

080 Ruth Reingold Brudner

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

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: The date today is the 23rd of October. Ruth Reingold Brudner is sitting in my kitchen with me. She lived at 118 Borden from 1936 when she was three years old until 1957.

Respondent: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: So Ruth, I want to say thank you very much.

Respondent: You're very welcome.

Interviewer: I appreciate it, and I look forward to learning what your experiences were in this neighbourhood.

Respondent: Sure.

Interviewer: When your parents [0:00:30] moved here in 1936, I don't know whether you know it all because, of course, you were so young. Do you have any idea why they chose to live in this neighbourhood?

Respondent: Well, I think that they liked the house. They were looking – they moved from Wales Avenue.

Interviewer: Where's Wales?

Respondent: It's south of – it's closer to Dundas, and it's east of Bathurst Street. It was [0:01:00] expropriated – this is not why they moved, but eventually after we moved from that area, it was expropriated and became part of the Western Hospital.

Interviewer: Okay. But they were already downtown, your parents.

Respondent: Yes. And my grandparents and my aunt and uncle lived on Wales Avenue as well. Not in the same house, so my mother wanted to be

close to them. So I think this was the general idea. We were moving further north, but it was still within walking [0:01:30] distance, and it was a house that they really loved, and it was indeed a lovely house, I must tell you.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. What do you remember about it that was lovely?

Respondent: Well, first of all, it was much more modern than anything that I had been in my young days, and it was quite beautifully appointed. It had gumwood paneling, and still does because I saw it about eighteen years ago. And my sister, my late sister and I went to visit. And it had French [0:02:00] doors...

Interviewer: Whoa.

Respondent: ...and a lovely, for then, lovely modern kitchen. [Laughter] And it was detached. Our other house had been attached. Semi-detached, it was. And it was really, really a lovely looking house, and my parents kept it in really beautiful condition. Beautiful condition.

Interviewer: Was your sister older than you?

Respondent: Yes. Nine-and-a-half years older than [0:02:30] myself.

Interviewer: So you were three years old, she was nine-and-a-half years older, and your parents. The four of you lived there. Did anybody else live there with you?

Respondent: Yes, originally and for quite some time afterwards we had the flat rented.

Interviewer: Now when you say flat, what does that mean?

Respondent: The second floor.

Interviewer: So the four of you lived on the main floor.

Respondent: Right. And we had this family, also four people, living upstairs for quite some time until [0:03:00] my father was able to manage the house on his own, and they moved, and we moved upstairs.

Interviewer: So that was done to help pay for the house.

Respondent: Yes, yes, yes, yes. And so we lived there for all those years, and as I say, the house – my father and mother kept the house. They were both fastidious people, which I'm afraid has being genetically passed on. [Laughter]

Interviewer: [0:03:30] It passed. It jumped your generation?

Respondent: No, it came to me.

Interviewer: Oh, you're similar.

Respondent: I inherited. Anyway, and so the house always looked in tip-top shape, and oddly enough, the one that has it now, it still looks in tip-top shape, and as I say, when I visited, we went to visit a neighbour, the Weinbergs, two doors down from us. They would have been at 114 Borden, and Mrs. Weinberg, Fanny Weinberg, was a very close friend of my [0:04:00] mother's, so we saw them quite a bit. Anyway, my sister and I had gone down many years after we'd moved to visit Fanny, and she said, "You have to come and see your house," and she knocked on the owner's door and they were very hospitable Italian people. Extremely hospitable. Invited us in, showed us through the house, and oddly enough, and this is really something – I don't know if you remember the time [0:04:30] many, many, many years ago that sort of a forest green and a mulberry were two very popular colours to have painted your living room?

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: Well – and I chose that mulberry colour when we painted. And it still was the same colour. The living room was the same colour, and the house is in present pristine condition. It was terrific. Really.

- Interviewer:** So whoever painted it through [0:05:00] the years liked the colours enough to keep them.
- Respondent:** Yes. And it blended so beautifully with the wood. The wood was really rich, beautiful quality wood. It was – really, it was a lovely house. I have more appreciation for it now in retrospect than I did when we were there because, of course, I grew up with it, so I took it for granted, you know?
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** So anyway, that's the situation, and as I said, it was nice to see it again, and they had put a new kitchen in it, and they...
- Interviewer:** An [0:05:30] even more modern kitchen. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Yes. And they had also finished the basement. My father had whitewashed the entire basement, but it wasn't finished. And they had finished the entire basement, and put an everyday kitchen down in the basement because...
- Interviewer:** So they had a second kitchen.
- Respondent:** Yes. You don't use your top kitchen because that's just for show. [Laughs] You use your basement kitchen. That's...
- Interviewer:** And you said that was a Portuguese family there?
- Respondent:** No, it was Italian.
- Interviewer:** Italian family.
- Respondent:** And this was [0:06:00] very common with the Italians. I think some of them still do it. So.
- Interviewer:** So you – one is a beautiful, polished, clean kitchen...
- Respondent:** Yes, yes.
- Interviewer:** ...and the other's the used kitchen.

- Respondent:** Yes. So – but I mean the whole frame of the house was just exactly the same, and the French doors were the same. The house was – it was so gratifying to see that they had looked after it and kept it up, and that you could remember aspects of it, which were the original aspects of the house when you were living there. It just was terrific.
- Interviewer:** So you [0:06:30] really appreciate the house still to this day.
- Respondent:** I appreciate it more in retrospect than I did when I was there because when you're growing up with something, you don't realize the specialness of it.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** You know?
- Interviewer:** Would you talk to me about the family that lived upstairs?
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** Did they have a kitchen?
- Respondent:** They had a kitchen. Yes, they did.
- Interviewer:** Did they have a bathroom?
- Respondent:** They had a bathroom. As a matter of fact, it was originally the only bathroom in the house, and...
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** ...so my father decided to put in [0:07:00] an additional bathroom downstairs in the basement.
- Interviewer:** In the basement.
- Respondent:** Which he did. I mean, the basement wasn't finished otherwise, as I say, because it was just – it was very difficult for eight people. I mean it sounds ridiculous now because you think houses have so

many washrooms that we forget that huge families used to share one bathroom.

Interviewer: So until he put that bathroom in downstairs, there were eight of you sharing the one bathroom upstairs.

Respondent: Exactly right. Yes. So that alleviated a lot of difficulty.

Interviewer: I can [0:07:30] imagine.

Respondent: Yes. Yes. Yes. So anyway, that was our house, and as I say, it was very pleasant to see that it was being kept in such good order. I think my parents would have really, really appreciated the fact that the house was just as pristine as they had kept it when we lived there. Yeah.

Interviewer: Did you have anything to do with the family upstairs? Or?

Respondent: Oh yes.

Interviewer: And I assume that they walked into your house and walked upstairs.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Or was there a separate entrance?

Respondent: No, no.

Interviewer: They walked into your...

Respondent: They [0:08:00] walked into the front door, and there was a flight of stairs, like a vestibule. There was a flight of stairs.

Interviewer: Just like a half-stair.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And yes, as a matter of fact, they had two children eventually, but they only had one child when they were living with us. When they moved, they had another child. And yes, and you know, we had – as a matter of fact, I don't even know – their name was Simpson. Their last name was Simpson, [0:08:30] and the little girl that lived there, their first daughter was named Cinny, and she belonged to our synagogue. Now I don't know what's happened because I don't see her, and she may have passed on. I'm not sure about that.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: But yes. Oh yes. You couldn't help but interact.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: I mean you were in the same house. It wasn't...

Interviewer: And sharing a bathroom.

Respondent: And sharing a bathroom. Yeah.

Interviewer: what about laundry facilities?

Respondent: That was in the [0:09:00] basement.

Interviewer: Everybody used those too?

Respondent: Yes, yes, yes. Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Was there a dryer?

Respondent: No. We had a wringer washing machine.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: And then the clothes to dry?

Respondent: Well you hung them outside on the line. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: That's what you did. We had a line inside too in the basement, but you know, if you could hang them out you did because it was quicker.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: But yes, I lived in that house incidentally until I was **[0:09:30]** – well first of all, I went to King Edward Public School. I should tell you that.

Interviewer: Yes, please. Yeah.

Respondent: And I went on to Harbord Collegiate, and in my – I completed my fourth form at Harbord, and I had met someone who was also from Harbord, and a Harbord student, and we got married.

Interviewer: Oh my god. You met him in high school.

Respondent: Yes. In the debating society. [Laughs]

Interviewer: **[0:10:00]** You were both debaters.

Respondent: Yes. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Were you a team? Or did you debate against each other?

Respondent: [Laughs] No, it wasn't that. I was the secretary because I was the only female. Those days, you know?

Interviewer: So you were the secretary of the debate club.

Respondent: I was the secretary of the debating society. Yes. [Laughs] Anyway, we got married and my then husband went into accounting, so we stayed with my parents. We lived with my parents. We had a **[0:10:30]** child while we were still living on Borden Street, and my mother unfortunately was ill for quite some time and she couldn't manipulate the stairs anymore. And we had to move, and that's why

we – that's primarily why we moved, all of us as a family moved from Borden Street.

Interviewer: So did you and your then husband and your child and your parents [0:11:00] move from Borden Street? Did you move together into another place?

Respondent: Yes, we did.

Interviewer: You did.

