

101 Pierre Beeckmans

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 3rd of April, 2013. This is Eleanor Levine, and I am sitting with Merlyn and Pierre Beeckmans.

Respondent 1: Beeckmans.

Interviewer: Beeckmans.

Respondent 2: That's the English pronunciation, yes.

Interviewer: At 76 Sussex. And you have been here since 1964.

Respondent 1: Right.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Interviewer: Thank you for allowing me to come to your home and meet with you. Thank you very much. Can you tell me [0:00:30] what made you choose to live here on Sussex?

Respondent 2: What caused us to live here?

Interviewer: Yes. How did you choose Sussex?

Respondent 2: Well I had been living, in fact, on this street on the other side of Spadina. I'd been living in this area as a student. I also lived up on Kendal just south of Dupont. And I [0:01:00] was looking for a place to live after we got married. We lived briefly on Palmerston south of Bloor. I was looking at housing that was available. I just graduated in town planning, so I was interested in [0:01:30] accessibility to downtown. I wasn't looking for the suburbs at all. And Merlyn had the same general idea. She doesn't drive. I bought here because we found a slum, a very cheap house that we fixed up. And I...

Interviewer: And you're describing [0:02:00] this house.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Interviewer: So you're describing it as a cheap house in a slum.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. I want to just be very clear...

Respondent 2: I had to convince Merlyn that...

Respondent 1: It was so dirty.

Respondent 2: ...it was a good thing to do – buy a house for ten thousand dollars.

Interviewer: Wow.

Respondent 2: You know, but it was run down. But I spoke with the lady next door, an Italian immigrant, and her house was beautifully clean. [0:02:30] And I asked her would she mind if I showed my fiancée her house. Not that I, you know – I was trying to convince Merlyn that we could live here. And you know, right next door – and she got...

Interviewer: So you wanted her to see the potential.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: Well that it could be quite clean and nice, which – and the lady was very pleasant. [0:03:00] Very nice. And she let us do that, and you know, and that helped. It's one of the ways that Merlyn was convinced. Another was Howie Adelman.

Respondent 1: Oh yeah. Howie.

Respondent 2: Do you know Howie Adelman?

Interviewer: Yes, I do. That's who was living next door?

Respondent 1: No.

Respondent 2: No, no, no, no. That's another person who helped me convince – I had to convince Merlyn to move into this slum, you see? [Laughter] And Howie – I got to know him at the campus [0:03:30] co-op. He'd been our general manager for a year. And he came over and looked – you know, I said, "Oh yeah, this is a great place to buy, you know?"

Respondent 1: [Laughs] I thought Pierre had maybe paid him something under the table because he was so, so optimistic about the possibility.

Respondent 2: He's very positive.

Respondent 1: Yes. Very positive. Yeah.

Respondent 2: And he meant it, I think.

Respondent 1: Yes, he did.

Respondent 2: He could see the potential, and so he backed me up.

Interviewer: Okay. I want to stop for a minute, Merlyn, and have [0:04:00] you describe – you used the word "slum." How did you see the neighbourhood, and what was it in 1964?

Respondent 1: Well it was a run-down neighbourhood. I was just thinking the other day when Pierre mentioned that you wanted to talk to us, I remember Harbord Street was full of shops that you didn't really know what they were selling. There was dust in the display window and you thought, "You know, what are they selling here? What is it?" It was a print shop that was just a mess. I remember that. I thought [0:04:30] I'd never take anything to be printed there. And most of the shops were like that. The one stand-out was the Harbord Bakery, which was terrific, of course. And over the years that we've been here – mind you, it's many long years – that whole area has changed completely.

Respondent 2: And Harbord Bakery has evolved too, of course.

Respondent 1: Yes, yes. Oh, with the times.

Interviewer: Okay. So let's just stay with the Harbord Bakery for a short time. What was it then? It was the best of the lot, but what was it? And you're saying it has evolved.

Respondent 1: [0:05:00] Well it was a very good Jewish bakery, and we liked...

Respondent 2: Good bread.

Respondent 1: Good bread. Very good bread. And Pierre is of Belgian background. It's come out. He's very – he likes good food. [Laughs] You know? In all its manifestations. So immediately we knew it was a good place, and a very friendly atmosphere. And we had our children after we moved in here, and they were so good with those kids. They were just wonderful. They were just – [0:05:30] at one point, when our son was an infant, he was crying when I went in, and some of the ladies behind the counter said, "What are you feeding him? He sounds hungry." [Laughter] You know, they looked at me and here was, a big kid, a big baby, you know, so obviously I was feeding him. But they thought maybe something was the matter. The kid wouldn't cry like that. And then they found out that he was usually a very sunny baby. He'd smile at everybody...

