

079 Mervyn Key

[0:00:00]

**Interviewer:** I'm at the home of Mervyn and Tony Key. Mervyn is sitting with me. 223 Borden. And you said you moved here in 1970.

**Respondent:** 1970.

**Interviewer:** 1970. So you've been here for forty-two years.

**Respondent:** Right.

**Interviewer:** Fantastic. Thank you very much for agree to speak to me. Okay. What I'd like you to start with is you've been here for forty-two years. What were your and your husband's ages when you [0:00:30] moved here so we know your stage of life, and then when did your children come into this house?

**Respondent:** I think in '72 I was forty-two.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** It's forty-two years ago, so forty-two from seventy-two. From seventy-three is...

**Interviewer:** Okay. So you were forty-two, so you're kind of a young middle aged or whatever you want to call it.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And you have two children.

**Respondent:** I do.

**Interviewer:** Were they born in this house? Or did you come with one? Or?

**Respondent:** [0:01:00] We came with both of them to here and they would be in that particular – you're asking me to do arithmetic real early. [Laughter] I'm not good at this.

**Interviewer:** Give or take.

**Respondent:** I would say probably about eight, seven, and six.

**Interviewer:** So your children really know this house and grew up in this house.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. Right.

**Interviewer:** Did you at any point ever have anybody else living here with you?

**Respondent:** Guests. That's all. That's all.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh. Okay.

**Respondent:** Some [0:01:30] here for a month when they came over from Britain to emigrate here.

**Interviewer:** Where did you live before you moved here to Borden Street?

**Respondent:** Chicago.

**Interviewer:** So as soon as you moved to Canada you moved here?

**Respondent:** No. The first time we came to Canada we were on Mount Pleasant, and then we went to Euclid, and then to Chicago, and then back here. We knew at that time where we wanted to live, which was in the Annex.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** And we came straight here.

**Interviewer:** So what about this place made you know that you wanted to move here? This area? What appealed to you?

**Respondent:** It was [0:02:00] downtown.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

- Respondent:** Didn't require a car, we didn't have a car, so we didn't require a car. And it was near the university, and my husband, as you know, works at the university so he could walk there, take a bike. So there was practical reasons.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** And being downtown near movie houses, theatre, whatever.
- Interviewer:** Well considering it's forty-two years later, I guess you liked it then and you like it now.
- Respondent:** Yeah, oh absolutely.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Absolutely.
- Interviewer:** **[0:02:30]** So that's a lot of years that you've been here. Are there some major changes that you've seen happen in all these years?
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** What are some of those?
- Respondent:** Well the most major change is that when we bought it, it was a whole area – was slummish. This street was a slum. This row of houses was a slum. And I mean we bought it at that time. I don't know whether you ask people the price of their house, but our house **[0:03:00]** when we bought it was twenty-three thousand dollars.
- Interviewer:** [Laughs] Lovely.
- Respondent:** The house next door, which has that revolting angel stone in it was fourteen thousand dollars a few years before that.
- Interviewer:** Well it's appreciated a little since then.
- Respondent:** I think so. I think a little.

**Interviewer:** Oh my god.

**Respondent:** So – and there were lots of kids on the street, kids playing in the street. Local eccentrics. It's changed a lot. Gentrification comes with pluses and minuses, and the minus is that it [0:03:30] had a more – what's the word? The population is renting, so you don't have a sense of community the way it was before.

**Interviewer:** You're saying that this part of Borden, which is south of Bloor, has renters.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Quite a few of the buildings. There's several of them.

**Respondent:** I would say quite a few, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Do you know who those people are? I mean are they students? Are they...

**Respondent:** There are houses, student houses up the road. You know it's a student house because of all the stuff outside. [0:04:00] And there are other people, I think, that are renting. But it does mean that a population is moving and there's not such a sense of community. And there's fewer kids on the street kind of thing. Middle-aged, single couples.

**Interviewer:** Well people have a different investment if they are renting as opposed to those of us who live here and take pride in our homes.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And you're saying fewer children. So Halloween's coming up, I'm aware of it. So Halloween, there are fewer kids coming around.

**Respondent:** Oh yeah. Maybe one or [0:04:30] two.

**Interviewer:** Oh so it's dead, Halloween.

**Respondent:** Oh yeah.

**Interviewer:** And when your children...

**Respondent:** I'm quite happy about that actually. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** Yeah, but when your children were growing up and they were going out for Halloween...

**Respondent:** There were more children, but yeah. A lot more children.

**Interviewer:** So...

**Respondent:** And the young girl, Desi, who's two houses away from me, she grew up here. She's a poet. She'll be interesting for you to go and talk to.

**Interviewer:** I'll take her name down.

**Respondent:** She's been here most of her life. I think she might have even been born here. **[0:05:00]** And so she was part of a growing up of the kids that I knew in the area.

**Interviewer:** Is she about the age of your children?

**Respondent:** She's a little bit younger than my daughter. She's just over forty, had her first kid. So that's nice. There's going to be a new child on the block.

**Interviewer:** Right, right.

**Respondent:** But she's been around since we came here.

**Interviewer:** But before I leave...

**Respondent:** I'll give you her number.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. I would appreciate it. Yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. For sure.

- Interviewer:** So in terms of a feeling of community, it's changed because there are people who are coming [0:05:30] and going, and who don't feel the same pride as somebody who's invested in staying here over the years.
- Respondent:** But you know, Ellie, people who live in a run-down house and own it still don't always have a sense of pride. It was very slummy, this street. I would not say that people have a sense of pride in those days. There's more of a sense of pride now. You know, as gentrified and all that kind of stuff, so it's changed that way too.
- Interviewer:** So if you came here forty-two years ago, when did this gentrification begin? Do you have any sense of that? [0:06:00]  
We're talking about 1970.
- Respondent:** Yeah. I would say about fifteen years ago, something like that.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** In 1995, 1990 I think. Something like that, yeah.
- Interviewer:** The houses that have students, I assume, nobody's modifying those homes. But have you seen people modifying in these last fifteen years? Are they – I assume that they're upgrading their homes.
- Respondent:** Yeah. Oh, but yeah. This street is – this whole area, as you know, has [0:06:30] been made to be very nice, very into living the way it looks.
- Interviewer:** The houses that are being bought now by people who are staying, who makes up those people? Who are they?
- Respondent:** The new people moving into the area?
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Over the last, say, ten, fifteen years.
- Respondent:** Usually single, couples, no children.

- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** And their children have already left? Or they're single and...
- Respondent:** I think probably their children [0:07:00] have left, or they didn't have any, or they don't want any.
- Interviewer:** Right. Yeah. So it's not a family...
- Respondent:** I think about forty – I don't know what it's like on your street, but people on this street are usually about forty and upwards. Not a young street. Not a street with young families.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Well my – I live on – for the tape I live on Borden south of Harbord. I have a number of young families there. And I'm not saying it's crowded with young families, but they're families with children.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And it does make a...
- Interviewer:** Young children.
- Respondent:** ...difference to the street.
- Interviewer:** [0:07:30] Yeah.
- Respondent:** You know?
- Interviewer:** I still don't see them playing outside very much. A little bit, but not very much.
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** There's a different attitude towards leaving children alone on the street.
- Respondent:** Also people used to play in Central Tech across from the houses, my house here. It's like a park because it's Central Tech. And so

people did, in the past, bring their kids out to play ball or that kind of thing over there.