Respondent: And we did that because, as I say, my husband was in accounting at the time, a student in accounting.

Interviewer: Oh, so he didn't have enough money to pay.

Respondent: Right. And that was one thing, but my mother also was very ill and she really needed to be cared for.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Respondent: So that's why we moved in. The place that we moved to had a basement apartment, so – but it [0:11:30] – really, so much of my life was spent on Borden Street all my formative years.

Interviewer: Let's talk about Borden Street in terms of a child on Borden Street. What are some of your memories about the street, the sidewalk, the road, the back lane? What are some of your memories?

Respondent: Well, as I say, you knew everybody because everybody used their porches. They sat on their porches and everybody knew everybody else's business.

Interviewer: [Laughs] For better or for worse.

Respondent: [0:12:00] Right.

Interviewer: For better and for worse.

Respondent: Really, really...

Interviewer: Too much.

Respondent: ...too much. It was really – and when I walk down the street, we did a lot of walking in those days. I mean people walked in those days, so you knew everybody. You'd say hello and you know, all the way down.

Interviewer: So it was a community.

Respondent: It was a community.

Interviewer: A little shtetl.

Respondent: Yes, yes. Everybody knew everybody pretty well, you know? If not necessarily by name, certainly by sight.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. But there was a lot of [0:12:30] hello.

Respondent: Yes. A lot. A lot.

Interviewer: And the children – did you play on the sidewalk?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: You played in the front.

Respondent: I had – Debbie was my friend, and there was another girl, Edith, who lived on our street, which I'll tell you about in a minute as well, and some girls on Ulster who are still my friends today.

Interviewer: Wow.

Respondent: So we played together. [0:13:00] Some of us went to school together. We went to King Edward School together, and I also had a friend on Borden Street who I just met again at the Harbord reunion, and she was my close friend from early childhood.

Interviewer: What did you play?

- Respondent:** Skipping. [Laughter] Double-dutch. We did a lot of – well I did a lot of crafts. I wasn't a particularly athletic kid. Some of the kids were athletic, [0:13:30] but I wasn't. We used to – this is really going back. We used to play with chestnuts. Did anybody ever told you about this?
- Interviewer:** One person mentioned it, so tell me about what you remember.
- Respondent:** You would take a chestnut and you would rub it on the lamppost, which was different from the lampposts we have now. They were rough. And you would be making what you thought was an eraser. Of course, it never worked, but you [0:14:00] still – you would still do it because you had faith that if it works for other people, it's got to work for you, so I can't tell you how many chestnuts I did that with.
- Interviewer:** So there was a myth about chestnuts.
- Respondent:** Right. We also made necklaces. I remember doing this. We made necklaces from the seeds of melons.
- Interviewer:** Oh, so you dried them?
- Respondent:** Yes. You washed them and dried them, and you strung them, and sometimes you coloured them with nail polish.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** The only thing was that you didn't [0:14:30] realize until you got it done that they were going to be very prickly if you wore them. [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** But they must have been pretty.
- Respondent:** Yes, it was. It was pretty.
- Interviewer:** But you know, you're the first one talking about this, including rubbing the chestnuts. That I haven't heard.

- Respondent:** Yes, yes. And there also was a game, a slinging game with chestnuts. My husband knows more about that than I do because I never played with them that way, but apparently that was – they would string – put a string through the chestnuts, bore a [0:15:00] hole through the chestnuts, and put the string and then...
- Interviewer:** Whack each other?
- Respondent:** ...whack. Not whack each other, whack against the wall. And I think one exploded. Whichever exploded first lost. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Lost. Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** But he knows more about that game because he played it. I didn't. And...
- Interviewer:** So the boys and girls both used chestnuts but slightly differently.
- Respondent:** Yes, yes. And you looked for chestnut trees. We had quite a number of chestnut trees and we were always [0:15:30] collecting chestnuts. Always. That was a big...
- Interviewer:** Did you eat them at all?
- Respondent:** No, because you can't eat those chestnuts. They're not the edible kind that you get from Italy, no. We didn't eat them.
- Interviewer:** But you used them creatively in games.
- Respondent:** Yes, we did. Right. And what else I was going to tell you about? Yes. I remember I did a lot of colouring with colouring books, and painting, and cut-outs. [0:16:00] Cut-outs were very popular with girls, little girls at that time, so I did that. But what I want to go back and tell you about, remember I mentioned Edith as one of my friends? She lived in – they rented flats. She and – her mother was a widow, and she and her sister and her mother lived in two different residences on Borden Street. One of them was a Jewish school. Did you know that there was a Jewish school?
- Interviewer:** [0:16:30] On Borden Street?

Respondent: On Borden Street.

Interviewer: No, I didn't.

Respondent: A [indiscernible 0:16:31] they called it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And they went...

Interviewer: North of College?

Respondent: Yes. It was – I'll tell you where it was. It was about maybe eight doors down from Debbie's house, if you know where that is, and it functioned – well they lived there. The family lived there. But it functions...

Interviewer: So it was – go ahead.

Respondent: It functioned as a [0:17:00] Jewish school after school. You would go, you would come home and do what you had to do, drop your books...

Interviewer: And at four-thirty you went to cheder.

Respondent: ...and then you went to cheder.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Now I didn't attend cheder because my parents gave me the choice, and I was seven years old so I said no, and I regretted it all my life. Yes.

Interviewer: So they asked if you want – and you thought it's better to be able to just draw or play.

Respondent: Right. So it's not a decision that I should have been allowed to make.

- Interviewer:** I agree.
- Respondent:** However, [0:17:30] but that was – you know, all the girls went to cheder. All of them.
- Interviewer:** They did.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So you were different in that respect.
- Respondent:** Yes, I was different. Always different in quite a number of aspects because we just – we lived differently because my father was in a different situation.
- Interviewer:** That he was a business person.
- Respondent:** Yes. Yes.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** And his political beliefs were different from a lot of the neighbours at the time.
- Respondent:** As a result of his occupation, I might add. I don't know about...
- Interviewer:** Being a businessperson?
- Respondent:** Yes. [0:18:00] He was an entrepreneur, and you know, he was self-employed, so.
- Interviewer:** And what was his business? And what were most of the other people doing as you recall?
- Respondent:** Most of the people were workers. They worked in factories.
- Interviewer:** Factories doing what?

Respondent: Well, a lot of people worked for Tip-Top Tailors. In fact, our neighbour two doors down, Fanny Weinberg's husband, used to bicycle to Tip-Top Tailors. That was his job.

Interviewer: And was he doing sewing or cutting? Something like that?

Respondent: I don't know.

Interviewer: You don't know.

Respondent: [0:18:30] I don't know what he – I don't know what he did down there. I really don't. But most of them were workers in factories. Definitely.

Interviewer: Okay. I want to stay with this a bit. Were some of the mothers working outside the home or inside the home in addition to running the household?

Respondent: Not too many, but most of them were full-time homemakers, but Edith's mother did work and a few other...

Interviewer: And what did she do?

Respondent: She was working [0:19:00] for – in a retail store on College Street and she sewed. She did sewing for them, but very – I don't recall too many of the mothers working, and they used to shop every day, by the way. That's another thing. They went grocery shopping every single day because the refrigerators – some of us had iceboxes. We had a refrigerator, but our – the people above us that rented our flat, they had an icebox. You had to be diligent about that, believe me, because [0:19:30] once it went – melted, you had to clear the water out, or else you'd have a flood. So it was quite a responsibility, but there wasn't room to keep food in the fridge, like our fridges are now because they were small.

Interviewer: And the ice? How did they get the ice?

Respondent: It was delivered by truck. Oh, you don't know about the ice? Nobody's ever said anything about the ice? There were ice trucks.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: And they used to deliver ice, and the kids used to – they would hack [0:20:00] the – well they were huge blocks of ice. So the owner would hack the ice to get a reasonable sized block, and he would use these huge pinchers, you know, and carry it upstairs in the house, through the house, to the icebox, and of course, as it melted, it melted down into a pan.

Interviewer: So much work.

Respondent: So this is very interesting because kids would run after that [0:20:30] truck, trying to get the small pieces of ice that – like use them as popsicles. And he would be yelling all the time because the kids would always be doing this, you know? [Laughter] So yeah, that was one really...

Interviewer: So they were right on the side, on the road these bits of ice.

Respondent: Oh yeah. Not the side of the road. They'd go right up to the – it was a truck that had an open back because with these huge pieces of ice, you had to get close enough that you could manipulate them into position, you know? So that was the iceman. [0:21:00] Yeah.

Interviewer: So that was a favourite activity for the children.

Respondent: Oh yes. Oh yes. And they were constantly being yelled at. And of course, the mothers were concerned because the ice was on the truck, and it might not be clean, and here they were, consuming it. [Laughs] It was quite something. Yeah.

Interviewer: I guess it was even more popular during the summer when...

Respondent: Oh yes, yes.

Interviewer: No air conditioning.

Respondent: Yes, yes. And of course, we all had milk boxes. Did you know about milk boxes?

Interviewer: No.

Respondent: The milk? Well [0:21:30] our house had a milk box. I wouldn't say everybody did, but being a newer house, it had a milk box beside the back of the side door, and so when they delivered milk, which was delivered in those days, they would put it in the milk box, and it would stay in there until you took it in to your refrigerator. Before that, and for those who didn't have milk boxes, they used to leave the milk on the [0:22:00] porch. They delivered it, and you could see in the freezing how the cream came up to the top and forced the – the top of the milk bottles, they were bottles in those days...