Respondent 2: It was still [0:06:00] a Jewish bakery from the time when the area was largely Jewish.

Respondent 1: Largely Jewish.

Respondent 2: When we moved in, it – I think probably the predominant group was the Italian working class.

Respondent 1: Yeah. They came and then they...

Interviewer: Okay. So by 1964, Jewish people had moved north.

Respondent 1: Pretty well. Yeah. Pretty well all of them, yeah.

Respondent 2: And like the people next door, for example, who were Italians, and we had Jewish people all...

Respondent 1: An elderly couple.

Respondent 2: [0:06:30] ...on this side. The first – I thought all Jewish people had a PhD. [Laughter] From my experience.

Respondent 1: Very bright.

Respondent 2: You know, like Howie Adelmans.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent 2: But...

Respondent 1: Next door.

Respondent 2: The husband there was very limited.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what was that?

Respondent 2: Well, his wife came once and asked if I would come over and change a light bulb for them.

Respondent 1: Yeah. [Laughter] I mean he just couldn't [0:07:00] do anything. She was quite bright. His wife was quite bright, and you know, they were good neighbours in many ways, although Arthur, the husband, used to think that our son was very energetic. "I don't know what you're going to do with that kid when he's seventeen." [Laughs] Because this kid was just, you know – he stopped napping when he was a year-and-a-half, and he was just a goer all the time. And if you took him out to the parks a couple of times a day...

Respondent 2: Yeah. She died first.

Respondent 1: Yes. She did.

Respondent 2: And he was left and [0:07:30] he couldn't look after the place. So they really got...

- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Pretty messy.
- Respondent 2:** ...very, very dirty, and...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Yeah. It's too bad.
- Interviewer:** Okay. We're moving so quickly. I'm going to come back to Harbord Street where Harbord Bakery stood out as the one decent place.
- Respondent 1:** Yes, yes.
- Interviewer:** Commercial place. And the rest were dusty, neglected of some sort.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. And I don't think I ever bought anything in any of those places because they just looked to sort of **[0:08:00]** unsavoury. There was even...
- Respondent 2:** There was Porretta's Pizza.
- Respondent 1:** Porretta's Pizza. Yeah. That was the one other place. Yes. It's now...
- Respondent 2:** You know where that is.
- Interviewer:** I do.
- Respondent 1:** It used to be Messis or it's changed its name, hasn't it? Somebody else's...
- Interviewer:** Well it has been Messis, and now another restaurant has just taken – Messis closed about a month or two ago.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** So they were the bright lights there on Harbord Street, but there were small shops. I remember even that lawyer's **[0:08:30]** office

there looked sort of dusty, you know? Nobody hired a cleaner or whatnot. It was just...

Interviewer: So Harbord was kind of shabby.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Shabby.

Interviewer: The whole street was shabby.

Respondent 1: I thought – yeah, yeah. At that point.

Respondent 2: It has changed quite a lot.

Respondent 1: It has changed a lot.

Respondent 2: Another feature of the area here was the fact that we still had corner stores.

Respondent 1: Yes, yes.

Respondent 2: On most of these corners.

Interviewer: Okay. We're on Sussex right now.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Interviewer: Near Robert Street.

Respondent 1: Yes.

Interviewer: Between Robert and [0:09:00] Major. Where were the corner stores?

Respondent 1: There was one on Robert Street on Sussex, right at the corner there where Danny lives. That was one of them. Actually – and there was another one just across the street.

Respondent 2: Where John Biggs lives. There's a corner store.

Respondent 1: Yeah. There were two there.

- Respondent 2:** And I think the other one was in the area that's now the university land where the rink is.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. There was one there [0:09:30] too. There were quite a number.
- Respondent 2:** When we moved in, there were still houses there, right?
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** They tore them down.
- Respondent 1:** On Robert Street there were houses from...
- Respondent 2:** Where the playing field is.
- Respondent 1:** Where the playing field is. That was all houses.
- Interviewer:** Oh. It was taken down.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. Yes.
- Respondent 2:** They had taken them very soon after we moved in, I guess.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. That was quite one of the issues I remembered thinking of that we should talk to you about it.
- Interviewer:** So on the east side of Robert Street.
- Respondent 1:** Yes.
- Respondent 2:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** Yes. Okay.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. And some big developer [0:10:00] bought up all those houses, that you know what was going to happen. And they sort of coerced the people to sell. And there were substantial houses on the east side. Well, rather like on the west side.

