073 Norman Track

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

Interviewer: The date is the 7th of September, and I'm sitting with Norman Track in his home at 222 Robert Street. And all I know is that you moved here in 1977. Would you tell me, please, what attracted you to this neighbourhood? What made you decide to come here?

Respondent: Well in 1977, I came July **[0:00:30]** '77 to the University of Toronto.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: I was at McMaster, and I was able to get an appointment at U of T in the departments of Surgery, Clinical Biochemistry, and Nutritional Sciences, doing research. And what attracted me to this neighbourhood was partly that I grew up at 4 Spadina Road, which – where my father had his office. We lived there.

Interviewer: Where is 4 Spadina?

Respondent: **[0:01:00]** 4 Spadina Road is where the parking lot is now next to the subway station, just north of Bloor Street.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: There was a lovely magnolia tree in front of it, and part of it is – well, the major reason is that I wanted to be within walking distance of the university.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And also in certain respects, it was coming home.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: And having lived in Europe, there's **[0:01:30]** a certain, I guess, flavour of something that's older. The tradition lives. The fact that the house we're sitting in now was built, I think it was 1884, 1886,

basically everything was handmade so that all the wood, the molding, all of that, which is original, is something that was **[0:02:00]** handmade. And most of the houses on the street have the original stained glass, so that all of the things that are here are handmade and are a representation of the artists or artisans that were working at the time. And the newel post, it's unique in the world. It was only one because it was handmade. What I've tried to do in the rest of the house when I've renovated is to try and maintain some of **[0:02:30]** that. For me, the real difficulty is – and also, if you have the shell, if you can put Victorian furniture into it, it lives as it did then. So you're sitting on a chair that someone sat on during the Victorian time in a Victorian house. That to me is as close as you can get to being Victorian.

Interviewer: So you love the nature of it, **[0:03:00]** and you are maintaining it because you have furnished your home with furniture that would have been made around that time and used around that time.

Respondent: Yes. And I even have certain pieces of – like a teapot that are older than that that are Georgians. They go back a hundred years before that. But it's just – I believe it's important because if we don't have history, if we don't have a tradition, I don't think we have anything. And to base something on **[0:03:30]** what's on the internet is perhaps valid, but it's also – it's what everyone else is doing. And unfortunately next door, that – my former neighbour, Martin Knelman, had all of the molding removed, cleaned, put back in.

Interviewer: Oh. So he…

Respondent: Which was – no, no. Which was wonderful. He moved **[0:04:00]** out, and I was away at the time, and the person who bought the place gutted it, and I'm sure that all the molding went in a container and it's in a landfill somewhere. To me, I would have loved to have had it. Like I've noticed that several of the hinges that I have aren't original. I would have loved to have hinges and things. Now what happened next door was basically – it was drywall. It was modern molding. Not even to match the old-style molding. **[0:04:30]** So it could be anywhere. It happened to be 224 Robert Street, and it was done elegantly, but it didn't have the tradition that was before. And some people can say, well, does it matter? And my answer to them

would be obviously, if you don't think it does, it doesn't. To some of us, it does.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And that's what I think is important. And I've even gone to the trouble where I **[0:05:00]** have a cupboard in the kitchen and I wanted another cupboard – that I have a friend who's able to match the curves of the molding, and to make it look like a Victorian cupboard. The inside is plywood, but you don't see the inside in the back.

Interviewer: So the character and the nature…

Respondent: So it's a façade in a way, but it's trying to maintain a certain – well the stove is **[0:05:30]** of that period. And as I say, everything in the house works.

Interviewer: So you use that stove. That's a gas stove?

Respondent: Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: Do you have any idea when it might have been made?

Respondent: Probably – I believe it's – the company's Ideal. I think that they were in Detroit and Windsor. I don't think they still exist. Probably turn of the century. Like it's probably seventy, eighty years old.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And I was able to get it serviced, **[0:06:00]** and they said you can, like, use it as a museum piece. I thought, fine, my house is a museum, so I'll use it as a museum piece.

Interviewer: So that's the stove that you're using.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: When you cook.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Bravo.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: It's a – well, I think I'll take a picture of it before I leave.

Respondent: Fine.

Interviewer: Because you're maintaining the character to the best of your ability…

Respondent: But it's also that we're coming up to Rosh Hashanah.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And my mother developed a technique of making gefilte fish.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: The **[0:06:30]** reason I say this is that I have her microwave. I have the dish where she made it. I have the recipe. So I follow the tradition that she did using the exact same utensils. And it may not taste as good, but it's just following a tradition. From my grandmother, my mother's mother, I learned how to make Russian borscht. It's following a tradition. Keeping something **[0:07:00]** alive, and every time I make it, I know that **[indiscernible 0:07:02]** is looking down and smiling.

Interviewer: Wow. That's beautiful. So do you have any idea what year your mother was born?

Respondent: Yes. She was born on 1915.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: Again, the interesting aspect is that my mother's parents came from Odessa, and that they came in 1913. And they **[0:07:30]** were able to come – they – again, it's almost worth writing a book about it.

They left – there were six children. They left Odessa and they went to Hamburg. The parents and, like, my grandparents. My mother's parents went to Hamburg separately; the rest of the family came. A son-in-law had bought passports in Russia, **[0:08:00]** and that they came across and they went to a farm in Nobleton. That's where my mother was born in 1915.

Interviewer: And I just want to come back. Do you know when your – the grandmother, who made the borscht…

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: …when would she have been born?

Respondent: Be 1870. I could tell you exactly. I have my mother's little black notebook.

Interviewer: Okay. But we're talking about women who were born 1870, 1915. What year were you born?

Respondent: 1944.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Late in the afternoon.

Interviewer: Okay. **[0:08:30]** So in Hebrew, it would be "L'dor V'dor." From generation to generation.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: And you are cooking recipes in this old stove, in this home that was built in 1884…

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: …and carrying on all kinds of traditions and rituals that have come across oceans.

Respondent: Yes. And…

Interviewer: And spanning three generations. Yeah.

Respondent: And to me, it's something that's important because, as I said before, if we don't have traditions, even some people may think that they – and I looked at – my **[0:09:00]** grandmother's candlesticks are there.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: That have a "G" on them for "Ginsberg." But Ginsberg was the name on the passports.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: The real name was Ilbershmidt. But it's like – and see, most people – more and more people that I speak to, their parents, grandparents came as farmers. People that went to Winnipeg. Like there are all sorts of stories that are there, and that what you're touching on is important because I believe too much of **[0:09:30]** the world is based on history. His-story.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: We're missing her-story.

Interviewer: Ah. So you have her.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Her Shabbos candles.

Respondent: Exactly.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: Exactly. And it's the type of thing that to keep some – and then also with a flame…

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: …like it always – initially it frightens me because I come down and it's dark, and I have a **[indiscernible 0:09:52]** camera, but there's light in the kitchen. And I think well, who could that – and then I realize that it's for one of the family **[0:10:00]** that's still here, but physically not.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: And to me, there's certain traditions which I think are so important, that Seder – that we moved the family's Seder here, I don't know, about twenty-five years ago.