**Interviewer:** And now?

**Respondent:** Well there's no kids.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** You know?

**Interviewer:** **[0:08:00]** So now it's a bit of a doggy park. I see people sometimes – when I pass I see people with their dogs.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** But it's not family as much as...

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** ...couples with dogs.

**Respondent:** Yeah. That's why it's so nice having Desi next door, who's forty and has this young child, year-old child. So that's to me – is exciting, having a child on the street, especially a friend, you know?

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Okay.

**Respondent:** Lovely.

**Interviewer:** I would love to meet her.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** When you moved here forty-two years ago, **[0:08:30]** who made up the neighbourhood in terms of what countries and what languages?

**Respondent:** Portuguese. Well I have an Italian who's been here as long as I have on the south side, and he has a perspective or an attitude that's very different from mine. I planted a maple many years ago, a

little baby, and branches over his garden, and he cut off the branches that were over his garden. So his attitude – and he's also cut down my hedge. [0:09:00] I mean I've had – we've had problems with him because of his different attitude towards nature and towards gardens, so he's a bit difficult. The one on the north side is Portuguese. They've been here longer than us.

**Interviewer:** Oh. They speak English?

**Respondent:** No, they don't actually.

**Interviewer:** Oh, too bad for me. I could get an interpreter, I guess.

**Respondent:** You could talk to their children who are obviously bilingual. The grandchildren of course are not. They speak English. I think that's what happens with [0:09:30] immigrant families. But they're very, very pleasant people next door, and it's good because we're attached, and the walls are thin, so – and they're very quiet.

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

**Respondent:** So it was Italian and Portuguese, and I think the Hungarians before that when the place was a slum. And a number of gay people on the street, two gay guys. One guy was murdered on the street. He was gay.

**Interviewer:** [0:10:00] Homophobia.

**Respondent:** I don't know. I think – I knew him. He was not a particularly – he was a bitch. Very bitchy. [Laughter] It was awful. I'd meet him on the street, and somebody would go past and he'd say, "Oh, wasn't that terrible. Look at their legs." I mean something really quite – and I knew that when I left him he was saying about – I don't know about – but he was the one that was murdered, and he picked up a guy in a bar or something, and he was – there's another gay couple who now – is owned by – [0:10:30] he used to be a cellist in the Toronto Symphony. I think he was a cellist. And Mary – what's her name? She's sort of an opera singer.

**Interviewer:** Mary Lou Fallis.

- Respondent:** Yeah. She lives up the street. She bought the home from this gay couple who used to be very friendly.
- Interviewer:** Oh, I know that house. Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah, it's a very nice house.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Nice atmosphere, and Victorian feel to it. It's a lovely, big garden. So there were a lot of mixed people on the street. There's a very famous playwright, Larry somebody who [0:11:00] I knew who died. I think he died of AIDS, I can't remember. He also lived on the street. And other nationalities, I can't remember any others in the past. And I don't know about your street, but on this street you just get to know the people that are very close. It's not so far away. So the area that I knew, it was quite a mixed bag.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Very mixed...
- Respondent:** Gay, and Portuguese, Italian, Hungarian, [0:11:30] English, yeah.
- Interviewer:** You commented before I turned the tape on that many years ago there were a lot of Jewish people living here. When you moved here, was it still quite Jewish?
- Respondent:** No. Not in my – not in this particular area, but the history I know, it was an immigrant – and it makes sense because these houses are so small, and you could say there's a bit of a meanness about moving because they're so small. So this is why it was an immigrant area. It's just the history I know [0:12:00] about.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. And a lot of them felt as soon as they earned some money they would move north to bigger homes, and to show their success in some ways.
- Respondent:** Right.
- Interviewer:** And those of us – some of us are very happy to be right here.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** The other thing that has changed here beside the – using to be a rather depressed area is that on the corner here, there's been a – on this side, there's been these houses, quite large houses built. I think there's four of them. Just along Sussex here.

**Interviewer:** [0:12:30] Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** And on the opposite side there's also some new houses built. They were – all have been built in the last twenty years.

**Interviewer:** So you razed whatever was there.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And they put these bigger ones in.

**Respondent:** Right.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** And that used to be a rather nice little house, a bungalow. Not new at all, but one-storey with a very large garden, wild garden.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** So to see the garden go and have these modern – it's quite nice what they've put up. I'm not complaining, but [0:13:00] you take – the character's lost with a modern house.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** And the same with the houses on the opposite side. They took down something that was a little bit dilapidated, but with oodles of character.

- Interviewer:** Yeah. So depends on who bought. Obviously somebody bought – I guess they bought a few homes in order to put up the floor...
- Respondent:** That's right.
- Interviewer:** ...or so that they had there.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And what was irritating about that, they came around and asked permission because of the building permits, and I said yes, on the condition that they wouldn't destroy any of the beautiful [0:13:30] trees they had. Well...
- Interviewer:** They're gone.
- Respondent:** [Laughs] Yeah, of course.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** I'm so naïve.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So it's lost some of the character of it's – like these windows that you have up here...
- Respondent:** Right.
- Interviewer:** ...the stained glass, which are so beautiful, that all the old homes have.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** But that's the last that I still remember is the – that when you modernize things, they become more efficient, you lose the humanity and the beauty because I think efficiency always means [0:14:00] cutting down and changing things are maybe not efficient, but are beautiful.
- Interviewer:** Well and if people – if you keep your one home and you're willing to invest some money in it, you can have air conditioning, or whatever

you want. Those systems. But you have to create it in your own home.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** So those are doable. You have to put some money in.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Do you have air conditioning?

**Respondent:** Sorry?

**Interviewer:** Do you have air conditioning here? Central...

**Respondent:** We have in the bedroom. [0:14:30] Only the bedroom.

**Interviewer:** So that means a unit.

**Respondent:** Is upstairs, yes. The air is just upstairs.

**Interviewer:** So you haven't put air conditioning into the house.

**Respondent:** No, no.

**Interviewer:** What kind of heating systems have you had in the forty-two years?

**Respondent:** Well we actually changed the heating system – was it last year? And the modern ones are not as good as the old ones. The old one was much more efficient, and never broke down in forty years. And I don't know why, but we decided to change it. I mean I suppose influenced by what you read in the paper that you'll save money, [0:15:00] blah, blah, blah, more efficient.

**Interviewer:** Yes, efficient.

**Respondent:** Yeah. We also have a TV. That's also forty years old, our old TV. [Laughter] It's in that cupboard there. [Laughter] Forty years old. It's good enough.