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: ...had little cardboard caps, and it would push as it expanded, and you'd have a chunk of ice at the top of your milk bottle like this, with a little cardboard cap.

Interviewer: Sitting like a hat?

Respondent: [Laughs] So yeah, that's – you know, [0:22:30] things have really come a long way when you think about that. In our lifetime, it's quite amazing.

Interviewer: Yeah. For sure.

Respondent: Yes. Yeah.

Interviewer: So to come back to the games that you were playing, did you ever play? Did you have a lane?

Respondent: Yes. That's something I wanted to bring to your attention.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: I don't know if you've ever walked down to – well, you're not that far from Lippincott, Ulster rather, but if you walk west on [0:23:00] Ulster from Borden Street, there's Croft Lane, right?

Interviewer: Yes.

- Respondent:** Okay. Now say these are our houses, this is our house. Behind our house was a sort of – and running off of Croft is a sort of open area with garages here and garages there.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** Do you remember that at all?
- Interviewer:** Well Croft is right here. Right behind my garage here.
- Respondent:** Yeah, right, right, right. So well this is – I'm talking about south [0:23:30] of Ulster.
- Interviewer:** Okay.
- Respondent:** Now, we – our garage was the last one from Croft Lane that is closer to Borden, and it was really a problem if you drove a car because there were – we were so far in from Croft Lane, and when it snowed, well you had to shovel a pathway to your garage, and it was brown. It wasn't paved or anything.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** I mean [0:24:00] our garage was paved. My father paved our garage – paved. But the others weren't paved, so it was – and people would shovel – you know, somebody would shovel, and then somebody else would come and put that snow back behind the shoveled portion.
- Interviewer:** Now, but you're saying the lanes were not paved.
- Respondent:** Right.
- Interviewer:** So when you were shoveling, sometimes you started to get some of that mud stuff, so it was pretty dirty stuff.
- Respondent:** Yes, it was. It was a mess. And there is a house [0:24:30] on – I saw this the last time we were there, down here. It was a shack. It's opposite this whole area with the garages. It was a horrible little

shack, and they've rebuilt the whole thing, and it's a lovely place now. It was the last time I saw it. I couldn't believe that they had done this, but now it's quite popular to build and redo houses [0:25:00] that are in lanes, so it's not that, you know, outrageous to think it, but it was nothing.

Interviewer: Yeah. Croft has a lot of homes in it.

Respondent: Well, it didn't at that time. They were really dinky and horrible, and run-down, and it was awful. Really awful. But it was a hardship having not a – believe me, very few people had cars down here.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: It was very unusual, as a matter of fact, to have a car down here. [0:25:30] So what happened is you didn't have a car, but you rented your garage to people who did have cars. The odd person who did have cars because some of the houses down here don't have – a lot of them don't have garages.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: So you'd rent your garage.

Interviewer: So it was an additional source of income for the family.

Respondent: Exactly. Exactly. Yeah.

Interviewer: The lanes were not paved. Did you use the lanes in any way other than for cars?

Respondent: Yes. IT was quite scary to [0:26:00] walk in the lanes. Yes.

Interviewer: During the day? At night? What are you...

Respondent: Well basically at night. I don't think I would have walked there at night. It wasn't well lit. There were all of these garages on both sides. It was not a welcoming area at all.

Interviewer: And during the day, you didn't use them either, the lanes.

Respondent: No, I didn't. I always walked on Borden Street. I always walked on Borden Street down to pick up my friend who lived near Van Koughnet on Borden, and we would walk [0:26:30] to Debbie also. We walked with Debbie to King Edward.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: And that was our route. And I had a route coming back from Harbord Collegiate as well, which was a long – down Palmerston Boulevard. I love that street. I still do.

Interviewer: It's still beautiful.

Respondent: And along Ulster, and down Borden because we, in those days, we came home for lunch. We walked. We walked to school in the rain. Nobody picked us up, you know? [0:27:00] And that was my route. So, yeah. It was really...

Interviewer: There were people using the streets, and using their legs.

Respondent: Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Yes. There was always – there were always people out. That's why I think it was so frightening. That lanes always had been very frightening, you know, because it was very dark. It wasn't well lit.

Interviewer: Was it paved while you were [0:27:30] still living here? Or was it not paved yet? You left in '57.

Respondent: I think it was. I think it was paved, but that inner courtyard wasn't. It was ground. It was...

Interviewer: Yeah. Which is very messy stuff. Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Oh, it was terrible. Terrible.

Interviewer: What did you have directly behind your house? Was there...

- Respondent:** We had our backyard, and I think there was a square like this in the middle of the backyard, which I suspect had once been a [0:28:00] well.
- Interviewer:** Oh. So what was there?
- Respondent:** There was – so it was like a paved portion this wide in a square, and there was nothing in the middle because I think, as I say, it was once a well. There was one solitary Hollyhock [Laughter] stalk growing there, and it came up relentlessly every year.
- Interviewer:** Oh my god. It was a tough one, eh?
- Respondent:** Yeah. [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Did you use that lack lawn, garden [0:28:30] at all?
- Respondent:** No, we didn't. And I must say that my father, my father cut the lawn, but he never really paid a lot of attention to it. It was his – attention was mostly to the front because we weren't people who sat out in the back and sunned ourselves, so he didn't. And he had enough to do just keeping the house up to his standards.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** So we didn't really sit up out there very much, and...
- Interviewer:** Did you grow anything other than the grass?
- Respondent:** [0:29:00] No. No.
- Interviewer:** So it wasn't a significant part of your lives.
- Respondent:** No. Not for me.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. I guess that's where you hung the clothes.
- Respondent:** Yes, we did.

Interviewer: The laundry.

Respondent: Yeah. I didn't really enjoy the back portion because there was nothing out there to draw you to it, you know? So.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. So you didn't use the back, and you said in the front there was a lot going on. You were sitting – did you have chairs or benches on the front?

Respondent: Oh yes. We had – we had – well first of all, I think the house must have had [0:29:30] a wooden porch originally because it seems to me that our porch, yes definitely, was different from the other porches in these new homes. And my father put in a tiled porch, and he changed the whole thing.

Interviewer: And what was tiled?

Respondent: The floor of the porch...

Interviewer: Oh. Oh.

Respondent: ...was tiled.

Interviewer: Is it still tiled now? You don't know?

Respondent: I'm not sure. I'm not sure.

Interviewer: [0:30:00] If it's not raining we'll walk out.

Respondent: What they have done, the people who live there now, which I do not understand but we had, of course, grass growing in the front, and we had also evergreen bushes right out front of the porch, at the base of the porch, and my father was very – my father and mother were very meticulous about how the front of the house looked. Very. I mean, [0:30:30] so much care was given, and my mother was so meticulous. She, you know, in those days you watered your lawn. You stood there with a hose and watered the lawn.

Interviewer: A hose.

- Respondent:** Well my mother not only watered the lawn, she watered the sidewalk, she watered the sidewalk in front of her house, and she watered half the road in front.
- Interviewer:** She was cleaning it.
- Respondent:** She was cleaning it. It was spotless. Spotless. And I mean so meticulous. Meticulous care to do it.
- Interviewer:** Well obviously it was very important to her.
- Respondent:** Pride. Pride.
- Interviewer:** Yes, yes.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** [0:31:00] The composition of the population...
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** ...in terms of religion and in terms of languages spoken, can you talk to me about that?
- Respondent:** Yiddish. Yiddish.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** And all the kids – well I would say practically everyone was first-generation – the children, the young children.
- Interviewer:** So the parents had come from Europe. Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** And spoke a lot of – a lot of Yiddish was spoken in the home.
- Respondent:** Yes, but some kids still didn't. [0:31:30] They may have spoken Yiddish to each other, but they tried to speak English mostly to the kids.

Interviewer: The parents?

Respondent: Yes. And the – a lot of the parents, if they didn't want their children to know what they were speaking to each other, they would speak to each other in Yiddish so the kids couldn't understand it. This was quite common.

Interviewer: I've heard that.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you speak Yiddish or understand it?

Respondent: No, but I do understand it.

Interviewer: You understand it. Yeah.

Respondent: I do understand it. I can speak – it's very difficult for me to speak, but I can understand it. And it [0:32:00] delights me to hear it really, you know?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Yeah, they were – and they were also very scholastically motivated because of parents just doted on education and the value of education, and I mean, if we did anything, you know, in school that was disobedient, well it was never the teacher's fault. It was always, always our fault. We did something to have provoked that kind of response [0:32:30] because they were so intent on us getting an education. It meant so much to them. And you know, I was very fortunate because I was brought up in a household. My father was really – he didn't have that much of a formal education, but he read Jewish newspapers a day.

Interviewer: Which ones?

Respondent: The Foreword, and The Journal.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: And he would discuss things with my mother and I. Well, she was less interested, [0:33:00] but I was very interested, and I think this is where my debating part of my – you know? He would discuss things. Actually not just tell me, but discuss things with me.

Interviewer: So you became well informed. You were interested.

Respondent: I was very – and it was a very, very precious bond between us because I don't think many fathers did that in those days. They didn't.

Interviewer: And with daughters even more so.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: Or less so, I would want to...