- Respondent 2:** Do you remember them?
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, I do. They were in good shape. Anyway, they took them all down and then the people in the area didn't like the idea of two sort of skyscrapers going up.
- Interviewer:** Same thing. They feel the same way today.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, exactly. Well it was a pure sad and...
- Respondent 2:** When I bought **[0:10:30]** here, I didn't expect that we'd stay here forever because I thought of St. Jamestown east of Yonge, which was redeveloped into high-rise apartments. And already it was starting south of what is now the Metro store, right? They'd torn down those houses...
- Respondent 1:** And they do have...
- Respondent 2:** ...and it's beginning already. The plans were to build two **[0:11:00]** tall apartment buildings there.
- Interviewer:** Right here on Robert Street?
- Respondent 2:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent 2:** Where the playing field is.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Oh.
- Respondent 2:** And we got lucky.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, we did.
- Interviewer:** So who fought it?
- Respondent 1:** Well this is one of the reasons when we came that...

- Respondent 2:** Yes. The association was born here.
- Respondent 1:** ...the association was formed.
- Interviewer:** Sussex-Ulster.
- Respondent 1:** It was around a protest. Yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** It was called at that time.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Sussex-Ulster. And that was the main reason for forming it. And we were lucky because we had – Pierre's a planner, and Harry Malcomson lived here on Robert Street, and [0:11:30] he's a lawyer. [Laughs]
- Respondent 2:** On Robert Street?
- Respondent 1:** On Robert Street. He's moved.
- Respondent 2:** You lived on Robert Street.
- Interviewer:** I lived south of Harbord, yes.
- Respondent 2:** South of Harbord.
- Respondent 1:** Well this is just south of Sussex that the Malcomsons lived. And they moved – I don't know when they moved. Their kids were quite a bit – well, it doesn't matter when they moved, but it was very appropriate because the developer – one of the developer's men, sort of his henchman in a sense, was – somewhere or another, I bumped into him in another context [0:12:00] entirely, and, "Beeckmans" He says, "Beeckmans, you aren't related to that man who helped stop the development on Robert Street?" And I said, "Well yes, he's my husband." He says, "He's very smart. He's very smart." But he said, "Somebody who's only – his down-payment on his house was only twelve hundred dollars. He stopped a million-dollar thing going up." [Laughs] He really harangued me. And I felt just a trifle [0:12:30] threatened, you know? And it was mid-day, you know, so nobody was – he wasn't going to do anything physical to me, but he was really angry about this. And...

- Interviewer:** So you were very active in preventing that from happening.
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah. He was.
- Respondent 2:** Well I was involved, I guess.
- Respondent 1:** Quite a number of people were involved.
- Respondent 2:** I was in the residents' – we should say we were not the only middle-class...
- Respondent 1:** No.
- Respondent 2:** ...professionals in the area, you know? You had mentioned Harry Malcomson, the lawyer [0:13:00] on Robert Street. The chairman of the first residents' association lived on Robert Street. You know, he – what was his name?
- Respondent 1:** I forget.
- Respondent 2:** But you know who I'm talking about.
- Respondent 1:** I think so, but I can't remember him.
- Respondent 2:** He taught at the University of Toronto. He committed suicide.
- Respondent 1:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Paul.
- Respondent 2:** Paul, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Not Malcomson. Paul...
- Respondent 2:** His wife goes to your church.
- Respondent 1:** She did. [0:13:30] She died too.
- Respondent 2:** She died too. Okay. Well anyway, they lived...
- Interviewer:** So that was another professional family.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: But it was sprinkled around. It was starting.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Gentrification.

Respondent 2: Gentrification.

Interviewer: So you paid ten thousand, your down-payment was twelve hundred in 1964.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: And at that time, educated people were in the minority, I think.

Respondent 2: Oh, very much. Yes.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah, yeah. They were.

Respondent 2: So [0:14:00] new immigrants could still – this is a kind of place that they could still afford to come in. They'd buy a house like this, and they'd have two families, you know? When we bought it...