**Interviewer:** Oh, so you're not wasteful people. [Laughs]

**Respondent:** No, we try not to be.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Really hard not to be.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** So yeah.

**Interviewer:** You said that you get to know **[0:15:30]** the people really – that you're closest to about – approximately.

**Respondent:** Right.

**Interviewer:** So I'd like to move on to talk a little bit about some of the east-west streets.

**Respondent:** Right.

**Interviewer:** I'm assuming that you might know the most about Bloor because that's the biggest, the big street that you're closest to.

**Respondent:** Right.

**Interviewer:** I'm not sure. But could you spend a few minutes talking about the stores that were here, that are here, other commercial establishments on Bloor Street near you?

**Respondent:** What about on **[0:16:00]** Sussex?

**Interviewer:** Oh, I'd love to hear about...

**Respondent:** There was a...

**Interviewer:** Yeah, please.

**Respondent:** ...you know Brunswick?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** The next block over? On that side, I think – I can't remember if it's that side. There used to be a shoe shop. Mending shoes.

**Interviewer:** Oh, a shoe repair.

**Respondent:** A shoe repair.

**Interviewer:** So it was Sussex...

**Respondent:** It may be one block over.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So Sussex and Brunswick or Major.

**Respondent:** Sussex. I think it might have been one over, which is – what's the one on the...

**Interviewer:** Major.

**Respondent:** It could have been on the southeast [0:16:30] corner of Major and Sussex.

**Interviewer:** Oh, I had not heard about that shoe...

**Respondent:** That was a shoe shop. You didn't buy shoes there.

**Interviewer:** Was a repair shop. Yeah.

**Respondent:** Repair shop.

**Interviewer:** Shoemaker.

**Respondent:** Shoemaker. And then on the corner of Brunswick and Sussex was a variety store on the north-east corner. It's all gone now because the houses have been taken down.

**Interviewer:** Because a number of those corners have houses that were clearly shops before, [0:17:00] because you have the big shop windows.

**Respondent:** Right. Those are the ones that – that was a variety on Brunswick and Sussex, and the other one further away on the south side was the shoe shop.

**Interviewer:** Did you use those two shops?

**Respondent:** I did.

**Interviewer:** You did.

**Respondent:** Yeah. I mean those days you got your shoes repaired. [Laughs]

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

**Respondent:** And yeah, obviously a variety.

**Interviewer:** And were the owners there changing hands? Or was it long-term?

**Respondent:** I think it was long-term actually. When they went [0:17:30] they were there probably for ten years while we were here, and then when they went, they were converted into houses. And again, it was a diminishing of the atmosphere in the sense of village-like.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** But when that went it was – you know...

**Interviewer:** Well that's why I ask because if it's the same owner over many years, you know them, they know you, you know each other's names. The kids know, they know your children.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** It's part of the village.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah. [0:18:00] So that was on here, and have you seen pictures of Harbord? There's a photograph of Harbord before my time when they had trees. It was a gorgeous street. The trees were right over the...

**Interviewer:** Oh really. No, I haven't seen it.

**Respondent:** Go and find it because it's a fairly common picture. I've seen it a couple of times at meetings, and it breaks my heart to see the street so ugly now. It's so ugly, Harbord. But before, you have these trees...

**Interviewer:** Like a [0:18:30] canopy.

**Respondent:** Yeah. I mean you can have the most ugly street. If you've got trees as a canopy it's a beautiful street. It was a beautiful street before. Beautiful. All gone.

**Interviewer:** Do you know why they were removed?

**Respondent:** I don't know. It's before my time, but I've seen pictures of it, and again it's sort of the thing that disturbs me to see what we've done.

**Interviewer:** When you moved here just south of here, was Central Tech as it is now?

**Respondent:** Yeah. Exactly the same.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh. Okay. So there were no [0:19:00] changes.

**Respondent:** The car park was there, the car park was up at the top there. That hasn't changed at all.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** Let me just get that and tell them I'm busy, because otherwise they will leave a message.

**Interviewer:** Bloor Street. What were the – what was here at...

**Respondent:** Well the place at the corner used to be a men's clothes shop called Kaplan's. You must have heard that.

**Interviewer:** No.

- Respondent:** [0:19:30] Obviously owned by a guy called Kaplan. Nice guy. I remember because we used to go in there a lot for socks and that, and then the pants, that kind of thing. And so that was a clothes store, Kaplan's. And...
- Interviewer:** And it was men only. Men's clothes.
- Respondent:** Only men's.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** And then it became Dooney's.
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah.
- Respondent:** The famous Dooney's. And now it's a yogurt store. It's come from the sublime sort of ridiculous on that side.
- Interviewer:** But Dooney's was also an establishment, a community establishment.
- Respondent:** Oh yes, very much.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** I mean that became [0:20:00] quite famous, I think, as a centre for writers and that kind of thing.
- Interviewer:** Right. Was it a place that you and Tony liked or used?
- Respondent:** Not so much Tony. I was there five times a week.
- Interviewer:** Oh. So that was a big loss for you.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. Oh yeah. And there's a lot of people who would go there like me, so it was very European. Very European.
- Interviewer:** Oh.

- Respondent:** And a lot of writers went there, a lot of artists, and you could go there – [0:20:30] it's like going to the JCC. You'd go there and you'd know tons of people, and you can smile, and chitchat, and so that was a – that came after Kaplan, and that was there for a long time.
- Interviewer:** I remember briefly when they had a fight with one of the coffee shops that wanted to take over Dooney's.
- Respondent:** That was Starbucks.
- Interviewer:** Right. And you won that battle.
- Respondent:** Well it wasn't so much a fight with Starbucks. It's a fight with a guy who owned the property of Dooney's.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** He owned the building.
- Interviewer:** Right.
- Respondent:** And Dooney's had [0:21:00] rented the property from John Hicks, who's a lawyer, and John Hicks – without telling the Dooney people, Graziano, he was going to give it to Starbucks just like that after fifteen, twenty years of renting it to Graziano. So behind Graziano's back he went to Starbucks, said, "Would you want to rent?" They of course said yes. Why would they not? And then Dooney's got in to say, "Uh-uh." And that's why they had the fight. It wasn't so much with [0:21:30] Starbucks, it was with Hicks.
- Interviewer:** I see.
- Respondent:** Because Hicks refused – Starbucks then said to – there's a lot of publicity, and Starbucks was getting bad publicity, so they said to Graziano, "You can take it." Pretending to be rather neighbourly and not, you know – I'm not naïve about that. And John Hicks said, "No, you can't do that" to Dooney's, and that's why they went to court. All to do with issues and morality, morals, you know?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Greed.

**Interviewer:** [0:22:00] Yeah.

**Respondent:** They all do big business. All to do with all that stuff, and Dooney's was a small guy who beat Starbucks, you might say, and Hicks. So it was an important battle for that café.