Respondent: Right. So [0:33:30] I treasured that particular memory, you know, of him. But people were – you tried your best at school. I mean you really...

Interviewer: So your family valued it, and you knew it.

Respondent: Yes. I'll tell you a story about one of my teachers at [laughs] – I won't mention his name because I don't want to put him in disrepute, but he was Jewish. This was my public school. And he was a very short man.

Interviewer: [0:34:00] Mm-hm.

Respondent: And I think he really – there were very few Jewish teachers in those days, and he, you know, he had to sort of assert his authority. And so he was very, very strict, and very different, and he made us learn Morse code. And he taught us, he taught us his lessons in Morse code.

Interviewer: Oh. He taught you in Morse code?

Respondent: Right. Right. That's right.

- Interviewer:** [0:34:30] Oh, that is really an unusual situation.
- Respondent:** Yes, it was. And his attitude was that he was going to be using his voice throughout his career, and he had to save it, so that was his reason for...
- Interviewer:** And that was okay with the parents?
- Respondent:** The parents wouldn't object to anything.
- Interviewer:** That's right. You're right. Of course.
- Respondent:** And that was fine with them, you know?
- Interviewer:** Whatever the teacher did was right.
- Respondent:** And he had rows Able, Baker, Charlie, Dog, and Easy. Those are the letters, if you know Morse code at all.
- Interviewer:** I don't at all.
- Respondent:** Okay. So you got – you were in Able, [0:35:00] Baker, Charlie, Dog, or Easy row, and if anybody in that row, anybody, misbehaved, the whole row was punished.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** This is how things have changed.
- Interviewer:** Whoa. I remember that philosophy.
- Respondent:** And my – I was so disturbed by this because I'm a great one for justice, and I thought this was a great injustice.
- Interviewer:** I agree. Oh.
- Respondent:** I was in grade eight at the time, and my sister went to – [0:35:30] she – I was so upset. She went to speak to him on my behalf

[laughs], and he said, "Well it's not against Ruth, you know, individually," but it impacted on me and everybody else.

Interviewer: You suffered as a result.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And I was – I think that was my – really, I'd always been a person that cannot tolerate injustice, and I think that that – he was my first male teacher, and to have come into contact, and you know, **[0:36:00]** when I look back at it now, I can understand psychologically why he felt he had to be this way. But...

Interviewer: Because he was Jewish and little?

Respondent: Yes. Yes. [Laughter] And you know, the kids were bigger than he was.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And strapping was allowed in those days.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: Yes, it was.

Interviewer: Yeah, I remember that.

Respondent: And he used to stand on a chair in a book room and strap...

Interviewer: Strap. And he was on a chair so he could...

Respondent: Yeah. So he had leverage. I **[0:36:30]** can't tell you how that impacted on me. I can't tell you. I just – and you know, I just thought so badly of him at the time, and when I look back at it, I still think it was wrong, of course, but I realize his decision and his psychological make-up to – that was all right. You know, it justified

that because he [0:37:00] was dealing with something that was – you know, there weren't any Jewish teachers in those days.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: So he was in the absolute minority, and because of his height – so.

Interviewer: You understand why it still wasn't okay.

Respondent: I do. Yes, right.

Interviewer: Yeah. When you think of it all these years later. And the strapping, you know. I grew up with the same thing.

Respondent: Sadistic.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: Sadistic.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Sadistic. And you know, I just – it's unfortunate because I think that [0:37:30] the Principal should have taken some action on that.

Interviewer: And he would do it in a cupboard behind a door?

Respondent: Well it would be in a cloakroom, which is behind – in the back of the – in the front of the class. So everybody would hear, and he wouldn't stop until he brought the person to tears.

Interviewer: Oh. Oh.

Respondent: It was completely sadistic. "I have power over you," you know? I do. I don't remember any girls being strapped, but the boys were strapped.

Interviewer: You know, there was a double-standard at that time, but...

Respondent: It was just...

Interviewer: [0:38:00] Yeah.

Respondent: You know?

Interviewer: I remember it well, and I had the exact same reaction. Even when I talk about it now, I feel it in the pit of my stomach.

Respondent: Right. Right. Anyway, otherwise, I used to – my sister would write poetry, and for special events like Queen Victoria Day. We would always have an assembly, and I took elocution lessons as a child.

Interviewer: Oh. Oh my god.

Respondent: So the Principal would always call [0:38:30] me to cite something appropriate. So my sister would write something, and I would in front of the whole school recite this, and I did this many times. He would call me for this kind of recitation. Yes.

Interviewer: So your family – I mean you and your sister were quite artistic. She wrote poetry and you were artistic in a craft way.

Respondent: Well I would say that we – my sister and I both – not so much [0:39:00] artistic as creative. Creative.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Respondent: So yeah. We were alike in many ways. Yeah.

Interviewer: Were your parents creative in some ways?

Respondent: My father. My father. My father was – he had very good taste in clothing. Very, very good because he was in business. He manufactured women's clothing.

Interviewer: Oh, it's women's clothing.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. So he had some designers? Or did he do some designing?

- Respondent:** No, he had two brothers. The brother that lived at [0:39:30] 127 Borden...
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** ...he was a partner. And then there was another brother who was a partner, so there were three partners.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** Three brothers. So one did the cutting, one did the designing, and my father did more the manual things like pressing, but then he graduated and they started having fur-trimmed coats. So my father learned all about furs and he was the one that bought all the furs for the coats.
- Interviewer:** [0:40:00] Oh. Where was the business?
- Respondent:** Balfour Building on Spadina.
- Interviewer:** So I don't know where that is.
- Respondent:** It's a loft building now. It's been converted into lofts.
- Interviewer:** And where? How far south is that?
- Respondent:** At Adelaide.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** Corner of – I think it's the northeast corner of Spadina and Adelaide.
- Interviewer:** So while – your parents bought the home, you had people living upstairs, and then your [0:40:30] father and his brother's business improved. You didn't have to have the people upstairs.

- Respondent:** Well I don't know so much if it was to the point of improving, but I think that made him – he was feeling more secure, let's put it that way. That he didn't have to have the tenants anymore. Yeah. So.
- Interviewer:** Can we talk a little bit about the stores? Yes, the biggest east-west street for you **[0:41:00]** on Borden was College?
- Respondent:** College. Yes. I'll tell you about that.
- Interviewer:** So, please do. Yeah.
- Respondent:** The corner, the northwest corner was Stancer's Bakery. They had the most delicious Jewish bread that you could ever taste in your life, and I've tasted much since, but it's never been as good as that. Really, really delicious. And some of the Stancer family actually lived on Borden Street as well. **[0:41:30]** So it was quite a large family. So then I think...
- Interviewer:** Do you know, was Ray Stancer one of those people?
- Respondent:** The name doesn't sound familiar.
- Interviewer:** Doesn't. Okay.
- Respondent:** No. But I just actually met somebody at the reunion who was a distant member of that family.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** Next to that was a dry goods store. I don't remember the name of it. People would probably not know what dry goods sells.
- Interviewer:** I was just going to ask you that.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** So please. Yeah.
- Respondent:** So they had **[0:42:00]** some clothing, and they also had some household linens, tablecloths, and dish towels, and things like that,

so it was sort of mixed. Then beside that was a variety store, and that's where I bought my colouring books and my cut-outs, and my crayons, and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: So, and they had of course cigarettes and all the rest.

Interviewer: Candies?

Respondent: Candies. Yeah. Stuff like that.

Interviewer: And who owned these? Were these owned by [0:42:30] Jewish people?

Respondent: Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: So it was very Jewish at that time.

Respondent: Then next door to that was Wilco's Appetizery. It smelled absolutely delicious. They got a lot of their things from Europe, all of their imported things. They were a Dutch Jewish family, the Wilcos, and they had not delicatessen in the sense of meat, but dairy things like they had all [0:43:00] kinds of exotic cheeses that you couldn't find, and Feldman's, which was at Harbord Street – has anybody told you about Feldman's?

Interviewer: No.

Respondent: Well let me finish this first.

Interviewer: Please.

Respondent: So anyway, they had smoked salmon, and smoked fish, and all that kind of thing, and they had delicacies that you never, as I said, saw in a regular food store because they imported all of these things because they had all of these connections, you see? So it was – it just – when you walked in...

Interviewer: Do you remember what some of these were?

Respondent: [0:43:30] No, I don't.

Interviewer: But they were delicious and special.

Respondent: Very, very special.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: Very special. And what I remember mostly about Wilco's is that it had a distinctive smell because all of these foods were so exotic. So you knew when you – a line followed you. You knew you were walking into Wilco's, you know? [Laughter] So it was a very special store. And I can't remember what was [0:44:00] next to that. And then I think the laneway went down to the – the Croft Lane went down to College Street.

Interviewer: Yes. Yes.

Respondent: And at Bathurst and College, there was a bank on the corner. I don't know if it's still a bank. The west, northwest corner of Bathurst...

Interviewer: The northwest corner's a church.

Respondent: No. Oh, sorry, northeast. Sorry. Sorry about that.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And my uncle had a drugstore about [0:44:30] three stores in from the bank, which was Reingold's Drugs. And there was Mars, which I think is still there.

Interviewer: Yes, yes, yes. Yeah.