Respondent 1: They had two families for a while.

Respondent 2: ...they were two families in a house.

Interviewer: A lot of people have described that to me.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: A few families or people who rented rooms.

Respondent 1: Yes.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Interviewer: There was a lot about that.

Respondent 1: Yeah. And it's hard to believe, you know? I grew up in – not a wealthy family at all. My father was a United Church minister, and the manses in most places were quite commodious because in [0:14:30] years gone by, most people had more kids. And our family was a family of six kids. Two of them were twins, mind you, but still it was a big family. And I was used to big, drafty old houses. Weren't very comfortable to live in because they got very cold in winter. But there was room, and when my – coming to this small place, I really felt cribbed, cabined, and confined. I just thought this is too small, you know? You're going to have [0:15:00] kids, you know? This is just too small. And I've adapted, obviously. [Laughter] And you know, I really enjoy our home now, and I have for a long time. Pierre was absolutely right, but it was just – it's interesting what your background does to you. You know, you're used to a big family rattling around a big house, and also people coming in off the street. Oh my god, I don't know how my mother ever stood it because she was always giving meals to some poor soul who'd [0:15:30] had some tragedy or something befall them. I shouldn't laugh because it isn't funny, but it was funny in a way because one of my sisters said, "You never know who's going to be here for dinner, mom. You have no idea who's coming next." And it was true. My parents were both – both of them very hospitable people and very concerned about people who were having a tough time or were poor, or whatever had happened to them. So that's just the way we lived. So I couldn't imagine that we'd be able to do [0:16:00] that in this tiny house.

Interviewer: This must have felt like a shoebox to you.

Respondent 1: It did a bit, yeah.

Interviewer: Being so narrow...

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: ...also. How wide is your house?

Respondent 1: Sixteen...

Respondent 2: Sixteen feet.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: So you know...

Interviewer: You grew up in this big, wide...

Respondent 1: Yes. And usually with a lot – we were in small towns by and the large in Manitoba, and usually they're quite the gardens. And of course, that was heaven for my parents because you would plant your vegetables and can them, and you know, look after your family [0:16:30] that way. They were very vigorous.

Respondent 2: One difference between those days and now is that poor people can't afford to...

Respondent 1: To live here.

Respondent 2: ...to move here. You know.

Respondent 1: The prices now are ridiculous.

Interviewer: I agree with that.

Respondent 2: They're out in the suburbs in what Doug Saunders in the Globe and Mail – I don't know if you – see, he had an article describing how they are living in slab farms. That is apartment, apartment buildings [0:17:00] in the suburbs, you know? And they have to commute long, long distance to work in large numbers, you know? They are no longer in the central area of the city. They just can't afford it.

Interviewer: So you're saying the socioeconomic face of this neighbourhood has changed.

Respondent 2: Oh totally.

Respondent 1: Terrifically.

Interviewer: So now in 1964, there were just a few educated people, [0:17:30] and a lot of immigrants, several families in each home. Like this could have probably had five people sleeping in these two spaces.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And the kitchen would have been kept open for eating, but these might have had a curtain and whatever, people sleeping here. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Now you mentioned something about you grew up with growing gardens, whatever, at the back. What do you have behind your house here? And what have you had...

Respondent 2: A mess.

Interviewer: ...over...

Respondent 1: A mess. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent 1: Pierre sort of [0:18:00] likes a wilderness in the back. We haven't really done the garden thing the way I was used to.

Respondent 2: Merlyn isn't the gardener.

Respondent 1: Well you know, I used to almost...

Respondent 2: Yes or no? [Laughter]

Respondent 1: As a child I did. As a child. And I used to try and get out of it. I had discovered from my – we visited a farmer's place that a horse could get blind staggers. It was some sort of thing, you know, some virus it caught or other, and I used to – we have to – we had our [0:18:30] times when we went out weeding the garden, and I complained to my dad. I said, "I think I got blind staggers."

[Laughter] And he said, "Little girls don't get blind staggers; only horses. You've got to do your couple of rows of weeding." [Laughs]

Interviewer: So even then you were not happy to be a gardener.

Respondent 1: No. Not really, no.

Interviewer: I feel the same way.

Respondent 1: Well I – you know, my parents sort of had to. They had these six kids to feed, and they were paid next door to nothing. They were doing God's work, but God was supposed [0:19:00] to pay them, I guess. I don't know.

