Halloween eve [0:45:00] Gus will parade through with his bagpipe.

**Interviewer:** Oh. [Laughs] Right.

**Respondent:** So that's been a change. We've seen that kind of culture. As the kids have gotten older will they keep that? Well the ones, our



immediate neighbours north and south who have been active in this, the youngest kids are now ten, twelve. They became to the point where it's no longer cool to do this, I don't know, but we'll see.

**Interviewer:** So maybe it's no longer cool to wear a [0:45:30] costume, but going and getting candy will always be cool. [Laughter]

**Respondent:** I don't know.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** The other really important change in the neighbourhood is Richard Gilbert's accomplishment, which is the street maze.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** When we first moved in, we did not have the street maze. And the [0:46:00] commuters would use the one-way streets to go up from College to Bloor as a shortcut, and that was not so good.

**Interviewer:** I'll bet it was a quick shortcut. I mean really shoot through and stop briefly at the stop signs.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** So we were very happy to see the street maze come in and we saw the volume of traffic on the street decrease, which made [0:46:30] the street much more pleasant.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** The other important change along those lines was the introduction of permit parking. When we moved in, there was not permit parking on the street, and then I used to – I used to spend more time at the office than I spend now because my teaching schedule was different, so I just had to [0:47:00] be on campus much more. And also with kids in the house, it was hard for me to work at home. So I work at home now more, but then when we first moved in, I would

be, almost every day, coming back at five o'clock in the afternoon, six o'clock, looking for a place to park, and it was awful. One of the [0:47:30] not so nice memories I have is coming back knowing that the kids were little and they needed something. You know, things were going wrong in the house that needed attention, and I would have to circle the block, and circle the block, and circle the block looking for a place to park.

**Interviewer:** And take another ten or fifteen minutes until you could park.

**Respondent:** Yeah. That was really tension-provoking. And when the permit parking – who introduced permit parking?

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Who worked hard to make that – [0:48:00] it had to be another petition.

**Respondent:** I don't know.

**Interviewer:** But yeah.

**Respondent:** We were probably asked at some point whether we wanted it, and so we had to agree to have it. It might have been an initiative from, you know, from – you know, that came out of City Hall where they polled the neighbourhood rather than something – or I just don't know. All I know is that ever since we had permit [0:48:30] parking, I've willingly paid whatever the city asks me to have my permit to park on the street, knowing that in those days when I do use the car, that I don't have to worry about being able to park when I come home.

**Interviewer:** Well...

**Respondent:** And it used to be just a regular nightmare.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. Well by the time I lived on Robert Street south of Harbord, the permit parking was already in place because, of course, I know that the restaurant – people using the restaurants...

**Respondent:** Mm-hm.

**Interviewer:** [0:49:00] Or U of T people wanted those spots on Robert Street, so I understand why it was impossible.

**Respondent:** Well for us it was the University of Toronto.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And for us too.

**Respondent:** More than one block – Robert's only one block from Spadina, and so students, you know, would drive down in the morning and park, and then stay there, and then you know...

**Interviewer:** And then sixteen hours later would move their car.

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

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** And then you've only got how many spaces on the street with the number of spaces? So you only need, [0:49:30] you know, half a dozen students or a dozen students to do that, and there's no parking for anybody else.

**Interviewer:** But one of the things you clearly were talking about when you talked about Halloween and it was such a nice atmosphere, you're talking about a sense of community that was happening with a variety of kinds of people and ages. But certainly you were happy to have the young people there with the young families.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. We talked about the lanes. I'm [0:50:00] wondering whether you might talk for a few minutes. We touched briefly on it, but how people used their back gardens, or what they had back there, and also front porches.

**Respondent:** On our block, the front porches aren't heavily used.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** I mentioned to you the older Italian woman, the widow.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** She sits on her front porch a lot.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** And when her husband was alive, he sat on the front porch with her.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** The – [0:50:30] but otherwise, it's not – our block is not a block of front porch hanger-outers.