**Interviewer:** Well – and it was an important establishment for the neighbourhood.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** A certain group in the neighbourhood.

**Respondent:** Yeah, it was.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** And it was very popular, and some things happened and it became not so popular, and Graziano made some [0:22:30] poor decisions, and it finished.

**Interviewer:** And when he moved it's never been the same. He's the person who owns the...

**Respondent:** That's right. He owned that and then he moved to Brunswick...

**Interviewer:** Right. Yeah.

**Respondent:** ...and a bad decision was made.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Bad decision, so.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So Dooney's was an important spot.

- Respondent:** It was.
- Interviewer:** Other restaurants or theatres? Or anything that you can describe to me that were on Bloor in this neighbourhood?
- Respondent:** Well that Bloor Cinema has always [0:23:00] been important.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** It's always been there. And there used to be a Revue, so you had two different movies every night.
- Interviewer:** It was the Revue?
- Respondent:** Yeah. The way they did – the documentary...
- Interviewer:** Right.
- Respondent:** ...that used to be the Revue, and two different movies every night. So you could always rely on something. A bit dilapidated over time, but reliable.
- Interviewer:** Well and a bit dilapidated until just about two years ago.
- Respondent:** Yeah. It got worse and worse.
- Interviewer:** But everybody loved it.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** It got worse and worse, and that – but it didn't [0:23:30] matter, you know? It's – so that was there. And then kitty-corner to Kaplan's, which is on Howland on the east side, that used to be a bakery.
- Interviewer:** What kind of bakery?
- Respondent:** I think it was Jewish. I can't remember. He served Halal bread.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** And he wasn't very nice, I remember. He wasn't very nice. He was never – [0:24:00] I'd go there for my bread and he would never – it was if I was a stranger.

**Interviewer:** Always a stranger.

**Respondent:** Always a stranger. So he – but it was a good bakery, I remember. And there's been lots of changes along – oh, one big thing that happened. The bookstore, the H & M Bookstore or something, that was empty for a long – like many, many years.

**Interviewer:** I remember that.

**Respondent:** And that was owned by a Hungarian woman who was very wealthy, and for some reason [0:24:30] didn't want to sell it. And it was – it used to be a – like a grocery store selling imported chocolates. But you'd go in there and you'd see mouse...

**Interviewer:** Eww.

**Respondent:** What do you call it? Feces.

**Interviewer:** Droppings.

**Respondent:** Mouse droppings.

**Interviewer:** Eww. Oh my god.

**Respondent:** And they were reported, and it shut. And for about – it must have been twenty years, it was nothing there. And they went from that – so they went from being a grocery store to being empty, to being the HMV. So that was a [0:25:00] big change.

**Interviewer:** I remember that being closed.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Boarded up for many, many years.

**Respondent:** And then not a good place. I mean it made it such a big space. It had an impact, negative impact. The other place that's changed a lot is Brunswick House.

**Interviewer:** In what way has it changed?

**Respondent:** Well we used to go there. It used to be – we used to go there with friends because it was a place the socialists used to hang out, and you'd meet people who had a similar [0:25:30] political bent, and so you'd go there – and the other place that we used to hang out was – was it the Blue Room? Oh Christ.

**Interviewer:** On Brunswick south of Bloor?

**Respondent:** No, no. No, it was further – it was Hungarian. There used to be lots of Hungarian restaurants and they're all gone except for one now.

**Interviewer:** Except for Country Style.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Well further along from the Brunswick there was a restaurant, and you went through this long passageway into what was called the Blue Room [0:26:00] or something. And there would be lots of smokers there, and lots of intense political discussions, and that kind of stuff. So that was another place you'd go to if...

**Interviewer:** But both of these that you're just describing were kind of left-wing groups who got together and...

**Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah. It was all very sort of nebulous and casual, but you would know that if you went there there would be somebody of the same political persuasion as yourself, you know?

**Interviewer:** So you had those two places and Dooney's.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So...

**Respondent:** Dooney's. That was before Dooney's.

- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** That was before Dooney's.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** Because we [0:26:30] came from – well we came from Chicago here. That's right. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. So those are big, big changes on the street. What do you call it? Metro's been there. It used to be Dominion's. That's been there forever.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Where have you done your shopping? Let me just introduce one other thing once – I'm asking about shopping.
- Respondent:** Right.
- Interviewer:** You talked about the corner store, and now you're saying Metro was there forever. What about Kensington Market? Where [0:27:00] have you done your shopping? And has it changed through the years?
- Respondent:** I used to go to Kensington for vegetables obviously.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** And that's changed. It used to be all vegetables. Now it's maybe a quarter. Now it's got cafes, and it's very different.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** It's okay. I can – I move quite happily with that. That's okay. Except I think it was [0:27:30] more colourful and vivid with all the fruit and vegetables out.
- Interviewer:** And the owners, who were the owners? Do you have any recollection of that? Of all these fruit and vegetable...
- Respondent:** I think they were Portuguese, Italian, maybe some Jewish mixed in there somewhere.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** But very big cheese shop. I'm not sure if they're still there.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, they're still there on – it's a north-south street.

**Respondent:** Right.

**Interviewer:** Yes. I think there's still two of them beside each other.

**Respondent:** Okay. Because that was a big place to go to in the city.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. With the huge wheels of cheese.

**Respondent:** That's right. That's right. That [0:28:00] was the place to go to in the city for cheeses.

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

**Respondent:** Now it's not anymore. There are other cheese shops.

**Interviewer:** Oh yeah, sure. One right on the corner here.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So you did – you bought cheese in Kensington Market, and vegetables.

**Respondent:** Yeah, and vegetables. Yeah. Yeah. Not meat. Maybe once or twice meat.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Occasionally fish. Yeah. There's no cafes really.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, that is a change.

- Respondent:** There's no cafes. Maybe one or two. They were sort of grungy. So we didn't go there for coffee. No Second Cup, [0:28:30] of course. That wasn't even around in those days. So yeah, that's changed.
- Interviewer:** When you moved here forty-two years ago, was there any delivery of food? Or was that finished?
- Respondent:** That was finished.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** There was no delivery of milk.
- Interviewer:** So there was no delivery.
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** No. If anything that's delivered now it's papers. The Globe or The Star or something.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** [0:29:00] We talked about Bloor and Sussex. The only thing you mentioned about Harbord was we lost the beautiful trees. Anything – any other recollections about Harbord, about how it was used and what was there, and what is there now?
- Respondent:** There weren't so many shops. There weren't so many restaurants, for sure.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Oh. We counted them. There were seventeen between Spadina and Borden.
- Respondent:** Well you have to remember, Ellie, when we came in '72 or even before that because we were here two years in Toronto before that, before we went to – after Africa and before we went [0:29:30] to

Chicago – there were no such things as decent restaurants in the city. This was not a restaurant city. And if you went to the airport to meet somebody from overseas, you couldn't buy a drink.