Respondent: And I don't remember the rest – there was Rothbart's on – what's the name of that street? Lippincott.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

- Respondent:** Lippincott and College on the northwest corner was a store, a [0:45:00] drugstore called Rothbart's. They were there for many years.
- Interviewer:** And anything special about it?
- Respondent:** No. Just that there were actually two drugstores on one block, because my uncle's and this, but they were, you know, quite a distance away.
- Interviewer:** Did any of them have food counters at all?
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** They didn't have.
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** No, no. They were drugstores.
- Interviewer:** But two competing drugstores on one small block?
- Respondent:** Well it wasn't a small block. It was a large block because Lippincott to Bathurst is quite a sizeable – [0:45:30] you know? Then on the other side on the northeast corner of College and Borden Street was Koffler Drugs. Koffler Drugs.
- Interviewer:** The northeast corner, so that's where...
- Respondent:** Directly across the street.
- Interviewer:** ...the pizza.
- Respondent:** Directly across the street from Stancer's. There's Stancer's, the road, the street, and then where the stores started again.
- Interviewer:** The northeast corner there's a pizza place there now.

- Respondent:** It used to be Koffler's drugstore.
- Interviewer:** [0:46:00] So was that the very first...
- Respondent:** Koffler's. Right. And you know that his wife's name was Marvelle.
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent:** And they had – she started that – the family started the breast cancer clinic at Mount Sinai Hospital.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** That's his...
- Interviewer:** So that was the original Shoppers. Well...
- Respondent:** Yeah. Koffler's. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** They called it Koffler's at that time.
- Respondent:** Yes. Koffler's Drugs. And then next to that was Tobando's Food Market, and [0:46:30] it was fruits and vegetables, and Tobando's, yes. It was quite a nice store too. Then there was a kosher butcher shop. This was really something. Did you ever see this? First of all, there are very few individual butcher shops left that are kosher, and I remember seeing the – they used to have all the organ meats in the showcase. They'd have the head, the cow's head. They'd have brains, [0:47:00] they had pancreas, they had all of these organ meats, which I don't even think are available now in a kosher butcher shop anyway. Anyway, that was – we bought our meat there, and then there was Jenny Lind Chocolates. Jenny Lind. They're not even available anymore, it's so old. Then next to that was the Bellevue Theatre, which is still a theatre, I think, at this time. Is it not?
- Interviewer:** [0:47:30] Not on College.
- Respondent:** It was on College.

- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. That was a theatre for movies or plays?
- Respondent:** Movies. And it was art deco.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** The whole thing was.
- Interviewer:** Oh, that's not there.
- Respondent:** It was beautiful. And I still to this day am enamoured with art deco. I just love it. It's such a gorgeous design. So all of the windows all had this rounded effect. In fact, the whole [0:48:00] façade was rounded.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** It was gorgeous. It was really, really beautiful.
- Interviewer:** Isn't that a shame that it's gone?
- Respondent:** Yeah. The building that I live in now has art deco lobby, so I always feel that I'm, you know, attracted to that. It's beautiful.
- Interviewer:** I think it's fabulous. I agree with you. It was a beautiful time. Beautiful style.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And in the next block, I don't remember – oh, there was a Smith's Delicatessen in that – it was at the – you know, if we're talking about [0:48:30] Koffler's – so there was a whole block of stores, which included the ones I just said. At the end of that group of stores was Smith's Delicatessen, and...
- Interviewer:** Jewish or not Jewish?
- Respondent:** It was Jewish-owned, but not kosher.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

- Respondent:** And that couple that owned that store lived at my uncle's flat at 127 Borden. They lived in the flat. So it's just so coincidental how everything was so intermingled.
- Interviewer:** So it was [0:49:00] not kosher, but it was a Jewish-style delicatessen with corned beef...
- Respondent:** Yes, yes.
- Interviewer:** ...and French fries, and sour pickle.
- Respondent:** Knishes.
- Interviewer:** So it just wasn't kosher, but it was Jewish style.
- Respondent:** Right. Right. Right.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Did your family use Kensington Market at all? I mean you used College Street and you remember it so vividly.
- Respondent:** Well we used – first of all, my grandparents lived near Kensington Market on Wales Avenue, and we went to see my grandmother every single day after school. We went out [0:49:30] to visit my grandparents. And so I was certainly very familiar with Kensington Market, and I remember going with my mother to the fish store there.
- Interviewer:** In Kensington Market?
- Respondent:** In Kensington Market. Yes, I do. But my sister, who was much older and spent more years on Borden than I did, she had really a lot of stories about Kensington Market that because my grandfather used to take her there, and they [0:50:00] would buy Jewish bread, and come home, and spread garlic on it. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Oh.

- Respondent:** And when my parents picked her up, she'd be reeking of garlic.
[Laughter]
- Interviewer:** So right now they'd say, oh, she must have been healthy.
- Respondent:** That's right.
- Interviewer:** But garlic is...
- Respondent:** Right, right. So I'm just trying to...
- Interviewer:** So your sister had some nice memories of being there with your grandfather.
- Respondent:** Oh yes. Oh yes. She was – you know, she's – well.
- Interviewer:** She was a decade older than you.
- Respondent:** Yes. Made a big difference from that point [0:50:30] of view that she had different memories than I did. And of course, you know, when she got married, she moved from Toronto to Owen Sound because her husband was brought up in Owen Sound.
- Interviewer:** So she lived there for many years, raised a family there.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm. So in their older age, they moved back to Toronto because their family was here.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Oh, so [0:51:00] their children had come down here.
- Respondent:** Well one daughter was living here and one daughter was living in England, but I mean, all the rest is – we were very close family, but unfortunately they waited so long that they couldn't really integrate too well after having been away for so long, and they weren't well physically, so they really didn't have an opportunity to taste the way Toronto was when they moved back. I mean, they were in frequently to Toronto, [0:51:30] but it's different living here.
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah.

- Respondent:** And establishing friendships and things like that. You know, so unfortunately I always yearn for the day that they would move back to Toronto and then we would be...
- Interviewer:** It was too late. It's too late. Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** You mentioned – I'm jumping a little bit.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** But you mentioned that you met your husband. You were the secretary of the debating team club.
- Respondent:** Right. My first husband.
- Interviewer:** Right.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Your first husband. Would you talk to me a little bit about what dating was [0:52:00] like at that time when you were dating?
- Respondent:** Well to tell you the truth, I didn't really have too much experience dating because I was only eighteen when I got married.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** So I didn't really date a lot before I got married, so I'm not really keen to, you know – I'm not the person to ask about that because I didn't really participate.
- Interviewer:** So you met him in high school and then by eighteen you were getting married.
- Respondent:** Well I was eighteen when I got married. I was nineteen [0:52:30] the next month.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: Like we were married in December, and then in January I turned nineteen.

Interviewer: But in today's standards it's young.

Respondent: Yeah, but a lot of us were getting married. A lot of us were getting married. And actually, I was wearing an engagement ring when I was completing fourth form, and my Latin teacher asked to be invited to our wedding, and we did invite him because I was very fond of him, and he broke his leg.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: **[0:53:00]** At our wedding because he was having such a good time dancing, he broke his leg. So that was something. But this is also very interesting story – is that my present husband, I've been married for twenty-nine years now.

Interviewer: To this person.

Respondent: Yes. And he also went to Harbord, and he was a year ahead of me, and he was in Debbie's year.

Interviewer: Oh. Did you know him?

Respondent: Yes. Yes. I knew **[0:53:30]** him in high school, and his wife, his first wife, was in my class at Harbord.

Interviewer: Oh long history.

Respondent: And he was at my shy seventeen party with Debbie. Was his date.

Interviewer: Oh. Oh fabulous.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Of course, I know Debbie because I met her and she gave me your name.

- Respondent:** Right. Right. And we actually – when we were married to other people, we lived on the same street on Bathurst Manor, but at different ends of Bathurst Manor. Our children happened to be in [0:54:00] the same class.
- Interviewer:** Oh. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** And we met again at the Harbord reunion, a hundred year Harbord reunion. It was a hundred years at the school.
- Interviewer:** And were you both single by that time?
- Respondent:** He was separated and I was single. Yes. Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** And is that when you began to...
- Respondent:** Yes. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Oh, so that was a wonderful reunion.
- Respondent:** Oh fantastic.
- Interviewer:** A reunion. Oh, lovely.
- Respondent:** [0:54:30] Yes, yes. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** But you had known each other for many years.
- Respondent:** Yes, we had. Yes. And we have the same network of friends because Debbie is one of the friends that was his first wife's close friend, and of course, I've known Debbie all these years, but we had lost track over a number of years. And then of course, when Hal and I became – you know, started dating, all that was cemented again. So [laughs]...
- Interviewer:** [0:55:00] Wow.
- Respondent:** ...it's quite a wonderful story.