**Interviewer:** I think your porches are a bit smaller than some of the others on, like, say south of you.

**Respondent:** Some of them are larger, but most of them are fairly small.

**Interviewer:** I'm sorry. But you said you do sometimes?

**Respondent:** I do sometimes. Yeah. And when I do I notice, you know, there's not anybody else. The [0:51:00] backyards – I mentioned – sorry, with our backyard, that our house had been partially renovated when we moved in, and when we moved in, the backyard had been used as landfill. And the plaster – the renovations had included, you know, taking the plaster walls off. A lot of the plaster cracked. Rather than repairing the plaster, which [0:51:30] was more expensive, people had taken the plaster out and put up drywall. They just threw the plaster out in to the backyard and that was their backyard paving.

**Interviewer:** So that's when you bought it. You had plaster.

**Respondent:** It was the remnants of that that had not been cleared away. We made a garden back there over the years. The first – when we needed it for parking before the permanent parking, we had a concrete pad, and eventually we took up the [0:52:00] concrete pad and had it just pulled out and put down paving bricks, and

they're much nicer because it feels like a garden. And they also – in terms of water, water runoff, you know, the paving bricks absorb the water and the concrete, the water just flows down. So wherever it flows, it's flowing towards your house, as it tended to do, that was not a good [0:52:30] thing. So we've put in paving bricks, we planted in the back, the back is a half a dozen different kinds of plants all crowding each other out. It's probably overcrowded and it needs to be cut back. Our neighbours to the south use their backyard for parking. Our neighbour to the north [0:53:00] has – that house was rented for a long time, but in the process of renovating for – this was part of the transition that they – that it was renovated to go from a rooming house to a rental house for a single family. You know, it was used as kind [0:53:30] of – we have family there for about three years who was a bank executive, you know, a young banker who was on assignment in Toronto, and he knew he wasn't going to live in Toronto, but he was just going to be there passing through.

**Interviewer:** But he rented it?

**Respondent:** So he rented for three years. So it was that kind of rental. It was renovated. So they did a very nice backyard renovation to – for that [0:54:00] transition, and then the house was subsequently sold and now the owner – someone who lives in a smaller house up the street...

**Interviewer:** Owns this bigger house.

**Respondent:** ...owns this bigger house. [Laughter] Liked the neighbourhood, but he actually bought the – the story is that our neighbour to the north bought the house as a rental property, his wife came to look at it and said, "I like this house." [Laughter] So...

**Interviewer:** So they're living there.

**Respondent:** [0:54:30] So they moved. And their children live in their house. So that's – which is also – it's kind of nice to see.

**Interviewer:** So that family clearly likes Robert Street.

**Respondent:** Yeah. And that the kids like their parents enough that the parents have a good enough relationship with their kids, they can sell them their house, right?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** So in terms of other backyard uses, the – [0:55:00] they tend to be sitting gardens in the back, not – a few of them are used as parking pads, maybe a quarter of them used – of the backyard uses parking pads, and because they're short backyards, there's not really room for anything else.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** But most of them are used as places, which have some kind of gardening. They're not necessarily elaborate, but they're places where – that people have made where they [0:55:30] go out and sit.

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

**Respondent:** You can't do much else. They're too small.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So those are small.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Because the ones we have here are much bigger.

**Respondent:** Ah.

**Interviewer:** They're longer. They're narrower, but they're longer.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Well these are narrow and short, so.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. [Laughs]

**Respondent:** They're about the size of this room.

**Interviewer:** We talked about Harbord and all the restaurants. While we're – I want to come back to that briefly, and just talk about stores and commercial [0:56:00] situations along Bloor and College, if you have any observations about those.

**Respondent:** Well less about College because I don't know College that well. Bloor, when we first moved in, Bloor Street was the neighbourhood shopping area. There were hardware stores, there's only one hardware – there were two hardware stores, there were clothing stores. It was kind of a mixed, you know, a mixed commercial area. And one by one, everything has become a sushi restaurant.  
[0:56:30] [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** Plenty. Yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah. So I had guests here a while back who were from the States who were – I took them out for – who were here for a conference. I took them out for sushi on Bloor Street just, you know, as a light meal, and they were [0:57:00] – they said, "This is so good and this is so cheap. Where we come from," which was in Rhode Island, you know, they said, "you know, and the sushi is – if you want to have sushi, it's a big deal. It's like going to, you know, to a fancy restaurant."