**Interviewer:** At all?

**Respondent:** I think you had to buy a meal with a drink.

**Interviewer:** Oh my god.

**Respondent:** And there used to be a plate of cheese that they would sell, and it was all curled up and old, but that's what people would buy to get a drink. You'd have to buy this plate of [0:30:00] cheese. So things as far as restaurants are concerned, and food, and wine changed drastically. Well the whole city's changed in these last forty years from being a very boring, dull town to being, I think, a very exciting town culturally speaking.

**Interviewer:** Well you know I grew up in Montreal, and I didn't come to Toronto as a child, but we called – we had two names. One was Toronto the Good, and we also used to say that they pull [0:30:30] in the sidewalks on Sundays just so – I mean what you're describing is it's really...

**Respondent:** Boring.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Totally boring.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** But it's not now.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** This is a very vibrant city.

**Interviewer:** So in order to be able to get any alcohol you had to order food.

- Respondent:** Yeah. At the airport.
- Interviewer:** And there were very few – no good restaurants.
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. Hardly any.
- Interviewer:** Right. Yeah.
- Respondent:** It's amazing how this city has changed. Just – you know in the literature, the opera, the ballet – **[0:31:00]** it's just wonderful.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** You know? And this area has demonstrated that too with Harbord having all these terrific restaurants between Spadina and Bathurst, and having cheaper, good quality ones on Bloor Street, which is for students more. Harbord is there for Students. I mean I'm sure you know that, but just...
- Interviewer:** Could you come back to Brunswick House because we talked about – you said you used to go there, you had a good time.
- Respondent:** Right.
- Interviewer:** What **[0:31:30]** have the changes been?
- Respondent:** I think it's students now and they go there to get drunk. I don't know because I don't go.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** But just from my – people who live around there, they complain about it, and people getting drunk, and being sick, and women are getting raped from time to time. All that kind of stuff. And then when we went, the idea was not go to get drunk. The idea was to socialize with a drink, so you know.
- Interviewer:** So that's really **[0:32:00]** been a downhill place.

- Respondent:** And also the guy who owns it. I think he's got a reputation of not being a particularly community-minded person. He's there for the – for money, more money, more money, so that destroys the whole area.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. I know there's a lot of anger because it's very unpleasant for the people who live really close to it.
- Respondent:** Yes. Awful, I think. Awful.
- Interviewer:** And certainly we've made efforts to modify things, and he's a fairly stubborn man who's [0:32:30] doing it his way.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. What about traffic?
- Respondent:** Oh, Gilbert chappy – Richard Gilbert? Is it Richard Gilbert? Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent:** He, I think, needs to be given an enormous amount of credit. He began, and I thought put into practice, was this one-way area streets around here.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** When we first came it wasn't like that, and so cars would take shortcuts through the street and really fast up the street. And it was noisy, [0:33:00] and unpleasant, and dangerous, and this was put into being by Gilbert, Mr. Gilbert, and...
- Interviewer:** He is the person that I send all these interviews to.
- Respondent:** Yes. Now I recognize the name.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** He looks like a nice man.

**Interviewer:** He is.

**Respondent:** And so because of him, I'm pretty sure it was him. You should check with him that he – because of that, made this area livable in. For you too, in your street too I'm sure, this whole area became – well you can see what it's like. Very quiet. Very quiet.

**Interviewer:** Well there's no way to zip from [0:33:30] Bloor to College...

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** ...in twenty seconds.

**Respondent:** But you could before.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Right up Harbord all the way up to Bloor. This was like a racing track.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** So that's been changed too, for the better.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. I'll have to make sure he listens to this piece of the interview.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** [Laughs] Yeah. So making these streets a bit of a maze has worked for those of us who live in the neighbourhood.

**Respondent:** Oh absolutely. Absolutely.

**Interviewer:** Okay, Richard. Thank you.

**Respondent:** Yeah, for sure.

**Interviewer:** [0:34:00] Yeah.

**Respondent:** Another person that should go on here is Tim.

**Interviewer:** In what way?

**Respondent:** Well I was involved in a committee with him as the Chair. He's finished, I think, last year. It was the planting of trees in the back gardens of people.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** You may have been...

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** ...contacted for that. And Tim did a wonderful job, and he was a great Chair.

**Interviewer:** He still is.

**Respondent:** So that's Tim too.

**Interviewer:** Tim – he's our Chair right now.

**Respondent:** I know.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** He's lovely.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And works very hard for the community.

**Respondent:** He's just terrific. I mean these people have got such a [0:34:30] big heart and, you know, very admirable people. They should – the City should grant prizes or something to let the City know that these are the citizens who are working for the city.

**Interviewer:** Rory Gus Sinclair has just been given an award for his community work.

**Respondent:** Good.

- Interviewer:** He just – yeah. So the City – maybe it should do more, but I was delighted that Gus won that.
- Respondent:** And is it [0:35:00] reported in the papers?
- Interviewer:** I'm going to have to ask him. I'll see him at the Market tomorrow.
- Respondent:** It should be. It should recognize the citizens who are really worthy of respect...
- Interviewer:** Yeah. He doesn't know it, but I'm bringing him a little bottle of champagne tomorrow [laughs] when I see him at the Market because he's – I agree. Those three people work very hard.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** And have been doing it...
- Respondent:** For years.
- Interviewer:** That was for – yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent:** I mean I didn't know Tim until five years ago or something, but Gus – when I was very involved in the area [0:35:30] politically, Gus was working extremely hard then, and so was Mr. Gilbert, obviously, because of the street thing.
- Interviewer:** And still does.
- Respondent:** Yeah. So I mean I don't. Although I am hoping to attend the meeting tomorrow night as a matter of – well, I want to do that. But so these people are consistently working hard for our benefit.
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah.
- Respondent:** So it's worthy of respect.
- Interviewer:** And over the long haul, as you described.
- Respondent:** Yeah. No, it's truly extraordinary. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Do you have a back lane behind here?

**Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** **[0:36:00]** Is it a space that you or your family has ever used? Your children? Or – in any way?

**Respondent:** Well we have a back lane, yes.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** I have a Vespa, we have bikes.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm. And do you have a garage?:

**Respondent:** And we have a garage.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh. So everything goes into the garage. Your Vespa goes in there.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Everything goes in there.

**Interviewer:** Do you still have no car?

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So as you say, your Vespa and your bikes go...

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Was the lane ever used by your children for playing? Or did **[0:36:30]** they not play in the lane? Or use it as a...

**Respondent:** I imagine they would have done, but it's not something that I remember. It probably didn't happen very often.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh. And what do you have behind? Do you have a piece of land behind your house? Garden? Or...