Interviewer: Here, into your home?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: Because it was easier for my mother.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And father. And we have **[0:10:30]** roughly sixteen, eighteen people each year, and some people have been coming for fifteen, twenty years, and the beauty is – and because my mother was very – both intelligent and did not want the – **[indiscernible 0:10:47]**, which most people use because it's two dollars and it's – she thought that the pictures were frightening, and it was non-English. So ultimately I compiled the Track family **[indiscernible 0:10:55]**. And this is what people come **[0:11:00]** and that they vie to read things because it means something. And this, I think, is the reality of living in a place like this, is that it has, if you want to say ghosts, positive ghosts of the past, and that the before – as we initially spoke, there used to be a number of prayer rooms in this district that people would **[0:11:30]** meet in the morning for prayers. There would be ten. There'd be a minyan. But it was beyond that. It was a social meeting in that there was a fabric in the community which we don't have today.

Interviewer: Could we move on to that?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: So you're talking about, like, little shteebles? People meet, gathering…

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: …and praying in the morning.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Were there some right on this street, Robert Street?

Respondent: I can't point them out, but I'm almost certain that there were.

Interviewer: But you knew there were – **[0:12:00]** or were they mainly homes? Were people gathered in people's homes to do it?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: Oh yes. Well, most people of my father's generation, they would come here, I lived in this house because this house represented downtown, so they were – whether they were on Major, or Borden, or Lippincott, or whatever, I was in this house. There were six families and we shared a toilet. We did this and that. But it was part of the, if you **[0:12:30]** want to say, evolution of the immigrants – in this case, the Jews – that came to Canada, came to this area, and because a lot of them worked Spadina, the garment or stores in this area, it was convenient and also, as we see today, because there were a lot of Muslims downtown, there's a mosque next to the bus terminal. It's just the idea of people keeping **[0:13:00]** community and something that's important. Okay, that in recent years – you see people, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, walking around dressed for the services, so to speak.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: Now having the – some people would say the chutzpah or the desire to show off, so to – to take their Judaism out onto the street, which I think is fine. It's like going up to the Gaza Strip **[0:13:30]** on Bathurst at Lawrence. You see people walking around as they did in fifteenth century Poland, which is their business. As long as they keep it up there, I'm happy.

Interviewer: Yeah. Are you affiliated with any synagogue in this neighbourhood?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. But you – from what you recall when you first moved here in 1977, who made up this area? What groups of people?

Respondent: **[0:14:00]** 1977, there were mainly the – across the street, Maria's Italian. Two doors up, Maryanne who's German. About five, six doors up on the other side, Christina who's Greek. I think that the Jewish migration had already started.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: Just as my father said when I was **[0:14:30]** interested in buying this, "Why would you want to move back where I worked all my life to get out of?" [Laughter] But then he mellowed and he realized that this, in a way, because he grew up first on Walton Street and then on Palmerston, and, like, his father, my grandfather was one of the elders at the Shomrai Shabbos. But there was a certain feeling here, which at that time – which would have been, say, **[0:15:00]** in the '20s, '30s, was Jewish. That no longer exists. Some of it is coming back, but it's more, I guess you would say, that the area has become trendy, and that the people are moving in because – who have – and this now, when I purchased my house, the cost of the house was, say, roughly double your annual income. **[0:15:30]** Now, it's probably ten times or more, and the only people that can afford that are either two incomes, like a professional family, or a situation where both parents have died – like on both sides of the family, so that you've inherited money.

Interviewer: Yeah. You're saying it's become much more expensive.

Respondent: I don't understand how someone can – say, someone in my situation, coming from the university, to be able to **[0:16:00]** afford a house for a million dollars, and then have to do some – okay, maybe for a million dollars you don't have to do very much, but it's out of the ballpark today for a lot of people. And the difficulty, I believe, is that you have a certain number of people that have more money than brains and taste, and that the fact that they have money and drive a large, expensive car, doesn't mean that they care about the property because they often have a **[0:16:30]** gardener or a this, or a that, and you can see. And to me, it's one thing that I'll always remember. That a neighbour from many years ago, when I visited him in Paris, said to me, "When we were growing up, your father was the only one who did his own gardening on our street."

Interviewer: And what's your perception now? What percentage of the people do their own gardening amongst your neighbours?

Respondent: **[0:17:00]** Minimal.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: Well, the other problem that we face is that a number of the homes are absentee landlords. Rented.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. Well, I'd like to learn more about that.

Respondent: So that all of these – and again, the people who were here, say, fifty, sixty, seventy years ago, a lot of them have **[0:17:30]** moved up…

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: …to heaven or, like, are gone. Their children moved north before, so the properties have sold. Most of them have been upgraded, for want of a better word. Fortunately now, some of the ones that had been duplexed are now single families again, and families are back in them. The real difficulty that I see is that if we want a community, we have to have continuity. **[0:18:00]** And the only way you have

that is not with renting to people who, "Oh, I'm a very, you know, good tenant," this and that. For how many years? And ultimately they have no investment here.

Interviewer: But I'm not sure what you're saying. But you're saying that for a while, there were more absentee landlords. Are you suggesting that it's reversing again, and more families are buying these properties, so there are not as many rentals?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: **[0:18:30]** In this block, which I believe is the best block on Robert Street because of the integrity of the architecture, we don't have the – if you want to call them the cottages, the one-and-a-half storeys, the place that had been, with all due respect, the **[indiscernible 0:18:45]**, with all of the various bricks and things in the fronts, and the various religious items, which I think are fine, but I don't see a necessity to have it on the front of the house. But that's – and the real difficulty **[0:19:00]** is that as you probably are aware, that we have a heritage designation for the front of the house, which I don't know how much water it will hold if someone really contests it.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: You're supposed to keep the front in the tradition that it was, and if you change something, if anything, you should change it back to the style it was. Okay. The problem was most of the porches were not there originally, **[0:19:30]** so if you want to take the porch off, you're going back to what it was. But if you want to replace it with something, it wasn't there, so what style should it be? But the most, to me, important thing is that you have a front and a back. Fine, the house does too. The heritage doesn't say anything about the back. The back, if you are familiar at all with the paintings of Albert Frank…

Interviewer: I'm not.

Respondent: Okay. He painted the back in the winter. The snow.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: The **[0:20:00]** – and that to me is an integral part, which has been forgotten, and people think, fine, we keep the front as it should be, but we can make a condominium on the back. We can do this, we can do that, and ultimately you lose the character. And the community – it's not just walking down the street; it's walking down the laneway.

Interviewer: Whoa. So you…

Respondent: So that there are all sorts of things that we – like what you gain on one hand, you lose on the other. **[0:20:30]** No, no. We just want to – we'll come back within ten feet, or this or that. And I don't know how strict the rules are in terms of the backyard. And also, it depends on who your neighbours are, and there's just a committee of adjustment business about a neighbour who wants to put an addition on, and to bulge out a bit, which I personally think is inappropriate because it distorts the structure **[0:21:00]** that's there…

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And what bothers me if that happens, as it has happened, I gather, on a house – I think it's on Borden, which you can see from the lane on Major, is that it establishes a precedent.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Someone says, well, two doors down they did that, why can't we? And then it goes to the committee of adjustment, and they say – or, you have an absentee landlord who doesn't get the correspondence from the city, from the committee of adjustment. They're not there. No one **[0:21:30]** discussed, contests, whatever, and it's not that I want them not to enlarge their place. They want to have a family, this and that, fine. But do it in the style of what is here.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Don't – and there was a family up the street on the other side who really should have been in a subdivision. They stayed here a couple of years, and ultimately they moved because this wasn't the style of living that they wanted. And it'll be interesting because there are – at least **[0:22:00]** the half a dozen, one or two have gone already, that in the next, say, five to ten years, that will – those properties will be coming up. And whether they will be – how they will be treated, who will buy them, obviously it's people that have a certain amount of money.