**Interviewer:** Boy, we can't relate to that. [Laughter] Those folks who live near Bloor Street.

**Respondent:** I know. So I – this must be the world's epicentre for inexpensive [0:57:30] good quality sushi.

**Interviewer:** You commented before about the security and the safety of the neighbourhood.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Any changes in that? Do you have any thoughts about changes as far as that goes?

**Respondent:** Any thoughts about changes.

**Interviewer:** In security and safety.

**Respondent:** I don't see a major change. I never felt insecure in this neighbourhood. I do know that there have been the occasional [0:58:00] incidents, but I don't see this as a high-crime area. There was a period where people's cars were being broken into.

**Interviewer:** I see that.

**Respondent:** But I think that kind of was like, you know, what do they call? One-person crime wave? You know? It was that kind of situation. It was like one guy for whom this was his neighbourhood, and once they caught him it [0:58:30] stopped, right?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** The other thing is – the other security issue has to do with drunkenness, which we don't see a lot in our street, but you know, on College Street and on Bloor Street, it is a problem, and where we feel it on Robert Street, I don't know what they – when you were on Robert whether you had the experience, but there would be the [0:59:00] occasional but regular event of people walking up the street on a Friday night, or more typically Saturday night, smashing the rear-view mirrors of cars.

**Interviewer:** I don't remember that when I was on Robert Street.

**Respondent:** Oh yeah. Yeah. So we – so that's just kind of drunken vandalism that, you know, it's an easy thing to do to walk down the street and rip up – rip [0:59:30] apart a mirror off. Has that increased? Decreased? I haven't noticed that for the past couple of years. But that is something – you know, but that's, you know. Our neighbour's house, the – our neighbours to the south, their house was broken into.

**Interviewer:** A long time ago or in the last two years?

**Respondent:** Recently. Yeah. [1:00:00] My impression is that none of this is professional thievery. It's just, you know, crimes of opportunity by, you know, people who happen to be hanging around the



neighbourhood. We have not – our house has never been broke into. We have an alarm system.

**Interviewer:** That you use.

**Respondent:** Which we use, which we put on, and we've put stickers on, and we lock up.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Our house is [1:00:30] not – you know, it's not an easy target, so we've never had that kind of crime of opportunity. I do know that I have friends who, you know, who were true Canadians and grew up leaving their front doors unlocked, and who to this day say, you know, "That's how I grew up, so that's how I'm going to live," right?

**Interviewer:** I grew [1:01:00] up that way [laughter], and when I first came to Toronto I lived that way, and now I lock the door.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. Were you around during the whole issue to do with the Spadina Expressway? Or did you come in at the tail end of that?

**Respondent:** We came right after. We were the beneficiaries.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh. Right. Yes, yes. What about Kensington Market? Do you use it? What do you feel is its effect on our community?

**Respondent:** We have generally good [1:01:30] feelings about Kensington Market. We don't go all the time, but we go regularly for fruits and vegetables. We go to the nuts for nuts and spices. We go clothes shopping in Spadina.

**Interviewer:** You mean in Kensington Market? Or on Spadina?

**Respondent:** Kensington Market. And you know, it goes out until the – I just went this week. I didn't – [1:02:00] I needed the belt, and I knew exactly what I needed, and I also needed to repair sandals. So I was in a sports store, and I bought the sandals, but the belts were what? I

don't know, whatever they were, and I said this is not – I'm not paying this, you know, for – I can get this for half price in Kensington Market. So the next time we went, [1:02:30] when we were in Kensington Market Sunday, I got the belt I wanted for half price.

**Interviewer:** [Laughs] So you do use the Market and you like being close to it.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** And we also – Kensington Market has become a terrific vegetarian neighbourhood that, you know, right within the area around the market, there's about half a dozen vegetarian restaurants.

**Interviewer:** King's Café, have you been there?

**Respondent:** Yes. Yes. We like that. That's our favourite.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. We [1:03:00] like it too. Yeah. Just ate there last weekend. [Laughs] Yeah, there's some other very nice ones. Yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah. So we eat there as well.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** So in general we're happy with the Market. Tom, from the clothing store...

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** ...is not happy with the Market. He always says the Market's in crisis, the landlords can't find tenants. I don't know. But our – [1:03:30] so this is the man in the Market. He sees problems, but we don't see it.