- Respondent:** I have a very small garden and a garage, and then the lane.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Has your garden changed over the last forty-two years?
- Respondent:** Oh yes. [Laughs] Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** In what way?
- Respondent:** It used to be a lawn, a bit of a pathetic lawn. But it was a lawn, and now it's [0:37:00] mainly bushes. I'll show it to you before you leave.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** There's another – you might like to go and visit, which is the coach house. I'll show you where it is. I don't have their name, but it's sort of straight opposite me on the back alley, and they're living in the coach house, which used to be a factory, which produced buttons. A long time ago.
- Interviewer:** The coach house was a button factory?
- Respondent:** A factory. A button factory. A long time ago.
- Interviewer:** Whoa.
- Respondent:** Okay. So that might be interesting for you to go and talk to them.
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent:** [0:37:30] I don't have their name.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.

- Respondent:** I don't have their name. I've been told he's a famous writer. I've never heard of him. He's a bit of an asshole. [Laughter] I shouldn't be saying this. It'll be taped. I'll be sued. [Laughter] But he was...
- Interviewer:** But you don't know his name. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** No, I don't know his name, but he was somebody who two summers ago had the music so loud that you could sit in here and here it.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** And thank god all the neighbours got together, all the neighbours got together and we each rang the police up individually. The police had to keep [0:38:00] on going, and eventually they said to him, "If you keep on being reported, you will be" – what do you call it? For mischievous – you will be accused of being – having been creating mischief.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** And he stopped. No problem since.
- Interviewer:** But it didn't happen. He wasn't respectful of the neighbours.
- Respondent:** No, but the whole neighbours came together...
- Interviewer:** Wow.
- Respondent:** ...in the community, and we reported him individually and he stopped. So just, you know, [0:38:30] maybe he's changed his stripes, but that used to be a factory for buttons.
- Interviewer:** Whoa.
- Respondent:** And it's a very nice – nice. It's got a garden in the – it's very nice. So okay?
- Interviewer:** But you know, you said to me, "Oh you've probably heard everything," and I'm learning so much from you.

**Respondent:** Really?

**Interviewer:** I certainly never heard about this. Not at all. Yeah. And I didn't know the Brunswick was a pleasant place many years ago.

**Respondent:** Well it wasn't just an atmosphere, Ellie.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** I mean it was grungy in atmosphere.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** But [0:39:00] the people who went there were with the right attitudes, and now it's...

**Interviewer:** Well it matched the neighbourhood.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** I mean the neighbourhood was somewhat grungy.

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

**Interviewer:** But homey and friendly, and it was a community.

**Respondent:** And they would listen to people, you know?

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. And there's still lots of that – that political leaning is...

**Respondent:** Is still there with people like Tim.

**Interviewer:** Oh yeah, this whole neighbourhood, I think.

**Respondent:** Yeah. It's an NDP.

**Interviewer:** When there are elections going on...

**Respondent:** It's NDP stronghold, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. [0:39:30] And any – pets, cats, dogs – any comments about that? Who's had what? Or who has...

**Respondent:** Well we had a mutt, he looked like a white Alsatian. It was quite big and white. And he was quite famous in the area.

**Interviewer:** Yeah?

**Respondent:** I wish – I'd let him go out and he'd wander around. You couldn't do that now.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** You could not do that now. But he would go wandering around, and the people who knew him would feed him. His name was Rupert. And Book City had been here for a long time, [0:40:00] long, long time, and he would go to Book City when it was very hot because it's air conditioned.

**Interviewer:** Oh. [Laughs] So it was cooler than your house.

**Respondent:** It was cooler than our house. And ask the manager, John, who's been there since it opened, or Franz, the owner, and they'll tell you these stories of Rupert. He was quite infamous. There was one famous case where he went off and he didn't come back sometimes, and that was fine. [Laughs] I mean it was amazing. It was like living out in the [0:40:30] country, which is what we used to do with our dog in the country. And he didn't come back. And anyway, John told me about it later. He said what happened is Rupert had gone in there, as was his wont, sat underneath the table, and when they shut the store at night-time they forgot that he was there.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** And in the middle of the night he wanted to go out for a pee, so he's wandering around and it set off the alarm. So the police came, the police rang up Franz [laughter], he came, unlocked the door, and out [0:41:00] walks Rupert and lifts his leg. [Laughter] So this is...

**Interviewer:** What a cute...

**Respondent:** ...the story about Rupert.

**Interviewer:** But that's – I don't know of any owner now who would let a dog come into the store and just wander around.

**Respondent:** Well that was the days.

**Interviewer:** Of course there are leash laws, so you wouldn't even be able to do that.

**Respondent:** No. He would be picked up and taken to the RSPCA or whatever.

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

**Respondent:** And we would be accused of cruelty to the dog. But things were so much more relaxed and not always [0:41:30] fucking – excuse the language – not all these fucking petty rules. I mean honest to god, it drives me crazy these rules, you know? Politically correctness and all that shit.

**Interviewer:** Oh, don't get me started.

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** But I love the story about Rupert and setting off the alarm.

**Respondent:** Oh, it was a lovely story.

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

**Respondent:** It's a lovely story.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** I can just see him.

**Interviewer:** And were there a lot of other animals around here? Or? And were there...

**Respondent:** There was a time in the dog park, I began – I got a dog after Rupert died. I got another dog. It was a Vizsla. [0:42:00] I don't know if you know the Vizslas.

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

**Respondent:** They're an – have I got a picture? Oh, I'll show you a picture of Kit. She was a – she was such a lady. She was such a lady.

**Interviewer:** So you had dogs for many years.

**Respondent:** This was my...

**Interviewer:** Oh, and another big dog.

**Respondent:** No, she's small.

**Interviewer:** Really?

**Respondent:** She's medium-size.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** That was when she was quite old.

**Interviewer:** I can see all the white. Very lovely looking.

**Respondent:** But you can see the way she's sitting.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Quite regal.

**Respondent:** Oh.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** Talk about [0:42:30] regal. [Laughter] She was a very regal dog. [Laughter] And I started taking her over to Central Tech, and there

wasn't any dogs over there, and then gradually people began, and it became a very large dog park. Very large.

**Interviewer:** So that's another community-building activity.

**Respondent:** It happened. There was a very large community of dogs, and for a while this was great fun, and there was one case – do you know David Berlin?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** You must [0:43:00] know David...

**Interviewer:** Of course.

**Respondent:** ...because you're in the same circles. Of course.

**Interviewer:** Yes. Yes.

**Respondent:** Of course. Well he had, if you remember, a great big St. Bernard. A great big...

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

**Respondent:** ...called Goldberg.

**Interviewer:** Wow. He called the dog Goldberg?

**Respondent:** I think it was called Goldberg. [Laughter] I think it was called Goldberg. Great, big dog, and a nice dog except when it saw a small dog. So when it saw a small dog, it would charge over and the small dog was often on-leash, charge over, and attack the dog. And the owner would pick up the dog and try to protect the dog, and the [0:43:30] dog – Goldberg was after a small dog, and there was – there were...