Interviewer: For sure. Now.

Respondent: But whether those people see – the real difficulty is a certain – like there is a family that's moved in here, which it's still not **[0:22:30]** clear to me why. Their son goes to a private school, which isn't here, so it means they have to drive. They don't have parking. And they – I don't understand the – because I don't think properties now here are a good investment, and they bought it renovated. So there may be people who come to think well, what am I doing here?

Interviewer: So who do you think belongs here? I mean you have a very clear idea about **[0:23:00]** maintaining the homes, maintaining the community in a certain way, which is beautiful, and it's the way it was built. These houses. So…

Respondent: Okay. Well the – someone may say, and I would have to agree with them, that maybe my ideas are fine for me. Maybe it's wrong to try and keep something that – like my music system is over thirty years old, but a friend was here and said, **[0:23:30]** "I haven't heard sound like this since, you know, I was in high school." Whatever. The problem is that most things today are convenient and, like, I have an espresso machine. You can get an Empresso machine. The catch is that they give you the coffee. It works, it's clean, it's neat, it's this, and it's that, but it's controlled. Someone is controlling what you can or cannot do. To me, we don't **[0:24:00]** – the heritage designation, I think, is a window dressing in a way. It means that, okay – we'll go back two steps. The block down by Willcocks, that there's a new modern house, which I think is wonderful. It's a hundred and twenty percent better than what was

there. And I think it doesn't **[0:24:30]** distract; if anything, hopefully the others, because to build in the old style is very difficult. My neighbour about eight doors down where they – the previous owners had put on the, like the stone, three-, four-inch stone and put the aluminum siding on the top.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: He, being a builder, wanted to go back to the brick. **[0:25:00]** So again, the problem is he had to go to England. You can't get Victorian-style brick in Canada. There's no market for it. So he – I think it's a blessing. It looks beautiful. Okay. Two up from him, they cleaned off the brick across the street. His is magnificent. Theirs to me is less than magnificent. To answer your question, who should be living here or who can, **[0:25:30]** clearly it's going to be people who can afford to buy the properties here, and that I don't think that they have the interest in the community that – because the schools aren't, shall we say, the most desirable as far as they see it, that they probably won't be coming here for the schools. And that a number of people, say, who are here, **[0:26:00]** have places in the country, and maybe that's why their front yards look the way they do, because they have gardens, whatever, in the country which they take. Like they work on the weekends.

Interviewer: Right. So is it fair for me to assume that you would like people who come here to be part of the community and to value us as a community, and not just be here because it's maybe only convenient?

Respondent: **[0:26:30]** Yes. But in the best of all possible worlds…

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: …yes, but the – like Leibniz's idea, the best of all possible worlds, is that if God exists, then everything should be proper. And if it doesn't, like if it isn't proper, then maybe he doesn't or whatever. To me, the real problem is that we can't control that.

Interviewer: Oh, for sure.

Respondent: The only thing that you can do, I can do, **[0:27:00]** is set an example, and that my front yard, my backyard, what I have in the house is what I believe – it's not what I believe. It is the way that I want to live in that I believe is valid. Someone else will come in. These Victorian loveseats aren't comfortable. Oh. To me, comfort isn't what's important, but that to me is part of the problem today. That a neighbour up the street **[0:27:30]** said to me about five years ago, that he wanted to redo the interior of his house because it was ten years old. He wanted to, like, upgrade it.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: To what? To what's in a magazine. What's trendy so that the couch matches the picture.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: But see, the real difficulty is that if you have something that's alive, that I have botanical prints there that are from **[0:28:00]** 1750s. And to a lot of people, like so what? To me, they were done by Philip Miller, who was the curator at the Chelsea Physic Garden. I have a picture of Hui-Yan, who is a Taoist in southwestern China from Yunnan, but it's just that there's something alive. Also that you might notice is that there are dream stones. Circular, marble pieces, and that they were the original picture postcards. **[0:28:30]** People would – **[indiscernible 0:28:31]** would go into the mountains, and they would experience something special, and they would bring those back with them.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And that that has some of the energy of the wild. What you bring into your house. It's the same, the stone in the front, in the front yard, the garden, to some people is a stone. Other people, can be a mountain. It can be whatever you want, but to me, I think what's really important is that we have people here who **[0:29:00]** are – I guess I'm likened to be intelligent, but in their use of the space, and sharing and using it with others, that's what I think is important. And that maybe they see what you're doing, what I'm doing, and they think, well, maybe I would like to get some older furniture. I would

like to do something. Or that I would like to have something which is a contrast to that. Like that is **[0:29:30]** fine for you. I don't want to tell other people what to do, but on the other hand, I don't want them to tell me that what I'm doing isn't right.

Interviewer: Right. How would you describe Robert Street? I mean you can talk about the whole neighbourhood, but Robert Street is the place you're most familiar with. What was it like in 1977 compared to today?

Respondent: Oh, it's difficult to say because I spent most of my time at **[0:30:00]** the university in the Medical Sciences Building eighteen hours a day. But it was the – there was more of a streetscape. We didn't have the binscape, all this nonsense that the – there were still more people that were more involved in their front yards. That – there was, I guess – I don't know that it's appropriate to say **[0:30:30]** that it was friendlier. That – and again, you find in the winter most people don't stop and talk because it's cold.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: In the summer, there are oftentimes that you can go out in the street and it takes two hours to get to the corner. You usually meet this one and t hat one. And the other thing that I think is amazing is that there are certain people who you do things for. And that they – and I would help anyone who requires help. **[0:31:00]** There's this one neighbour up the street who called me over recently and you know, come over into the back, and she gave me – not a seven-fifty, but a litre bottle of Greek wine…

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: …because I had been helpful, and I had done this and that. But it's the type of thing that it's her way of repaying, and I think that the problem today – because we're just getting going on a project of an English woman, a lady from a landed family **[0:31:30]** in 1939 who went out to India. And my point is today, how many not necessarily landed women in Toronto, single women, would go to the Eaton Centre alone?

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: But that there was a different attitude and different style, and I think that part of that is lost. That there were still some of the older families. That there was – I think it was three doors down at the end. There was a Jewish woman. Every **[0:32:00]** time she would see me, say, "Say hello to your father." You know, you offered on the – whatever. But it's just that things – if you've been here, the Harbord Bakery has changed.

Interviewer: In what ways?

Respondent: Well to me, when Goldie and Albert were there, it used to be a bakery. Now, there's Gucci olive oil, there's truffles and chocolates, and to me, what I said to Rafi and Susan and **[0:32:30]** Roz, "You should have Albert's Corner."

Interviewer: Oh. [Laughs]

Respondent: And have rye bread, have bagels. Like have Albert's stuff. I'll always remember that the other thing I did was I – from **[indiscernible 0:32:46]**, who I got the borscht recipe, I also got a apple strudel.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: Odessa-style. So I made some and I took some over to the Harbord who – the Kosowers are relatives of my father – **[0:33:00]** that I showed it to Albert, and he looked at it and he said, "I've never seen strudel like this before. Leave it with me." So I said, "Fine. That's why I brought it for you. Taste it and enjoy." But little things like – I don't know if you ever made strudel. The way my grandmother made it when she had the strength was she would roll out the dough and then you put some Social Tea biscuits to soak up the – like all of these. Like I know how to get into a computer program, she knew how to make strudel.