**Interviewer:** But certainly there are more cafes there. That's a change.

**Respondent:** Mm-hm.

- Interviewer:** And it's bringing the young people there.
- Respondent:** Oh yes.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** And we like the pedestrian Sundays, there's the sense of excitement down there. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. I've gone to pedestrian Sunday many times, and I like it. And when I bring friends who live in the community, they want to walk through it quickly and they're done with it. So I've learned [1:04:00] I have to go with Paul or with friends from the neighbourhood, but other people don't want to slow down and linger and just enjoy the atmosphere and the ambiance. That would be my experience with it.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. What about the University of Toronto? Do you have some thoughts or feelings about how it impacts on us liking it or whatever?
- Respondent:** They're not good neighbours. What else can I say? [1:04:30] You know, you wish they would have a more accommodating attitude towards their own – the playing field at Robert Street. You know, the most serious drawback of this neighbourhood is that it's park-deprived.
- Interviewer:** Yes. Yeah, we have just the little one here.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Brunswick.
- Respondent:** And the Robert Street playing field just sits there, you know, has green space that's – when we first came to the [1:05:00] neighbourhood it wasn't walled off. The university – I understand why the university walls it off. They walled it off because of dogs.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** But you know, it's an ugly chain-linked fence, and you know, it keeps the neighbours, the kids who want to use the sports field out. So. I don't want – I don't want you to miss asking me about the TRANZAC.

**Interviewer:** Well please, because [1:05:30] [laughter] certainly towards the end of our meeting I was going to ask what have I not asked about that you want to talk about, so let's go there.

**Respondent:** Right. Okay. So the – when I went back to guitar playing after my children grew up and I had time...

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** ...I had discovered the TRANZAC, which I had walked past [1:06:00] and never gone in. There was a sign outside on the bulletin board saying, you know, folk music song circle, you know, last Tuesday of every month, new people welcome. So this must have been about fifteen years ago. Maybe longer by now, I'm not sure. And that's also something that I really like [1:06:30] about the neighbourhood. I could just – once a month I can just walk my guitar over to the TRANZAC and spend three hours in a song circle with other people. And for some times, but not usually because it doesn't otherwise hit my schedule, I'll go to the jam they have on Saturday afternoons.

**Interviewer:** At the TRANZAC?

**Respondent:** At the TRANZAC. It's an open sort of music jam. So the TRANZAC is [1:07:00] very nice for amateur musicians, and it's a nice part of the neighbourhood, and it's become a part of the neighbourhood. You know, I feel like I get my needs met within a ten-minute walk of my house. Almost everything I need. [Laughter]

**Interviewer:** And some you get in your house. [Laughs]

- Respondent:** Yeah. But it's kind of, you know, peculiar. Most people can't say that.
- Interviewer:** TRANZAC also has [1:07:30] the month or the six weeks before Christmas, they have a lot of different artists coming through and selling what they make.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** And it's on a rotation basis, so if you go back two or three weeks in a row, you can meet some different artists selling different, you know, pieces of work. Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. It's a nice little institution that is – you know, it's one of these places that has a weird history. You know, it was the Australia-New Zealand Club, and they're [1:08:00] no longer there. The ANZACs who founded it, you know, lost interest or moved away or whatever, and so they kind of left behind this building with a board of whoever was kind of interested. They also have – they had for years the TRANZAC on Sunday night, really good folk performances as well. Very – on their stage. So. [1:08:30] And every night of the week there's jazz or something. A lot of young, young performers. You know, it's a very – it's a really nice arts venue.
- Interviewer:** Oh, I'll have to check it out. Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Okay, so Stuart, is there anything else in addition to the TRANZAC that we didn't talk about that when you knew you were coming you were thinking, here are some things that would be interesting for me to share because you've lived here for so many years [1:09:00] and you've seen changes.
- Respondent:** Yeah. I don't think so. I think as we wandered around from topic to topic, that – and some things I didn't think about talking – I didn't, you know – the story about the lane was not something I'd thought about for a number of years, but you know, you provoked it as we were talking about the neighbourhood and changes.