**Interviewer:** And would leap up on this person holding – my god.

**Respondent:** There were a number of difficult situations.

- Interviewer:** Whoa.
- Respondent:** The issue was that David didn't have Goldberg under control.
- Interviewer:** Oh, you can't do that with a huge dog.
- Respondent:** No. He didn't. And – but there weren't a lot of small dogs, but when the small dog happened, there would be fireworks, and...
- Interviewer:** So it would be like a cat with a mouse.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Just go after it.
- Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah. And on one [0:44:00] occasion I think the woman fell down, and there was shouting, and of course, you know David.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** [Laughs] David would accuse the – he said, "Well you did – you shouldn't have picked the dog up."
- Interviewer:** Oh. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** I saw that. I saw that and heard that with my eyes and ears. [Laughs] So it was kind of stuff for him, you know?
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah.
- Respondent:** And eventually things happened, and unpleasant things happened, and they sort of dispersed and so there's been no [0:44:30] real dog park since then. But that was a big one. It was a big dog park, and it was very nice. You know, you sit there and talk to people, and...
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** ...meet interesting people, and...

- Interviewer:** Do you want to talk about what you were referring to? You said some unpleasant things happened.
- Respondent:** You know something? I don't think so. I don't think so because I'd have to name names and stuff like that. I don't want to do that.
- Interviewer:** Okay.
- Respondent:** But you know, you get such a diversity of people in that kind of situation, and you really need to have one person who's a little bit [0:45:00] crazy...
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent:** ...and mean...
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** ...and you can just – it can cause havoc.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So it's kind of toxic and the whole thing.
- Respondent:** That's what happened. That's what happened.
- Interviewer:** So that's too bad because everybody – it was everybody's loss after that.
- Respondent:** Yes it was, but I think laws became stricter, and I've gone and talked to the principal at the school and said, "Would you mind if we did this? And we'll make sure we pick up after our dogs." And blah, blah, blah, and she'd said yes. This was all very [0:45:30] casual and informal, but I don't think you could do that now. I don't think it would be allowed.
- Interviewer:** But when I'm walking up and down, I certainly see people with dogs off leashes across, you know, and playing on the grass.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.

- Respondent:** I think probably people can do, but it wasn't so – between, say, five and seven. There could be easily twenty dogs across the street there.
- Interviewer:** Well and all you need are two or three people who don't clean up after their dogs and it ruins it for everybody.
- Respondent:** Well I think people are quite meticulous about that because we [0:46:00] had gone around saying oh, do clean up. And if people didn't, we would remind them or give them a bag.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** So that was kept under control, so it wasn't the issue of people not picking up. It was the issue of someone being somewhat toxic, and it made a difference.
- Interviewer:** Too bad. Too bad.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** The – do you have any impressions or thoughts about the university being so close to our neighbourhood?
- Respondent:** No, I don't think so. [0:46:30] I mean as an academic, my husband really could not afford to live in this area now, you know, probably. And I like that there has been a diversity of people. I like being amongst people who are not all middle class. I really like that.
- Interviewer:** But those who are buying the houses now are because they – that's the only way to afford it.
- Respondent:** That's right.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And they're not impoverished writers or artists or studios [0:47:00] around here.

**Interviewer:** And that's what it was when you bought it.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Slummy but a more diverse...

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...possibly more interesting.

**Respondent:** It's become very gentrified.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** That's okay. That's okay, but there's a loss.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Well and there are some people like you who maintain the character of your home, and then there are others who come and want to, quote, improve it.

**Respondent:** Well one of my – people I know on my street have a beautiful [0:47:30] Victorian – the façade is a beautiful Victorian, a lovely old brick, but the inside is like a minimalist condo.

**Interviewer:** So they've...

**Respondent:** Oh they've dug it out.

**Interviewer:** ...gutted the inside. Yeah.

**Respondent:** And to bring it back to its original Victorian feel it would cost a fortune now, and I mean – it's their choice, and it's their property, but it's difficult for me not to, say, like lecture them. That you're destroying history here and you shouldn't fucking do it. [0:48:00] You know? But – so that's happened to a few of the houses. They've just been ruined inside, and it's such a tragedy.

**Interviewer:** Well because – I agree with you. You change the character, and you lose the character.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. What about security, safety of the neighbourhood? What was it like then? What was it like twenty years ago and now?

**Respondent:** Yeah. Well you've heard about this sexual stuff that's been happening...

**Interviewer:** Christie. Yeah.

**Respondent:** And that's made a difference to me [0:48:30] today recently. Tony's away. I have to bring my Vespa around the back. I'm going out tonight to a movie. I will be coming back here about probably nine, nine-thirty when it's dark.

**Interviewer:** So you have some anxiety.

**Respondent:** I have – oh yeah. Not some. I have a lot.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Respondent:** So I probably will park at the front, but I'm just using that to demonstrate that I do have anxiety.

**Interviewer:** Before this happened with these women in the last [0:49:00] three months...

**Respondent:** Right.

**Interviewer:** ...the area of Christie and Bloor, was your anxiety increasing through the years?

**Respondent:** No. Well you read the papers and it's always about these attacks. Before you didn't even think about it because it wasn't reported. It's all to do with the media, so I don't remember having that. I have become more cautious as I've got older due to – I don't think any increase, but it's due to the media focusing on this kind of stuff, and shove it in your face. [0:49:30] You start becoming scared.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So this has been happening over the last few months.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** In general, do you feel that this is a safe neighbourhood?

**Respondent:** I do.

**Interviewer:** Was a safe neighbourhood?

**Respondent:** I do. I do. Yeah, I do.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. But that's...

**Respondent:** And usually if I go out by myself in the evening, I'm not on my Vespa. I can walk home quite safely from the subway.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** But I'm very close to Bloor Street.

**Interviewer:** Well when I walk home from the subway, or any of the restaurants on Bloor, I'll always walk over to Spadina. I won't [0:50:00] walk down the quiet streets.

**Respondent:** Right.

**Interviewer:** I'll walk over to Spadina and then along Harbord, and then down my street.

**Respondent:** Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

**Interviewer:** So I feel very safe, but I stay on the big streets.

**Respondent:** That's right. That's right.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** And you've got a big parking lot on the school, which is – there's nobody there.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So I won't walk down Borden Street. And I can eat on the corner of Borden, but I'll walk up all the way over to Spadina.

**Respondent:** Yeah, no.

**Interviewer:** And I won't walk down Bathurst either.

**Respondent:** Because it's too quiet.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And it's not – yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah. No, you're like me, Ellie. I mean you're just cautious.

**Interviewer:** I'm cautious, and I...

**Respondent:** I think it's nice to be [0:50:30] cautious actually.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. But I use the streets willingly, happily, and I feel confident, but I use them in a safe way.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** I guess you weren't here when they were fighting the Spadina Expressway. I think you...