Interviewer: Yeah. So **[0:33:30]** did Albert…

Respondent: Okay. Let me just – so I learned how to make the strudel, I make it, I leave it there, and I think it was the next day, he had four versions of the apple strudel. But it's something like that, and that this to me – and that I whatever years later, that I had a Japanese friend, Mrs. Suzuki visiting from **[indiscernible 0:33:57]**, and that we went **[0:34:00]** there, and Rafi said, "Well he's an executive baker."

Interviewer: But that's how Rafi described himself.

Respondent: Yeah. You know, and I thought fine, but – and that the other thing that was wonderful is that Ron, who was the head baker many years ago, that who – I'm not sure if my father operated on him or whatever, but had a very strong feeling for my father. Like here's, like, a doctor, a surgeon who acts like everyone else. Like he doesn't think he's **[0:34:30]** – doesn't act as if he's special, type of thing, or elevated. And Ron came to a – I don't know if it was a Thanksgiving or a whatever party here, and I think it was one of my mother's friends had made an apple tort out of the Naomi Cookbook.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: I think it was Mrs. Mandelbaum's or whatever the hell the recipe. And that Ron wanted to get the recipe **[0:35:00]** because, like, Susan Kosower really liked it. So they started making it, and they didn't make it with cut apples. They did an apple upside-down, and I think it started, like, his Doros Apple Tort for my mother.

Interviewer: Oh, lovely.

Respondent: And she said, you know, like where's my royalty? But it's – you know, they had granola. The real difficulty is that to me, that it's – if you want to say going with the times, **[0:35:30]** which is Gucci.

Interviewer: Well you said that about Gucci olive oil. [Laughs]

Respondent: Yeah. To me, olive oil has nothing to do with a bakery.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And if you want to have it, you have it separate. You know, the teas, okay. Jam I can see goes on bread or something, but it's trying to be everything for everybody, and greeting cards, and this and that. That's their choice. I personally – maybe it's my makeup. I would have made something – I would have had **[0:36:00]** different styles of bagels, perhaps, instead of olive oil.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. So you want…

Respondent: Different styles of rye bread.

Interviewer: …so you're saying for your taste, their going beyond being a bakery.

Respondent: Absolutely.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: But that, again, is – I always remember – I can't remember the name of the place, but on Berkeley – no, it was on Telegraph Avenue or whatever, there's a twenty-four-hour bagel place, and that – you know, they make the bagels, and their fresh, and they dump the things out and you go in there. The smell will bring you **[0:36:30]** in off the street. But it's just what they do are bagels.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And like I had a great idea. I thought in over at Wellesley and Church to have a bagel place called the Bagel Queen. [Laughter] They have the Bagel King on Eglinton.

Interviewer: That's good. Yeah.

Respondent: No, but it's [laughter]…

Interviewer: That's good.

Respondent: But you know, it's with all these things. And that again, that if you – like I can remember **[0:37:00]** you know, with Goldie and Albert, and various things, and ultimately in the end, Albert was diabetic

and lost one, if not both his feet, and was out – but it's just something that's lost. He was up every morning at, you know, two, three, four, baking, and doing this and that, but that type of work, physical work is gone. For the – like our generation, can you get a PhD in baking? [Laughter] Like is there a future in that?

Interviewer: Yeah. **[0:37:30]** In terms of the neighbourhood, you started talking about something. And you said people used to be – there was more of a sense of community. People were outside having conversations. But you did talk about this woman just recently who gave you some wine because she…

Respondent: Okay. But that's part of, if you want to call, the old school.

Interviewer: Okay. That's what I want to clarify.

Respondent: That's Christina, and that – but see, again, I didn't know – **[0:38:00]** I never really knew her husband, and I don't think – she speaks some English. I don't know how much he did. He – I didn't see him. It was the winter. And then I saw some furniture out, and I realized he died.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And the same with Bruno two doors up. He…

Interviewer: But so to come back to this theme, we're talking about changes in the last thirty-five years. Are you suggesting **[0:38:30]** that it's less friendly now? Less of a community now compared to what it was like in '77 and…

Respondent: Well it's difficult to say because there are people who are friendly.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: There are other people who walk by you, don't say hello, don't do this, don't do that. There are various places that every year, whatever, six months, there are new people. It's rental.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Respondent: And it isn't the same, but **[0:39:00]** there are certain people that move in, and it's amazing that one family that were living on the other side of the street near the end, I think were here for two years. Never said a word to them. Would walk by. They, whatever. The new family, I think they were there for a week or two.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: "Good morning. Nice to meet you. We just moved in. Who are you? Where do you live?" Like probably spoke to a lot of people who didn't live on the street. [Laughs] But it's just that they're completely different. **[0:39:30]** And those are the type of people who, you said before, the type of people that I would like to be here, that they are at least – and also very supportive of Christina, which I think is wonderful.

Interviewer: Now when you moved here and now, could you talk about the front porches?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Were people using them more, less? What's your observation about that?

Respondent: I would say that Maria across the street is probably one of the best **[0:40:00]** security systems. [Laughter] That she is perched out there most of the time. That I don't think – because, like, on the west side of the street, we have the morning sun, so most of the people, if anything, sit out in the back, not in the front in the afternoon. The one advantage we have with the – across the street here, the apartment building, is that we get afternoon sun in the front because it reflects off the **[0:40:30]** building in back. But I don't think that in general, the neighbour a few doors down has a – like a seat out in front that they – like they sit in from time to time, but generally people do not sit out, have not. And Maria's the only one…

Interviewer: I've seen her when I walk by. Yeah.

Respondent: …who really does. Christina does from time to time, but she hasn't been that well lately. But she is further back, has a lovely garden, and **[0:41:00]** part of the time is concerned that people like stealing her – you know, cutting things. And I think it's one of the reasons there's a fence up there now. But it's also a question of what there is to do on the street, and that certain people are on the street because they see someone going by, they talk to them.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: Like I'll come back from a run in the morning, and I'll sort of be thinking about something else, and I'll hear, "Norman." And certain times I just **[0:41:30]** keep going because I think maybe it's me talking to myself, or who knows what. It's Christina across the street calling to me, and to me it's – she gave me some Greek honey. Like all of these things which came from Greece. Like you can't get that sort of thing here. But it's just sharing something because you've shared support in them.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And it's one way of saying thank you, which is meaningful and it, in the end, **[0:42:00]** that – Mark who lives up, maybe six, eight houses, helps Christina, you know, with the garden, shovels the snow with Maryanne. There's certain people that do things because they feel it's important to do.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And other people think, well, what's this **[indiscernible 0:42:23]** up to? Like doesn't he have something better to do? Well maybe he does, but he takes the time to do that.

Interviewer: **[0:42:30]** Is your – what's your impression about when you moved here thirty-five years ago and now in terms of level of education of the people who live in the neighbourhood?

Respondent: Well it's difficult to say because I know – like there's certain people with university degrees, PhDs, professors, **[0:43:00]** heads of department, whatever, who are not as, shall we say, socially adapt

to be able to interact in the community. And then you have people who have street sense.

Interviewer: Yeah. So you're saying education doesn't matter. Doesn't mean a whole lot.

Respondent: I think it does to certain people…

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: …and to other people, that **[0:43:30]** it's – to me, what's really important is what you both have to say, and what you've done and can do.

Interviewer: But I'm talking more about the demographics.