- Interviewer:** Yes, it's a lovely story.
- Respondent:** It's a wonderful story. It really is.
- Interviewer:** And you're all living happily ever after.
- Respondent:** Yes. [Laughs] Yes. So it's quite something. Yeah. I have a lot of affection for Harbord Collegiate.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So you really didn't date because you met him, you married him, and you...
- Respondent:** Right.
- Interviewer:** ...were so young. How did people socialize – the girls and the boys – at that time? Do you have...
- Respondent:** This is [0:55:30] interesting that you're asking me this because it's very evident when you go to one of the reunions how many people from Harbord Collegiate married other people from Harbord Collegiate and are still married to them.
- Interviewer:** So those are long marriages.
- Respondent:** So you've got to realize that that was an exceptional school. Exceptional school. The spirit at Harbord Collegiate was – you'll never find it anywhere. It was extremely special. [0:56:00] First of all, the kids were – it was ninety-nine percent Jewish. The kids were highly motivated and very creative, and they were just the most wonderful group, I swear. If you ever – I don't know. I don't have access to it now, but so many professional people and artistic people have come – their background includes Harbord Collegiate. It just produced...
- Interviewer:** Leaders.

Respondent: [0:56:30] Leaders.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Exceptional people. Really. And I don't know whether, you know, it had to do with the fact that we were first generation, that our parents were really struggling for most of it, were really struggling, and that we wanted to do well so they could have a better life and they could be proud of us. It was just...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent:exceptional. Really.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. It was really – everybody made that effort.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: Both generations made the effort.

Respondent: Right. It was a very [0:57:00] high-spirited school. Just fantastic. And very creative minds. It produced creative minds. Wayne and Shuster – did you...

Interviewer: Of course.

Respondent: They were Harbordites, and this is how it started. In Harbord. We started.

Interviewer: Entertaining in Harbord.

Respondent: Yes. Just – it just – I tell you, if I ever had a list, and there is a list somewhere of people who graduated from Harbord, and the activities that they were involved in, you know? [0:57:30] And how the professional – successful professionals and people in the arts that came out of that school. Incredible. I don't think there's another school in the world like this. It's just something. Anybody that's gone to Harbord will feel like this. They will tell you this.

- Interviewer:** Well, and I know some of these people, you know, who have succeeded. Who have – it was – that was kind of the ethic of [0:58:00] the time.
- Respondent:** That's right.
- Interviewer:** For that population at that time.
- Respondent:** But that was – but young people going to other high schools, it wasn't the same as it was from Harbord.
- Interviewer:** Montreal had Baron Byng, and that was somewhat the equivalent.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Baron Byng and Harbord Collegiate had that in common.
- Respondent:** Anyway, it was a great school. It was a privilege to attend. I'm telling you, it really was. So – and [0:58:30] many of us have had very interesting lives beyond that. Between marriages, I was on my own for eleven years. I haven't – well I worked in a Reitman's – I was first married. My husband was – you can imagine it as a student articling. He was earning, I think, nineteen dollars a week, so anyway, I worked as a salesperson in Reitman's [0:59:00] and Virginia Dare, which no longer exists. And when I was single once again, and I was a homemaker, and when I was single once again – first of all, I went back to school when I was still married, and I had always intended to go on to university, but this marriage thing interfered with that. So I – when my children [0:59:30] were probably – my younger children were about eight, I decided I was going – York University had just – was only a few years old at the time, and I went to Atkinson College and took courses in the evening, and got my degrees.
- Interviewer:** Good for you. Degrees? What?
- Respondent:** Well I have two degrees. One in English Literature and one Humanities, but it was interesting, is that I started in the [1:00:00] late 1960s and I kept going on. I got my first degree and then I decided I wasn't ready to give it up yet, so I went on for an honours.

Then I decided to take Humanities. I got my BA in that, and then I went on for honours, so I actually got – finished my degrees in 1999.

Interviewer: Oh. Good for you.

Respondent: So I was going. There were periods of time that I didn't take these classes after I was married the second time. I was off school for **[1:00:30]** about seven years, but then I got the craving to go back again.

Interviewer: Wow. So that's a lot of work.

Respondent: I also at the same time, I was a single parent, and I was working for CBC doing research for television programming, and that was fabulous. I loved, loved that. I really loved it. It was right up my alley. And I worked for the program "Ombudsman." Do you remember that program?

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: You do? **[1:01:00]** You remember that program?

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: Most people don't. And then I did some documentaries for CTV, and then I did – I mean I worked on the research for it, and then I worked for W-5.

Interviewer: Oh my god. You have a lovely history in terms of work and studying.

Respondent: Yeah. And so I was doing all of this, plus dating. Yeah. I can tell you what dating is like. Not now, because I'd been out of it for long, but it was very interesting to see what it was...

Interviewer: **[1:01:30]** In between in your forties or something like that.

- Respondent:** Yes. And how differently you would have as a more mature person, you know, dealt with that, and having children also, and having to take that into account.
- Interviewer:** How many children do you have?
- Respondent:** I have three children. Two are twins.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** I didn't know I was having twins.
- Interviewer:** So that's the first one you had.
- Respondent:** No. The first one is my son, and then I had the twins who are male and female.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** And that [1:02:00] came as a major surprise because I didn't have...
- Interviewer:** So at the delivery you learned that you were having twins?
- Respondent:** Surprise. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Whoa.
- Respondent:** Yeah. So that was quite – yeah. A surprise.
- Interviewer:** And how many children does your husband have?
- Respondent:** He has five.
- Interviewer:** Oh, so you have a big family.
- Respondent:** We have eight children and we have fifteen grandchildren.
- Interviewer:** Oh.

Respondent: And two of them are now married, and two have significant others.
[Laughs]

Interviewer: So you might be [1:02:30] great-grandparents.

Respondent: We are great-grandparents.

Interviewer: You are great-grandparents.

Respondent: Yes. We have a little grandson who my – actually my grandson, his son, who is now seven months old. Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh, that must be exciting.

Respondent: It is exciting.

Interviewer: A great-grandmother.

Respondent: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: Yeah, it was very exciting. It's very adorable. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. At the time that you were living here...

Respondent: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: ...I'd like you to talk about whether [1:03:00] it felt safe.

Respondent: You mean safe in what way? You mean to walk out at night and...

Interviewer: To walk out at night.

Respondent: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Unlocking the doors. Being alone.

Respondent: We did lock our doors, but there wasn't the fear that you have now with letting your kids play on the street and stuff like that. There

was nothing like that. And I mean, we walk at night, and you didn't have that fear. Just – it didn't exist. And you know, as [1:03:30] I say, everybody knew everybody else, so...

Interviewer: So you could walk...

Respondent: ...you could walk, run into someone's house if need be, you know? But there wasn't that fear.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And do you know the store – I was just remembering about the store that I didn't tell you about. I don't know what the store is because I didn't know it was – at Harbord and Borden here, at the corner? On your side.

Interviewer: On my side?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's the Boulevard Café.

Respondent: Okay. It was Feldman's [1:04:00] Great Grocery Store.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: When we were here. And the Feldmans lived upstairs.

Interviewer: Oh, from the grocery store.

Respondent: Yes. And it was – the couple ran, the Feldman's ran the grocery store, and it was pretty tough. I remember that she was always in a bad mood, and I think she just had too much responsibility. She was a nice person, but she had too much responsibility, but I remember about Feldman's is that they used to have – they used to sell [1:04:30] cookies, and now when you think of buying cookies, they buy them in a package. No, because they'd have containers, huge containers, and you'd buy them by the pound. You choose your cookies and you'd buy them by the pound. That always – it's so different now, you know?

- Interviewer:** Yeah. So you could choose a few different kinds of cookies, and then she'd weigh them.
- Respondent:** Yes. Yes. Yes. And there's no – there was no problem of any – now I think, imagine everybody handling that. There are so much...
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah.
- Respondent:** ...germ connecting now, you know? [Laughs] **[1:05:00]** So yeah, no. We felt safe. My mother used to send me out at night to buy – go to the grocery store and buy things because you bought from day to day, so you didn't have any...
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So there was a...
- Respondent:** I would walk with my friends at night. That was – you didn't think about anything.
- Interviewer:** What about – I'm thinking of other institutions. Synagogues, shuls, and churches?
- Respondent:** Well, my grandfather was **[1:05:30]** originally a member of the Kiever Shul.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** And they had some political disagreement, which is history with that shul, and the shul that's at Shaare...
- Interviewer:** Shaare Tzedec. Yeah. Joel Greenberg's shul.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** At Markham and Ulster.
- Respondent:** Right.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

Respondent: My grandfather belonged to that shul. He left that other shul, the Kiever.

Interviewer: He left the Kiever. Yeah.

Respondent: And he joined [1:06:00] that. And he would walk from Wales Avenue. He attended evening services, so he would walk from his house on Wales Avenue with his cane. I remember this in my mind very distinctly, and I know what time he'd be coming, so I would roller skate down to meet him, and I'd roller skate back holding his hand, and he would just – had his cane. And you know, that remains in my mind, and...

Interviewer: I can picture it. It's a lovely picture.

Respondent: Yeah. Wonderful. And [1:06:30] when it came to High Holidays, although some of the – one of my aunts, his youngest daughter, was not religious. Everybody else was kosher. She was not religious. She was a rebel. Nevertheless, at Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, her husband came to the shul and he doved. He had to be. And my grandfather had a whole row of seats that he would buy...

Interviewer: Oh, for the family.

Respondent: ...the family had to be there. And they [1:07:00] did. And then because we were at the halfway point between the shul and my grandfather's, we were always the one that people came to to break the fast.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: And we'd always be prepared, or else if they wanted a rest, they'd come to our house and come to our house and just have a rest and go back to shul. But we were the middle point between the two residences, so – between the shul, rather, and his residence. So he came every day. [1:07:30] He was a very – my grandmother had died, and I don't really remember her very well because she died when I was seven, and I was – just adored him.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: He was so part of our lives, you know? I mean he would stop at our house, we'd walk up to the house, and my mother would serve him tea, and she'd always have some home baking, and they'd sit and chat for a while, and he'd have a rest and he continued to shul. That was every day. So.