**Interviewer:** Well and as you said, it became a playground, an additional playground for the children.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** That's right.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. I play in this lane back here with my [1:09:30] grandson.

**Respondent:** Uh-huh.

**Interviewer:** Badminton, tennis, Frisbee, baseball.

**Respondent:** Oh yeah.

**Interviewer:** [Laughs] We use it a lot. I love the lane. Yeah.

**Respondent:** Now that's nice to hear because I didn't know if our lane was unique in that way.

**Interviewer:** Oh I think lanes are defined. [Laughs] I like back lane living.

**Respondent:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Are you getting that from other interviews?

**Interviewer:** People – well people who lived here and went to school, they walked to – they used the back lanes for walking to school.

**Respondent:** Right.

**Interviewer:** [1:10:00] And one man described that they used it to kind of check their manhood, and you know, peeing on garages. [Laughs] So yeah, the lanes had been used a lot by young people. And also I interviewed somebody who talked about – this was a woman, and

she got her lane paved because she would hang her laundry out and it came in dirty, so she got the neighbours and they paved the lane, and so her laundry came in clean after that. [Laughs]

**Respondent:** Mm-hm.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. [1:10:30] Well...

**Respondent:** Do you know Norman? Norman Track?

**Interviewer:** No, but I think I'd like to meet him.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Mm-hm.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Maybe you'll help me meet him.

**Respondent:** Sure. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. I look forward to that.

**Respondent:** Okay. Norman's very talkative.

**Interviewer:** Well that's fine. [Laughter] Stuart, I just want to say thank you. It's been a pleasure.

**Respondent:** Oh, you're welcome.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

[01:10:57]

[ At this time the recorder was turned off,  
then turned on again a few minutes later for a few final remarks. ]

[1:10:59]

**Interviewer:** Okay. One more story from...

**Respondent:** From Stuart. So here is the story that I should have made a point to come with...

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** ...because this is something that I hope you'll be able to follow up. We have a friend whose name is Allan Robbins. Allan's an eccentric character. We see him sometimes. He showed up at our house one day, unannounced, [1:11:30] saying all excited, "I had to come, I had to come, I had to come." "Why'd you have to come?" He said, "I was up north in Steeles Avenue. I had to deliver something at a woman's house, and she has a newspaper clipping from 1938 about her. She said, 'Come, take a look.' So here, I took a copy of the newspaper clipping. Take a look." So we read the newspaper clipping and it's about a woman and her friend who hitchhiked from [1:12:00] Toronto to New York to raise money for Habonim or something like that for a Jewish charity. And it gave their addresses. 210 Robert Street. He said, "This woman lived in your house in 1938." [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** "I had to show you this." [Laughter] So we called her up and we said, you know, we were very excited to know something about the history of our house, and we had a nice chat with her, and we said we'd like to have her come down. Of course we never found the time [1:12:30] to invite her to come down, but when I got home, I'll see if I can find that information and pass it along to you, and...

**Interviewer:** Whoa.

**Respondent:** ...maybe you could interview her.

**Interviewer:** And I'm willing to drive. I've done some drives to meet people. Yes.



- Respondent:** But it's such a – you know. And I guess everybody in this neighbourhood has had the experience when somebody knocks on your house and says, "I used to live here. Could I come in?"  
[Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Yeah. And you let them in.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** I had a similar [1:13:00] experience. I'm taking a politics class at Ryerson, and I was walking up the stairs with a man. We were heading into our class, and it turns out – I have interviewed Rosie Schwartz – and it turns out that Rosie Schwartz bought the house from his family.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** So he lived there before Rosie...
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...and he's away during the summer, but I'm going to interview him at the end of the summer.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And we actually – the person who did it to our house was a couple [1:13:30] of owners back before us. I told you that our house had been first – we bought it from the doctor, the doctor bought it from somebody who had done a partial renovation, and the person who had done the partial renovation had bought it from the Goldhar family, and it was the – they were the ones who lived there for a long time, and they – it was someone from that family who knocked on our door and said, you know, "I'd like to come in."
- Interviewer:** Wow. Well thank you, Stuart.

**Respondent:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** I'm turning it off again. That's a terrific addition.

**Respondent:** Okay.

**[1:14:00]**

[End of recording]