Respondent: Oh. That probably – but just like we have some people that have moved in, like two families that have moved in recently where I don't think that either of them – like one of them, the wife works at U of T, **[0:44:00]** but not as an academic. Not that there's anything wrong with – U of T wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the staff. That the – again, we come back to the question of who can afford to live here? And whether that is the type of person that we want to be here. It really isn't up to us. It has to do with their bank account ultimately.

Interviewer: But I'm asking if you think there have been any notable differences or changes **[0:44:30]** in the last thirty-five years.

Respondent: No. And the other thing as well is that I don't even remember his name, but it was Belinda Stronach's husband moved in across the street.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: I don't think I ever saw him. He had a gardener that did this, and then he moved out. [Laughs] And then I think…

Interviewer: So he wasn't much of a community person.

Respondent: No, no, no. But it's the type of thing, again, I don't know why he moved here. **[0:45:00]** And it may be that there was a house available, or he knew – like the couple or family that bought a place across the street somehow knew the person or knew someone who knew the person. The person was blind. Nothing had been done on the house, so to get in, he bought a new furnace for him.

Interviewer: Whoa.

Respondent: Which he then wound up buying the place.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: But it's – the real difficulty is I don't think a lot of people **[0:45:30]** realize that in today's market, it's probably twenty years ago that I changed all my windows and it was, say, eighteen hundred dollars. Now I'm lucky if I can get two windows changed for eighteen hundred, because then there was a standard size. There was this. Now everything is made to measure. Whether it is or not's irrelevant, but it's just – I had a window changed upstairs, it was five hundred dollars, and it wasn't a big window.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: But it's just that you're at their mercy. And the – **[0:46:00]** whether it's triple-paned or this is irrelevant because the walls are cardboard. They're going to tell you, you know, it'll reduce your heating. It's only, like, two by two or something, and the walls are twenty by twenty.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And that we're living in a Victorian house. Fortunately most of us don't heat with coal anymore. [Laughter] But it's all of these things that you can't expect to get, even if you put an R-factor of whatever, you insulate, it's going to cost – like I had a quotation to do **[0:46:30]** stucco on the side of my house for twenty-four thousand dollars. But they said with the R of who knows what, and this and that, you will save X dollars on your heating. And I said how many

years will it take to get the twenty-four thousand? Like I should live that long.

Interviewer: Right. Yeah.

Respondent: But then I got someone to do what had to be done for two thousand dollars, but it's just part of it is that today, people want to do what they want to do, especially if they want some business.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: **[0:47:00]** And it's very difficult.

Interviewer: You talked about Harbord Bakery. Can you comment on other stores in the neighbourhood? The changes that you've seen over these three-and-a-half decades?

Respondent: Well most of the other – I guess the advantages that – in a way it's an advantage, and in a way it's a disadvantage, it's wonderful that we have amazing restaurants locally on Harbord Street, and there are a couple on Bloor Street, but it basically means that you don't have to go **[0:47:30]** anywhere else. You know, you can walk down to College in Little Italy and things like that, and there's an amazing Indian restaurant, Utsav, in Yorkville, but…

Interviewer: Mm. I know that restaurant.

Respondent: Yeah. The real difficulty is that what we – we do have what used to be Dominion's now.

Interviewer: Metro.

Respondent: Metro. But it's, I would say, enth grade. **[0:48:00]** That Loblaws is just a little – it's a different quality of things, and then we have the twenty-four-hour – I don't know what it's called now. It changed. On the other side. The thing is I guess what troubles me is that – like I have to go up to Dupont and Spadina to get milk. Like it bothers me to pay six-fifty for milk if I can get it for four-fifty. It's a **[0:48:30]** nice ride on my bike.

Interviewer: Yeah. But you're saying they overcharge.

Respondent: Yes. But they have a captive market. People, you know, get off the subway or the bus or something, and they come there and they – and it – the other thing, if you've been to either the Christie or the Forest Hill Market of Loblaws, that you go in there when they opened that they had music, it was – like it's a good time. Everything was beautiful, you had a cappuccino. You check-out, it's three hundred. What did I do?

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: Like it's three-hundred and fifty dollars, but you had a good time. And that it's **[0:49:00]** – I guess and also it was Sobeys or something.

Interviewer: On Bloor Street.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: But I don't know. The whole – now that there's so many, quote, Japanese restaurants run by Koreans, which there's nothing wrong with that, fortunately we have Akai over here at Major, which is excellent.

Interviewer: Yes. Yes.

Respondent: But again, it's a different quality. The others on Bloor Street, they have **[0:49:30]** plastic dishes. Here they're porcelain. Like little things. The seaweed is like – all of these things, it's fresher. But the problem is most people don't care, don't know. And lots of people – I don't even know. I'm probably guilty myself. You buy something, do you really look at what it costs? As long as, like, you don't get it for over fifty dollars and it's fifteen or something, but most people today take what's given and go on.

Interviewer: So **[0:50:00]** you're saying that the supermarkets around here are too expensive, and a lot of those Japanese restaurants are low-quality.

Respondent: Yeah. Well, but again, it's a question of too expensive when compared to what? Like I personally, every two weeks, make a trip to No Frills where I can get milk for four forty-nine, and – although it's interesting that the Shopper's on College Street has milk for four-forty or four-nineteen or something. Not on Bloor Street.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: But it's just – **[0:50:30]** to me, there's certain advantages. I usually go down and get certain things in the Market. But it's just something that I read in a book last week, "The End of Illness," that it may be better to buy flash-frozen food than, like, fresh produce. Even if it's a farmer's market. When did they pick it? Well they picked it this morning. No, no. It turns out that what you got was picked for last week. Didn't sell, they put it out **[0:51:00]** in front, put a couple of fresh ones on the top, but – the nutritional value.

Interviewer: So the flash-frozen…

Respondent: Is better. And also not to boil. Like if you make broccoli or whatever, Brussels sprouts, steam them.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: Or drink the water you boiled them in. But, like, it's all the things – but the real difficulty today is that most people don't know the difference, and we come to a point where **[0:51:30]** you eat your spinach, but you're not going to look like Popeye because it doesn't have the nutrients. And I think that it's a common characteristic today. Everything is rapid, it's convenient, and you delete it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And this is, you know, we've come full-circle in a way. This is why living in a place like this, I believe, has something of meaning for me. It may not for other people.

Interviewer: But I **[0:52:00]** can see that you use – you jog, and you use your bike, you use your bike to go out to get less expensive milk. So you really use this neighbourhood the way people who live in suburbs wouldn't be able to because everything is at our fingertips.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Well then also, the – like access to Kensington, I think, is great.

Interviewer: You use Kensington Market?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: But again, too, I didn't realize that my father for whatever number of years **[0:52:30]** had been – I knew he – I think he may have been one of the first customers in the clothing place. I forget the name of it.

Interviewer: Tom's?

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah. It was a Hungarian refugee, right?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Like he knew his father.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: But Global Cheese. But I didn't realize that my father had been going in there for years. Like probably when we lived on Spadina, and I remember when he stopped driving that I took him down there, and **[0:53:00]** that Octavia or Dave saw him, and I don't know if you go to Global.

Interviewer: I don't buy cheese very often.

Respondent: Okay. But Dave, Octavia – used to wear his hair short, long, this and that. And my father remembered him when he had short hair. We went in, and Octavia, came the first time, you know, and this and that. He just looked at him and said, "Did your barber die?"