Interviewer: [1:08:00] So he was a major adult in your life.

Respondent: Absolutely.

Interviewer: An adult family member in your life.

Respondent: Absolutely. Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Any churches?

Respondent: That I recall? No. I really don't. There was something on the – you know Bellevue off College?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: There is a church there at the corner. That's still standing.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: In fact, there was a write-up about it about two years ago in the Globe and Mail. It's still exactly the same as it was. [1:08:30] And the fire hall there played a big role in our lives. For example, when I was about maybe eight, there was a huge snowstorm, and I mean like maybe eight feet of snow. And don't forget, they didn't have snow plows like they do now. So you were just – it was right up to our front porch.

Interviewer: Oh.

- Respondent:** So [1:09:00] you really couldn't even walk in it. You struggled to walk in it. Well, I remember playing on the road with Debbie, and we were making snow angels. I remember that very, very, very well. And because nobody could get to the grocery store, well, you'd have – if you could get down to the fire hall, you could buy milk at the fire hall, but then you'd have to truck it back. But that didn't get cleared up. That storm – we didn't get rid [1:09:30] of that snow for quite a few days, so you were really isolated in that.
- Interviewer:** Oh. We don't have that kind of snow in Toronto anymore.
- Respondent:** No, no.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** But they did.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** And you remember it so well.
- Respondent:** I do. I do remember it very well. We got a lot of snow. We don't get the snow that we used to get.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. It certainly has changed. Well...
- Respondent:** What time is it? I have to watch the time. Yeah, okay.
- Interviewer:** What about heating your homes?
- Respondent:** We had [1:10:00] a coal furnace to begin with.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** And then we converted to oil. And I remember when we had the coal furnace, my father used to barbecue in the basement. Yeah. He used to barbecue. He had a little grate.

- Interviewer:** So he would open that...
- Respondent:** Well he had a little grate somewhere on the side, and he could get the heat from the furnace somehow, and he used to barbecue. It was delicious. I remember it.
- Interviewer:** That's a [1:10:30] colourful memory. [Laughter] The JCC. Was that part of your life in any way?
- Respondent:** Not really, no. No.
- Interviewer:** And when you went to cheder, when you went to school...
- Respondent:** I didn't go to cheder.
- Interviewer:** Okay. So the – was that at Brunswick and College where the children went?
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** Where did they...
- Respondent:** That school, which was a house, was as I say, about maybe ten houses [1:11:00] running south from whatever Debbie's address is on Borden.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** And it was just a house, and they had – they converted the living room into a classroom, and he would teach.
- Interviewer:** Oh. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Yes. Yes.
- Interviewer:** Right.

- Respondent:** And I even remember their daughter's name was Naomi. Naomi. Yeah. Sulkle. Sulkle was their last name. Yeah. It was a [indiscernible 1:11:24]. Yeah. That's what it was called.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. While [1:11:30] you were here, were people doing home renovations?
- Respondent:** No. They didn't have the money.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** If they painted out their front porches or – it was really not done too much because it was very costly, and a lot of these things they did were, you know, on their own. But basically they didn't have the money to do – to beautify their places. They didn't.
- Interviewer:** And when you – you have a family living upstairs.
- Respondent:** [1:12:00] Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Was that pretty much the norm? Did a lot of families have other people living in their buildings?
- Respondent:** Absolutely.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Absolutely. Every house. Every house.
- Interviewer:** So it was a high density...
- Respondent:** Yes, high density. Yes. It – very. I don't even remember anybody who didn't have their flat rented or if they had their extended family living there. But it was all – you didn't use a whole house. It was [1:12:30] very unusual in our case, and eventually we did use our whole house. One family.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

Respondent: And by this time, my sister married shortly after we had extended ourselves into the rest of the house, so we had really a lot of room.

Interviewer: So it must have felt very big by then.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Yes. Mm-hm.

Interviewer: I think that we've pretty well touched all the topics. I'm wondering if there's anything that [1:13:00] – that we haven't talked about. Any stories that you had thought about? And you said you don't have any pictures. Your parents died a long time ago and you were young.

Respondent: Yes they did. Yes.

Interviewer: So you don't have any pictures.

Respondent: I was a young woman really when they died, which was too bad.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: Yeah. My mother was already – she had been ill for quite a number of years, so – and oh, my father had – he had – they – [1:13:30] north of – up north, as it was called, that is the area north of Eglinton.

Interviewer: I love up north.

Respondent: It was being called "up north."

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: It was being constructed at that time. We would go up north every weekend to see if we could find another house to move to. Well my father didn't really want to move. He felt he should move, but he didn't really want to move. Excuse me.

Interviewer: [1:14:00] And why the "should"? And what did he like so much about being here?

Respondent: I never – to tell you the truth, I just think that he felt comfortable here, and my father was a very superstitious person. And I think that he felt comfortable that he was in the position he was with people who had less. I think it made him feel secure.

Interviewer: [1:14:30] Oh.

Respondent: Just a minute. Excuse me. Now he never found a house that was well enough built for him, which would justify his moving because he really didn't want to move.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: He was comfortable.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: For whatever reason it was, he was comfortable here. Our house was lovely. It really was. Except my mother was ill, and it was starting to get really hard for her. So he – I think he was very torn with that decision, and [1:15:00] – but I was just so gung-ho on these beautiful new places, and every house we'd go into I'd find the room, the bedroom that I was going to have, and I would, in my mind, furnish it. And this was every – I have a thing for design. I love design. So every house we would walk into, I would – this is going to be my room, this is what I'm going to do to it, and [1:15:30] you know, have...

Interviewer: So you were looking forward to moving up to a newer home.

Respondent: Yes. Yes. I was. So that never happened because as I say, he could always find something wrong with a house. There was always, always something wrong with it. It wasn't well built enough, this was wrong, that was wrong because he didn't want to move. He was very torn with that. He was very torn. And unfortunately, by the time that we did move, [1:16:00] he settled for something

because it was such an emergency that we moved that he settled for something that was poorly built. It was a new house and it was poorly built, and he never would in a million, million, million years have bought that house had he not been desperate.

Interviewer: Well you're saying he didn't have a choice anymore.

Respondent: He didn't have a choice.

Interviewer: Yeah. But his first choice anyway was to stay right here on Borden Street.

Respondent: Yeah, I think so.

Interviewer: I understand that.

Respondent: He was very comfortable here. And my uncle and aunt, they moved before [1:16:30] we did actually from 127 Borden, and they moved up north. [Laughs]

Interviewer: To where? How far north did they go?

Respondent: Well, their house – let me see. It was north of – I'd say north of Eglinton. Yeah.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: So they moved there, [1:17:00] and some of their children were married by the time they moved. But...

Interviewer: What was the attitude about staying here versus moving? Not for your father. Your father wanted to stay. But what do you think people were thinking when they were leaving here and moving up there?

Respondent: They didn't. They didn't. Nobody I knew moved. Nobody I knew moved. They could hardly – they could hardly afford the places they were in, let alone think of moving. They didn't. [1:17:30] So I don't – none of my friends moved. I mean, you have to think that people were really struggling in those days. For example, if you have a

living – well every house had a living room, but most of the houses were turned into – the living rooms were turned into bedrooms.

Interviewer: So your family must have done that if four of you were living on the main floor.

Respondent: No, we turned – the dining room became my mother and father's bedroom, and there was another room, which was another bedroom off the kitchen, and my sister and I shared it.

Interviewer: But you [1:18:00] had no dining room then.

Respondent: We had no dining room.

Interviewer: Okay. So one of these rooms that we consider functional now...

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: ...didn't exist.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: So they had the kitchen.

Respondent: Yeah. That's right. The kitchen was the centre hub.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: It was really interesting because people just didn't live the way – I mean we're so spoiled now, you know? We don't realize that people don't live in the lap of luxury, you know? And have everything they want. Is just – they were struggling. They were really [1:18:30] struggling. And just to get ahead, just to keep up.

Interviewer: And their values were our children will be educated.

Respondent: Oh yes.

Interviewer: And they will have a good life.

- Respondent:** That was always, you know, the aim. And you know, you just – education was everything. And also, this is interesting. My sister was, as I say, nine-and-a-half years older. [1:19:00] So there were some obviously young women on the street that were in her age group. And the mothers were – strove to put their daughters in a position to marry someone who was going to give them a good life in terms of – I'm talking about financially.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** And it was very competitive. You knew who was dating, and I mean, [1:19:30] it was competitive.
- Interviewer:** So competitive for the families that had done a bit better. They wanted those boys for their daughters.
- Respondent:** They wanted, they wanted their daughters to marry well and have a good life. So – oh, and this is another interesting aspect that I just thought of. In my generation, girls were just starting to carry on with careers. In other words, they were [1:20:00] carrying on with their education, extending their education. For example, I had always decided that I was going to university. I mean that was my goal, to go to university, and I was going to take social work, which is the thing that I would least want to take now [laughter] because I would be terrible at it. I would be – I'm too empathetic and that would be awful.
- Interviewer:** You would take all those...
- Respondent:** Because – yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...problems home with you.
- Respondent:** I haven't got any objectivity when it comes to emotions, and I'd be involved. I know you get hardened, [1:20:30] but it's not an occupation that I would choose today, you know? And – but during my years, for instance my sister's generation, most of the girls went to Harbord Collegiate. I'm sorry, Commerce. Central High School of Commerce, and my sister went there too. Even though she wanted to go to Harbord, my father said, "There's no sense in you going to

Harbord. You know, you'll probably [1:21:00] get married, and so what's the point?" Wells he didn't argue with him, although she should have [Laughs] because she was very bright. But he wouldn't – in the ten years, intercepting years, there was no way that my father would have said, "You have to go to Commerce," because there was no way that I would want to go to Commerce. I wanted to go to a Collegiate. I wanted to continue my education, which she did [1:21:30] too, but I had the nerve to say it.