**Respondent:** I was.

**Interviewer:** Oh you were.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Oh, would you talk about that?

**Respondent:** Well not very much because I think when we came I was not particularly active in that at all really.

- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** I went to a few meetings and signed the right things, [0:51:00] but I wasn't out marching.
- Interviewer:** But did you have an opinion? I guess you signed because you didn't want it to come through.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. For sure.
- Interviewer:** Okay. So you had an opinion – you didn't get actively involved, but you were involved...
- Respondent:** I signed all the right things, and went to a few meetings, and yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. I think we've covered a lot of territory.
- Respondent:** Good.
- Interviewer:** I'm wondering when you knew that I was coming and that I would be asking you about...
- Respondent:** Right.
- Interviewer:** ...what [0:51:30] it was like then, and how it is now, was there anything that you thought of that – some stories that you might want to – that you might have wanted to talk about that I – topics I haven't brought up, I haven't thought about?
- Respondent:** Well these five houses are joined, right?
- Interviewer:** So you're joined on both sides?
- Respondent:** Not on this side...
- Interviewer:** Okay.
- Respondent:** ...but on the other side.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** And there's five of us all joined. We have the same – what do you call it? With the wood. A beam that goes from the end of this house right through to the end of the first house.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** So if [0:52:00] one house goes on fire, we'll get it. I don't even think about that. I've been here forty-two years, so you know, if it's going to happen it will. But there was at the first of these five houses – there was a woman there called Dorothy, and she was a street person basically, and she was a bag lady. That's what she was. She wasn't a street – she was a bag lady. And she was a fundamental Christian, so if you stopped her on the street, or she stopped you, she would start prophesising. [0:52:30] And she was quite a character, and she kept the neighbourhood a bit slummy because her house was in terrible shape. Her garden – it was a – what do you call it? It was a fire hazard, both the front and the back, and the house. It was a fire hazard. And so when she died, the house was bought and that's when this whole little five-house began to elevate in regard to the quality.

**Interviewer:** Were there – was there a problem with cockroaches and mice because of her too?

**Respondent:** Oh yeah. [0:53:00] Oh yeah.

**Interviewer:** And that's been eliminated?

**Respondent:** Oh yeah. Yeah. I mean we had mice because in the fall...

**Interviewer:** Well downtown.

**Respondent:** ...everybody gets mice because they're looking for somewhere warm.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. But it's not an infestation as it would have been because of her mess...

**Respondent:** No, no. But there were cockroaches. We got rid of them. Everything's fine. We have none of that. But she was an eccentric. She was unique. She was very different. And I liked having her here because she was so different. And...

**Interviewer:** But [0:53:30] you didn't mind getting rid of some of the...

**Respondent:** Well the issue about the house being a fire hazard was always a worry because we were attached. I forgot the name. There's a name for this beam that attaches all the houses, and I knew that if one house went, they would all go. And so I was somewhat relieved when she got too ill to stay here, but I do miss having those kind of...

**Interviewer:** Characters, the characters.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** You know, there's a certain loss to ambiance, and character, and [0:54:00] different people. We're all very similar now, you know? Middle class, and you know, white.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Btu there are a few Chinese. There' s Chinese down the road here just a few houses down.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm. But it is a more homogeneous...

**Respondent:** It is. There's no...

**Interviewer:** ...population than it was before.

**Respondent:** ...black people on the street.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. And there were around on this – especially right here because I've interviewed people who...

- Respondent:** Black people on here?
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** On this street? This bit here?
- Interviewer:** Right near – yes. **[0:54:30]** Their homes were torn down...
- Respondent:** Oh.
- Interviewer:** ...for Central Tech.
- Respondent:** Oh, it's interesting that people actually were here before the – in the parking lot place.
- Interviewer:** No, I think it was the other side when they made the big field for Central Tech.
- Respondent:** Oh, on Bathurst side. On Bathurst.
- Interviewer:** On the other – yeah. Here on the...
- Respondent:** On the east side.
- Interviewer:** ...I'm talking about the west side. Yeah. They tore down houses to do that.
- Respondent:** The west side of Bathurst is houses still.
- Interviewer:** Oh, I'm not talking about Bathurst. I'm talking about – I think it was Borden Street that they tore these...
- Respondent:** Lippincott. Going north-south?
- Interviewer:** **[0:55:00]** Maybe it was Lippincott that they tore houses down to make the field.
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I can believe that. And they're black.
- Interviewer:** Yes.

- Respondent:** Okay. Because as I remember, there were no black people on this street. No Chinese. Now there's Chinese. No Vietnamese, nothing like that. Oh, there's a Vietnamese, I think there's a Vietnamese – one of these five houses is a – I'm not sure whether it's just Korean or Vietnamese. Anyway, there is one there, so **[0:55:30]** that is changing, which is making it, you know, diversity.
- Interviewer:** Well and there were, so it became more homogeneous, but it was a little more diverse – people I spoke to who were here forty years ago.
- Respondent:** Right.
- Interviewer:** There was more diversity.
- Respondent:** More diversity, but all white.
- Interviewer:** No, no. I'm talking about Asian, I'm talking about black.
- Respondent:** Not in this part here.
- Interviewer:** Well Brunswick.
- Respondent:** Maybe in another street.
- Interviewer:** Oh, but not on Borden.
- Respondent:** But nothing...
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** ...on **[0:56:00]** this block from Sussex to Bloor Street there were no black and there were no Chinese.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** They were all white.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So I'm talking about Major and Brunswick.

- Respondent:** That could well be the case. That could well be the case. Yeah. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Well thank you, Mervyn. This has been a delight.
- Respondent:** Well I'm glad you enjoyed it.
- Interviewer:** And even though you didn't expect it, you did talk about things that I haven't heard from anybody else before.
- Respondent:** No, I'm glad I did.
- Interviewer:** And even if you hadn't, everybody has their own experience...
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...with whatever was [0:56:30] here and...
- Respondent:** Well what do you sort of – what sort of feeling are you picking up about the area then and now? And how would you describe what you're hearing? How are you putting it together?
- Interviewer:** The people I'm meeting who were here and have moved away liked it very much. Often people lived – I mean the people who were here a long time ago, even if they lived in this size house, could have had twelve people here. They – the whole [0:57:00] family would live on the first floor, and the second floor would have tenants, and if there was a third floor there would be more tenants.
- Respondent:** Right.
- Interviewer:** Or as families joined them, they all lived here until these families got jobs and found their own. So there were a lot of people. And there might have been a second kitchen possibly.
- Respondent:** There's a second kitchen here.
- Interviewer:** Okay. Okay.

**Respondent:** On this floor.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So there might have been a second kitchen.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** For sure there was only one bathroom.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Lots of people. But people liked it then and like [0:57:30] it now.

**Respondent:** Uh-huh. Maybe for different reasons?

**Interviewer:** I'm going to turn this off.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** We can continue to talk.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** I just want to say thank you. It's been a pleasure, and I learned a lot, and it's been interesting and fun.

**Respondent:** It's been a pleasure for me too, Ellie.

**Interviewer:** Thank you.

**Respondent:** Very nice.

**Interviewer:** Thank you.

[00:57:45]

[End of recording]