Interviewer: Oh. [Laughs]

Respondent: But, like, it was so – then he gave him a big – but then my mother, I remember, had knitted **[0:53:30]** booties and things for the kids.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: But it's having a connection and the other thing as well, is that certain places when they – "You're Doctor Track's son?" You know, that I either – I remember one place, a fellow pulled his pants down and showed the – you know, my father operated on him when he was little. But it's the type of thing that there's a certain tradition that you follow, and that it's not – but my father was doing sort of the same thing. **[0:54:00]** I don't know if – okay. But here again, something that's interesting, that in a way has sort of come out recently is a lot of the immigrants that came were Orthodox Jews who kept kosher.

Interviewer: They came to this neighbourhood?

Respondent: Yes. And had, like, Orthodox synagogues. And that they – there were kosher places to service them. Butchers, etcetera, etcetera. Most of that is gone. One of the reasons the **[0:54:30]** Harbord Bakery is here is because it's there. What I mean by that is the Lotmann's and all the others are history. Gone.

Interviewer: So that's the only one that still remains…

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: …from a long time ago.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And it, you know, with all due respect, you know, the – you know, as various people say, you know, that **[indiscernible 0:54:48]** is okay, and this and that. But if the others – like there's no competition.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And it doesn't – you know, there's something to say for having staying power, **[0:55:00]** but it's – I guess the – to me the reality of it is that for I don't know how many years, I would go there to get a crown challah, you know, for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, etcetera. But a few years ago I went and they were sold out. They would not – you couldn't reserve before. And I was sort of lost, so I figured – I got on my bike and I rode over to Whole Foods. They had hundreds of them. "Tell people." You know? And it was half the price.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: **[0:55:30]** So where do I go now for my crown challah? No lineup. I go to Whole Foods.

Interviewer: Do they have the crown?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: I never heard it called that.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: It makes sense. Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah. And the thing too, like, it's not a Gucci bread. It's a basic, like, sweet bread, but it's just I don't like being taken advantage of. And I guess what bothers me is that not to have common sense enough, I said, "You know where I can get one?" "No." At least to think, like, I just thought well maybe they **[0:56:00]** have some, or something that looks like it. [Laughs] Or they'll make something.

They had hundreds of them. You know, send – it's just that this – that you have a certain – I guess it's the old – I think I mentioned this to you before, that the Harbord Bakery, people used to take their, like, Shabbos meals there to put in the oven.

Interviewer: Yeah, I heard that.

Respondent: Because they didn't have the home ovens, or it would cost something. So like all of these things, which **[0:56:30]** don't exist anymore because people will buy something there and put it in their micro.

Interviewer: Right. Let me know – I'm going to switch topics completely because we're running out of time. The University of Toronto is our neighbour. Do you have any thoughts or feelings about the University of Toronto as our neighbour?

Respondent: Yes. They have a slow – like Harvard of the north. Well I believe it's the Harbord of the north. The **[0:57:00]** U of T is a very well respected school for everybody within probably fifty miles of Toronto. That the people that are here – I know that when I was at U of T I had a dear friend who now is a transplant surgeon in the States. He said, like, I came to Toronto, and that I was the sort of king of what I was doing. If I had gone to the States, I would have been the emperor. But just it's a **[0:57:30]** – if you want to say a university within a university, they think they're wonderful and that they are, because they think they are.

Interviewer: So they have an inflated sense of who they are.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Is what you're suggesting.

Respondent: And that there are some very good people there. Unfortunately, a lot of them are gone and dead, and that you can't keep playing the violin for insulin, for the electron microscope. And I guess what bothered me is that I went to a talk because my sister's executive director at Woodsworth **[0:58:00]** for the President's Circle, and this – what was she? A cancer detective gave a talk on nanotechnology

and about developing like nanotechnology to use with the PSA test. So I stood up at the end and said, "The PSA test isn't specific, so what difference does it make if you make something that'll detect, you know, ten to the minus whatever, like nano ten, twelve, or ten to the minus fifteen?"

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: What difference will it make? "I have **[0:58:30]** a copyright on it." And I thought to myself that's the difference. She should make some money. But I guess the difficulty that I have is that I was at the university for roughly seven, eight years, and I'm the first one to admit that I was young. I was naïve or more naïve than I am right now. I'm playing I'm not. But I thought that the university was a place of higher learning, was a place of integrity, was a place where people would share ideas, **[0:59:00]** where there wasn't petty competition. Where there wasn't – things were done in an honest way. And I realized it's no different than anywhere else. That people would cheat, that there were people who would have students who had no right being a masters, a PhD student. I had no idea how they got there, but they couldn't fail. They had to withdraw because failing is not a good statistic. We're all **[0:59:30]** for statistics. And also the university, as you probably know, is headcount. If we have three thousand undergraduates, we get so much per head. If we have two thousand, we get a third less, so we have to have four thousand. Do we have the staff? Are they competent or whatever? Doesn't matter. The bottom line is we have to make – like we don't want to lose money.

Interviewer: Right. So you're saying that you think it has an inflated impression. It's not the Harvard of the north, it's the Harbord of the north.

Respondent: Yeah. I don't think that Harvard is that **[1:00:00]** wonderful either.

Interviewer: Yeah. But in terms of our neighbours, it's just, you know, we back onto U of T, or U of T backs onto us.

Respondent: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Any comments about that? What kind of neighbour U of T is to us?

Respondent: Well I think that they're interested in themselves in terms of the – well, just to finish what I said, the only thing that's important at the university is the name. The reputation. The people aren't. You know, people will come and go, and the university goes on. And you know, **[1:00:30]** big names like Marshall McLuhan, and most of it's not true. You know, the global village is Mickey Mouse. But you don't say that over there because they think it's the gospel. But it's the real difficulty that it's the small person or small community dealing with the megastructure, and that we are here to provide education. We have a mandate. We've been here for, whatever, 1830s, whatever the hell the time they'd been there. But again, if they're going to do that, if they want – what we talked before **[1:01:00]** about being an example…

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: …they have the core. University – like the older buildings. Why they didn't maintain that. I guess what frustrates me, even with New College, they can't even have the two buildings the same. And the idiocy with the Graduate House, I went to a meeting and they said, "Well we made the small windows," I think part of it was so that students couldn't jump – like commit suicide and jump out. But also because of the noise from **[1:01:30]** the…

Interviewer: Spadina.

Respondent: …Spadina Expressway, which was going to come down.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: I thought to myself, like – but then they built, like, the son of New College, south of it, or daughter, completely different architecture. Why can't they at least maintain something and that the Graduate House won an award. Fine. To be out in the desert or someplace, not to be in a downtown Victorian neighbourhood. What's her name? Olivia Chow. She didn't realize, like, **[1:02:00]** it was eight feet or eighty feet, the sign sticking out over the street.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: They missed that. Well hello, is someone asleep at the wheel? And now, I didn't – I just because of the last, was it, Gleaner that the post office is going in October. I thought from what I'd heard that the university had purchased the land, they owned it for a long time, and now they have to – if they got the corner, then they basically have the whole thing. **[1:02:30]** And the other thing that troubles me is this idea of fighting them for where the Credit Union used to be. They want to put up a, you know, multi-million-dollar whatever. The point is let's – I think there was a TV program, "Let's Make a Deal."