Interviewer: It was a decade earlier.

Respondent: And I had the nerve to say it. So attitudes had changed towards women's education as well. And many, many of her friends went to Commerce and were secretaries.

Interviewer: So they graduated at eighteen years old and could have a job immediately.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: And they'd find the right man, and have children with him. [Laughs]

Respondent: Right. Exactly. Exactly.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And that was the norm.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: [1:22:00] So I remember my father asking my uncle, his brother who was a lawyer, and he said, "What do you think – you know, where do you think Tillie should go? What school do you think she should go to?" And he said, "Well she may as well go to Commerce. What's the point of her going to Harbord? She's not going to go on to university." Well she never said a word to him about this, and she wanted to go to Harbord. But I would not have accepted that. I'm trying to show you the change in attitudes.

Interviewer: [1:22:30] Well ten years is a lot. It's a serious amount of years.

Respondent: Absolutely.

Interviewer: Yeah. So there had been enough changes that it wouldn't have been as big a battle for you.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: Well, and you did go to Harbord.

Respondent: Yeah. But I think I really would have asserted myself because it was very important for me to do that. Very – and just as, you know, I was delighted when I decided to go back to York, I cannot tell you how I loved those years. I loved them. I loved [1:23:00] learning.

Interviewer: Well to think that you did a degree and then an honours degree, and another degree, and another honours degree, it's clear that it was something that you enjoyed.

Respondent: It was very – you know? And I felt when I was finally finished, I thought – and I felt finished. I felt I'd done enough, you know, at that point. But it was very difficult for me. It's like someone retiring from a career that they've had for their whole lives.

Interviewer: Yeah. It's been a lot of your [1:23:30] studies learning.

Respondent: Yes. And I'd structured my life around that as well. And it's so stimulating, you know? And this is very interesting. I graduated from my first degree, my BA, the same year as the twins graduated. We all went to York, but we were in different colleges in York.

Interviewer: Oh. So you all were at the same convocation?

Respondent: No, because they were in different colleges than I was. I was in Aktinson, so the graduation from each college is at a different time.

Interviewer: I see.

Respondent: So we graduated...

- Interviewer:** But the same year...
- Respondent:** [1:24:00] ...the same year.
- Interviewer:** You must have been very proud.
- Respondent:** Oh yes.
- Interviewer:** Of yourself and your twins.
- Respondent:** Yes, yes. Yes.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** So that was really something. We had a lot of fun. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** I think – I just – one other thing about the University of Toronto. Did that have any influence or impact on your life as you can recall?
- Respondent:** Well all my cousins went to University of Toronto. Everybody.
- Interviewer:** Pretty convenient. Yeah.
- Respondent:** You didn't think of somebody going out [1:24:30] of town the way they do now, even though there's a university here. You just went to university. You didn't create additional expenses by going to residence when you didn't need to. The reason that I chose York is that we lived in Bathurst Manor at the time, and York was a new university. It was only maybe three or four years old. It was very idealistic. They had excellent professors, most of whom had come up to escape the war, being having to enlist, [1:25:00] etcetera. Or whatever. And they were young, they were idealistic, they were enthusiastic, and you felt it. And it...
- Interviewer:** There as an energy.
- Respondent:** Energy. And I loved it. I loved it. By the time I finally called it quits in 1999, when I got my degree, they were close to retirement. They were [laughs] branched off for the most part. It just shows you, you know, you can start a career with such enthusiasm, but time

[1:25:30] wears you down and circumstances wear you down. And there was one professor who – I took a course in communications, and he was seventy-three years old, and he was scathingly critical of certain of the students. I mean you can't even think that this would happen at a university level, but [1:26:00] he had his ideas, and if you didn't agree with him, instead of welcoming them, he would make some very disparaging comments. Enough so that these several students went to the administration and reported him.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And normally he would – if you have three complaints that are consistent, they have to look at it. And the response that they got was, well, he was close to retirement and he would lose his pension, [1:26:30] so they did nothing, and he continued to...

Interviewer: Close to retirement? He was seventy-three.

Respondent: I'm sorry. Sixty. I'm sorry. Sixty-three. And he was – because in those days you had to retire when you're sixty-five.

Interviewer: Yes. Yes. Yeah.

Respondent: So – but he was...

Interviewer: Talking about age and that, do you remember the end of the Second World War?

Respondent: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: What do you remember?

Respondent: Exciting.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: Jubilant. [1:27:00] I mean my whole childhood was – not my whole childhood, but when I was able to, old enough to realize that there was a war and the ramifications, and of course we had family in Europe, and everybody lost somebody. And then after the war, the

people who were left, the families got together and tried to bring them over and help them get established. And we had that in our family as well.

Interviewer: So that's a lot of [1:27:30] memories.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Bringing people, and the joy of it.

Respondent: Yes. It was hard for them too to – well first of all, they were dependent until they got themselves settled, you know? But aside from that, the culture was different. I mean we were all Jewish, but the culture was different...

Interviewer: Oh sure.

Respondent: ...when they come from such horrible circumstances, you know? And it did mark them for life too.

Interviewer: Oh, and they suffered.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Very ugly. Yeah.

Respondent: You can even see that in our synagogue. We have [1:28:00] – well there are older people than we are, my husband and I, but many of these older people had the war experience. They were involved in it, and it never wears off. How can it?

Interviewer: Yeah. Well just before we complete this, I just ask if you can describe the character of this neighbourhood as you remember it.

Respondent: Warm, cohesive, [1:28:30] interacting. People were – they were interested. If you had, you know, if you had a problem and you were friends, like my mother's friends with Fanny Weinberg, that I told you, two doors away?

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: You know, you could speak to each other. You had that basic – and they were just neighbours, but you had that basic way of unloading.

Interviewer: You were there for [1:29:00] each other.

Respondent: And also, you know, they lived lives that were very – in terms of structure, very similar. The men would go off to work. I mean there was no such thing as working at home like there is now. Just think about it. Everybody went to work in the morning, and the women had their housework.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And their shopping. And they had their friendships and their exchange of recipes. [Laughter] I do remember that very well. [1:29:30] So it was – it's different than the neighbourhoods are now because you were more involved in each other's lives directly because you lived on top of each other, you know?

Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Respondent: And you shared more, and you saw each other more. This was another thing. You interacted because you were with each other all the time. As I say, television just came into being when I was growing up, so...

Interviewer: So you spent more time being with each other, and using [1:30:00] your front porches.

Respondent: Yes. Yes. The front porch was your social scene.

Interviewer: Yeah. A good social scene.

Respondent: Yeah. And also, the older parents, like the parents of my mother's generation, many of them lived with their kids because they couldn't afford. First of all, there was a retirement home for Jewish people. I don't know if you know about this.

Interviewer: I don't.

- Respondent:** It was, I think, on Cecil Street. If you were [1:30:30] really penniless and you needed to have assisted living, I'll put it that way, they would look after you there. That was pathetic. I remember my father would go down there every – I would walk with him down to make a donation to this residence, if you want to put it that way, and these old people, they just sat there. There was no recreational facility. There was nothing that [1:31:00] we have today. It's so different, you know?
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent:** And they just – they provided a place for them to live, and they provided their meals, and that is it. So it's quite different now.
- Interviewer:** But these people were indigent.
- Respondent:** Indigent is the word for it.
- Interviewer:** And they had nothing, and they were taken care of.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** Just the fundamental needs.
- Respondent:** And they were – it was through charitable donations that this sustained.
- Interviewer:** But you described the neighbourhood as [1:31:30] – in very positive – cohesive, close, interactive.
- Respondent:** Well I was – I think it depended on your personality as well because I was always quite friendly, and so I would walk down and I would always say – walk down the street, and I would always say, "Hello. How are you?" I would always do that. If people were sitting on their porches, because I knew – sometimes I didn't know their names, but I knew them.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. It was a community.

Respondent: You know, yes. It was [1:32:00] a community.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Very much a definite community feeling.

Interviewer: Well Ruth, I think we're going to stop now.

Respondent: Okay.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Respondent: Oh, you're welcome.

Interviewer: I hope this was enjoyable for you.

Respondent: It was. [Laughs]

Interviewer: It was for me. But I appreciate that you came down...

Respondent: Oh, it's fine.

Interviewer: ...and you shared all these wonderful stories with me, so thank you.

Respondent: Oh, you're very welcome. And I hope that, you know, that you're successful with this project.

Interviewer: I think we are.

Respondent: And you know....

[01:32:24]

[End of recording]