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: Like you want that, fine. We think it's a bit high, this and that. We would like this. Let's…

Interviewer: So you're saying we should be having a dialogue with each other, and they shouldn't just put up these gigantic **[1:03:00]** structures. Is that…

Respondent: Well yes and no. I don't know. Well see, my feeling is that they said at one time that they were, like, going to bring all of the top quality scientists from the, you know, Western Hospital and this and that, and I said they would need, like, a Volkswagen. [Laughter] But it's just the idea. Listen to what – I guess what troubles me, with all due respect, that a lot of people in this and other communities, anything the university wants to do **[1:03:30]** is bad because they're too big, they want to do this. I think the university policy, for me, having been an academia setter is incorrect. We don't need more students, we don't need more faculty, we need quality students, we need quality faculty. Maybe we should be building a homeless thing where they want to put a students' thing there because we don't need more students. And that maybe we should make, like, higher education **[1:04:00]** free for the gifted. But you pay back once you've graduated. You pay back your tuition. I've got friends in Norway that are in their – you know, almost seventy. They just paid back their medical education.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And then the university has an income this year when they can afford it. And maybe there are certain people who can't afford it. Fine. But not this, you know, that I'm going to university, I've got subsidized sixty percent, and yet I still end up with, say, twenty, thirty thousand dollars in **[1:04:30]** debt. Did I force you to go to university? You know, the real difficulty is that we – I think that we have to speak to the people there, they have to speak to us. Not that they are our enemies, but they should be part of the community, and that we should be able to do something with the corner up here. I would love to see them rebuild the Victorian houses down Robert Street.

Interviewer: Where are you referring to?

Respondent: The playing field.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: They ripped down all the houses.

Interviewer: Yeah. **[1:05:00]** And then there's that piece of land that's not being used for anything. It's just growing tall grass.

Respondent: No, no. That was…

Interviewer: The laneway.

Respondent: …the tennis court.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: That was a tennis court, and then they made a volleyball court out of it, and then they…

Interviewer: And now it's neglected.

Respondent: No, no. But this is – the real difficulty is, see, the reason it's neglected is because there isn't any money. Well, why didn't someone think that maybe if they'd left it as a tennis court, the

community would maintain it, would do this, do that. Before, I used to have my own tennis net.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Oh.

Respondent: And we'd **[1:05:30]** go up. Yeah. And that there were no nets, so instead of playing in the air, I added my own net and we'd go up and play, and finish. Many years ago, I remember going skating there a few times.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: But it's just…

Interviewer: And that rink is closed now, of course. The structure's there, but there's no ice.

Respondent: Okay. But the problem is that, I guess, that the compressor and all this was not maintained properly, and ultimately now it's going to be probably a million dollars to bring it **[1:06:00]** to work state-of-the-art or something. But the real difficulty is do we need a skating rink there? Like could that whole area be a park? Could it be something? Like what I personally would love to see is – and I thought they might be aiming for it, is that why Metro when they renovated, which I thought was ridiculous, they made the aisles smaller rather than larger so they could squeeze more junk in. Why not have parking on that level, have some, like, commerce on **[1:06:30]** the street, and have the store up like they do at, you know, Loblaws on St. Clair? The Forest Hill thing. And then come out onto the parking lot, and then maybe go up and have some, you know, condo living or something. To me, they should have put the condo tower on top of the JCC. They shouldn't have built it next to it. They should have been right at – I, again, my naivety, everyone – "Oh, no, no. We're all going **[1:07:00]** to go and fight it." I registered, I went to City Hall. I was the only one there fighting it. And then as I said, I mentioned to you, when I grew up, the tallest buildings in the communities were the churches. Something we looked up to. It was meaningful. Now, it's these dumb apartment buildings, the condos, and that – possibly more coming.

Interviewer: Well.

Respondent: And the point is we're really helpless to fight it because if they're **[1:07:30]** going to – like with the one that went up, I think they gave, I'm not sure how much, but a significant amount of money. I think it's – was it paragraph twenty-four or thirty-four or something where they give so much to the community, which isn't – which is like for use in the community. Like 1 Bedford Place, a million dollars to upgrade the park, which is for the community, but also for the people from 1 Bedford. But it's all of these things. Before, the money just went to the City Hall. **[1:08:00]** And I think we're fortunate in having someone like Adam Vaughan as our councillor.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: Hopefully we'll either have him or someone like-minded, but it's frustrating because most people don't care. That's the sad part, and especially with the changing, you say, demographics south of here, with all of the condos and here, and these people are here overnight. They're not – like live in these little cubbyholes. They're **[1:08:30]** not coming with a family or something.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: They're day-traders, and they're moving on.

Interviewer: Okay. I have two more questions.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: One is about the security of our neighbourhood.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts about how it used to be, and whether it's changed, and what it's like now. Safety, security.

Respondent: Well, I think it's probably as safe as it was. The – like I have an alarm system because I get a **[1:09:00]** whatever deduction on my house insurance, etcetera. The game they played, as you probably

know in term of naming the laneways was for the police, so the police would know if something happened, where it was. Before it was…

Interviewer: Yeah. And fire.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: But it wasn't, you know, to honour people, to do this and that, whatever. Okay, that was sort of a side effect of it. I don't think – I think that part of it is that most real **[1:09:30]** break-ins, like real thieves know what they're looking for. Most of the places around here, unless, like, you're intelligent enough to put out, like, a forty-eight-inch screen box, empty box in front of your house, someone walking by, mm-hm. [Laughter] They might have a – so what do they do? They come back the next day with Sony overalls. You know, that – there was someone who said they were an IBM serviceman and went into one of the government blocks and **[1:10:00]** started servicing the typewriters. By the end of the day, there were no – like just took them. But it's just that people weren't thinking. I think that if you don't advertise that you have certain things, and that you probably have an alarm system, keeps away the amateurs, the kids.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: Because if the alarm goes off, they know that they have a few minutes and probably either neighbours will come out, something will happen, and the professionals know how to get around the alarm. They can come down **[1:10:30]** the chimney, or like do whatever.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Respondent: So – and if you have anything, like most of what I have isn't easy to take, easy to carry, and like taking my computer or something, it isn't worth the effort, so that in a way most of what – when I did have a break-in many, many years ago where someone, some kids

forced the back, like, sliding door with a screwdriver or something, and when I came back that I **[1:11:00]** sort of thought – and this is when I just published my first book. And my sister had bought me a pen to sign the books. They'd taken it, you know, it was a twenty-dollar pen or something. Taken that, took a bottle of whiskey, and took some speakers, and then I thought everything else – and then I went downstairs. Where's my camera bag? It was there. Then I went running upstairs, you know, where's this? It was there. And – because there's really nothing. Like **[1:11:30]** candles, silver candlesticks to them wouldn't mean too much.

Interviewer: Right. Yeah. So…

Respondent: Unless they had a grandmother who – you know, this type of thing.

Interviewer: Yeah. So to answer my question, safe, not safe?

Respondent: I would say as safe as anywhere else, probably safer. And it's all a question too of this is why if we had more families and less transients, that you have people, say, who live here **[1:12:00]** talk about something. Someone listens at a bar or something. Oh, the people next door had this big barbecue. I saw on the window they have this and that. Someone comes on a weekend, holiday weekend, and takes the barbecue and does whatever. Like they come down the back way with a…

Interviewer: With a truck?

Respondent: …with a junk truck or something.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And it could be that someone wants to get rid of these things. Who knows? And the other thing today is that most people won't open the door at night, don't care **[1:12:30]** about next door, and this is why many years ago, this dear friend who's died recently was here with her young son. And I thinks he had come twenty minutes, whatever, early, and I hadn't come back from the Medical Sciences building. So Maria had a key, let her in. And I came back and Maria sort of – Norman – I went over. "Your friend with the brown coat

with the baby is inside." You know? **[1:13:00]** I don't know. I assumed she was – but I was talking about Sharon, but it's just that it's the best type of security, is people watching. If you see something that's abnormal, is to do something about it. It may be it's someone from your family who no one has seen before. Or it may be that it is someone doing something and they disappear. You know, more and more people have dogs now. I don't think dogs are the answer.

Interviewer: But you're saying generally speaking **[1:13:30]** this is a safe neighbourhood.

Respondent: I believe so.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: I believe that if you're looking for trouble, you'll find it.

Interviewer: Yeah. So before I turn this off, I'm wondering what…

Respondent: The battery's still working. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Yeah. [Laughs] That's a good question. When you knew that I was coming…

Respondent: I was going to bake a cake, but. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Did you think of anything that you wanted to talk about that I haven't touched on at all? Was there anything that you think is relevant **[1:14:00]** for me to know about these last three-and-a-half decades of your time here?

Respondent: Well I think that the real difficulty is that if someone asks questions, they usually know the answer that they would like to get. And I'm not saying that – and it's true with most things. You know, it's a simple example of how many times a day do you beat your wife? [Laughter] Not do you, but how many times. But it's just I think it's important that for you, **[1:14:30]** I'm not sure what your background perspective, like interest involvement, but you have a certain sense of is someone happy where they are? Is this a viable atmosphere

conducive for learning, for whatever? Or is this a place that is modern, in a way, **[1:15:00]** but it doesn't mean anything? Like you have a lovely leather – like I think I've seen it at the Chesterfield Shop or something, and that the picture over it is, like, came with it. This type of thing. You have an interior decorator. And I guess that it's something that you have to have both the neurons firing and the cardiac – like and working together, and that you create an ambiance, something that's relevant to you. **[1:15:30]** Hopefully it might be relevant to other people, and if it is, wonderful. If it isn't, that's fine as well. Like I've gone beyond – before when I was teaching, that I would be giving a lecture at McMaster or U of T, about ten, fifteen minutes. "Sir, is this clinically relevant?" And I'd say, "Well, that's something that you'll have to decide." Three or four minutes. "Is this on the exam?" And I said, **[1:16:00]** "I submit questions. I don't make the exam." And then I would stop and I would say, "Some of you may be old enough to realize that in life, there's something called enrichment, and that what I'm talking about today isn't in textbooks. It's state-of-the-art research, things that are going on, which may help you understand the physiological process. May help you in diagnosing a disease one day. Or it just may help you broaden **[1:16:30]** your understanding of life." Twenty, thirty people got up and left. And I thought, fine, you know? [Laughter] But it's just the idea you want to do something. Like I listen to music that I enjoy. You may have never heard of the composers and this and that. But it doesn't mean that the music you listen to isn't valid for you. And it's not for me to tell you what you should do.

Interviewer: But to **[1:17:00]** come back to…

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: …my final question to you, is there anything that you think about or feel about our neighbourhood that I didn't ask about that you would like to bring up before we turn off the tape recorder?

Respondent: I guess the real difficulty is that a number of people in the community are physically here, but if you want to say culturally or whatever, aren't. **[1:17:30]** And it's usually the same people doing

the same thing all the time, and I think that it's disappointing in a way that more people aren't more involved in what's happening.

Interviewer: To feel a commitment and a connection with our neighbourhood, you're saying.

Respondent: Yes. And the bottom line is it's what they are losing, I believe. But to turn it the other way, the certain **[1:18:00]** people may be turned off because they don't want to go to a community fair and have their face painted. They don't want to listen to some, you know, hillbilly singer. They don't – maybe they would like a string quartet. Maybe they would like some cleanse – or whatever. But it's – you can't be everything to everybody.

Interviewer: Yes. Yeah.

Respondent: And that I'm sure you're well aware that there's certain people that are involved for certain reasons, and other people who aren't involved also for reasons. **[1:18:30]** And I guess in the end, what I have realized is that we all are going to die one day; some sooner, some later. Some have cancer, some have this, some have that. So when I was doing research in endocrinology, gastroenterology, cancer, nutrition, and all of this, the government isn't following because all the food available at Metro, etcetera, is there because the government has allowed it to be there. And it's the same in **[1:19:00]** the community. That if – like I think to myself, if the people in the community really cared, and continuously, why do we have a nuclear reactor-looking-building for Lord Lansdowne school? Why isn't it something in keeping with the heritage designation? Like why do they allow these concrete block additions? You know, it's this, it's that. At least put a veneer on it that looks like brick. Like do something, and this is what, **[1:19:30]** I guess, bothers me. But I have other interests, and that I am delighted that there are people, such as yourself, you know, collecting histories and doing things like that because, like, my interest is the history of this woman in England.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: That I fully appreciate, and I think it's wonderful, that people are doing things locally. I guess the sad part is that it didn't start sooner, and that we've lost a lot of things, which people won't **[1:20:00]** know we've lost because they've never known them.

Interviewer: Well I'm trying to interview. I'm going to be meeting soon with a woman who's ninety and her sister who's ninety-seven, so I'm trying to get as much as I…

Respondent: I feel young. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Yeah. Right, right, right. But I think that you feel a connection with the community, and you care.

Respondent: But it's also that I believe that it's your actions and it's not talking about doing this and that, but **[1:20:30]** it's doing something. Like I – like usually once a month, have a music afternoon where I invite people. A week Sunday it's going to be Maynard Ferguson.

Interviewer: Lovely. Lovely.

Respondent: And I have a Seder each year. I have people for Rosh Hashanah that I have people look at my – like to do things. And I've spent time, like, helping this one friend make a book. A year of my life. But it was worth **[1:21:00]** it because I learnt a lot about his life, my life, and life in general. And if it wasn't for me, it wouldn't have happened.

Interviewer: And you talk about sharing and helping.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: But also not – it's something you should do, if you follow me. Okay, you can talk about it, but doing it is what is important. And that it's – I don't know if you want to use the term **[indiscernible 1:21:24]** or whatever, but it's just – or also the – become **[1:21:30]** a believer in the, what is it, the **[indiscernible 1:21:32]**. The thirty-six righteous.

Interviewer: Ah.

Respondent: There's an amazing program. If you haven't seen it, you should. The "God on Trial" BBC Scotland production about a group of men at Birkenau who had been selected, "You're going to die in the morning." The night before, they put God on trial. **[1:22:00]** It's fascinating. And one of the things in it is that there's this rabbi from somewhere in the east, and that the younger disciple says that he's probably one of the thirty-six.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: The thirty-six righteous who don't know who they are, don't know who the others are, but they are the ones that have been charged by God to keep humanity on course. And you know, this rabbi is, you know, making like this. But **[1:22:30]** I believe it's probably with everything. That…

Interviewer: But one of the things you said so simply and clearly is it's not only what you say, it's actually do it.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: So if you feel something. I used to teach school, and I had a student who used to say, "Talk is cheap." [Laughs]

Respondent: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And I think that's what you're saying.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Do it.

Respondent: Yes. And also…

Interviewer: I just – okay.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Finish what you were going to say.

Respondent: No, **[1:23:00]** but to do it in a way that is just, as I said before, with this friend who's decided not to pursue this project because he can't do it with the excellence that he wants to.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Well you know what? We've come full circle.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: And I'm just going to turn this off.

Respondent: Fine.

Interviewer: But before I do, I just want to say, Norman Track, thank you very, very much.

Respondent: You're welcome.

[1:23:21]

[End of recording]