Respondent 2: Our garden has gone through three phases actually.

Interviewer: Front and back? Are we talking about both?

Respondent 2: We're talking about the back.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay.

Respondent 2: Initially when we had – we had two children, right? There was a sand pit in the back there, and I was able to rent a parking space across the street, so the garden was just – the back was not just a parking space.

Interviewer: [0:19:30] So the sand pit was for the children to play in.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And all the...

Interviewer: A wonderful, big sand pit.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Whoa. Yes. Okay. So that was the first incarnation.

Respondent 2: That was the first phase.

Interviewer: Yeah.

- Respondent 2:** Then as they grew up, I eventually changed it and it became my parking space mainly.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent 2:** And now more recently, I no longer drive a car. I don't have a car any longer. So it's back [0:20:00] to being not a children's play area, but sort of an attempt at a garden.
- Respondent 1:** It's not a vegetable garden, but it's mainly some vines...
- Interviewer:** Some flowers.
- Respondent 1:** ...and flowers, a few flowers.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. And then in the front, he tried tremendously...
- Respondent 2:** Our herbs are in there.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent 1:** At the front, he tried to get grass to grow again and again and again, and I said unless we get rid of the tree, which I don't think is a good idea...
- Respondent 2:** The tree. I thought – I didn't realize. I planted that [0:20:30] tree...
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So I guess between the roots and the shade...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. It just...
- Respondent 2:** It's that particular kind of tree apparently that we have. It does things to the soil.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent 2:** It doesn't allow...

- Respondent 1:** Grass.
- Respondent 2:** ...flowers to bloom.
- Respondent 1:** So we have – what is it? We have periwinkle in it now. You know, it's quite nice.
- Interviewer:** Oh, that's good. That's a nice cover.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. When it comes, all of it blue...
- Respondent 2:** It gives shade.
- Respondent 1:** ...the little blue flowers. It's very pretty.
- Interviewer:** So your back was used for children to play in when your children were young.
- Respondent 2:** Initially, when they were young. Yes.
- Interviewer:** What about [0:21:00] your front? Did you use the front in any way?
- Respondent 1:** No. No. They didn't play there. Actually, partly that was my doing because I was a little worried about them, you know? I couldn't keep tabs on them. And since both of them, both our son and daughter, very energetic. Very adventuresome kids.
- Respondent 2:** No, but if we had the back, we didn't...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. They were quite happy to play in the back.
- Respondent 2:** ...we didn't need them for children.
- Respondent 1:** They didn't need the front, and we sort of figured that was a good idea because I didn't want to sort of cage them in, but on the other hand, you can't sit there all day and watch them.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: And they were outdoors [0:21:30] kids, even as babies. You had to take them out every day.

Respondent 2: But neither of us have competent gardeners.

Respondent 1: No, no.

Respondent 2: So I guess a garden hasn't been a priority...

Respondent 1: No.

Respondent 2: ...either at the front or the back.

Respondent 1: Mm-hm.

Respondent 2: I do my best [laughter], which I guess is about as much as I can say. I experiment with different things.

Interviewer: Yeah. I'm a similar kind of gardener, so please don't [0:22:00] be apologetic. [Laughs] What about the pedestrian traffic on your street? As your children say, when they were twelve or fourteen, were they playing? Were people sitting in the front? Are people friendly in terms of stopping by? Was there anything happening on the street in the front?

Respondent 1: Oh, certainly with the kids. They played ball hockey. You know, the whole business of they have got get off the street when it's – a car comes.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent 1: And there's quite [0:22:30] a few cars, but they played assiduously. And then at the time the university put in the athletic complex over on – well, on Sussex, but it's...

Respondent 2: The rink.

Respondent 1: The rink. The rink. They had a rink there, and the kids...

Respondent 2: That was very important for our time.

- Respondent 1:** It was very important. Yeah. Our son...
- Interviewer:** It was wonderful, that rink.
- Respondent 1:** it was terrific. It was just terrific, yeah. And it kept a lot of kids off the streets, I think. You know, it really makes a big difference.
- Respondent 2:** It's sad that it's [0:23:00] not being used now.
- Interviewer:** I agree. I agree.
- Respondent 1:** I think that's a real waste of a good addition, really, to the neighbourhood. I don't know why. Well, I guess it's the university cutting back in costs, isn't it? They just don't feel...
- Interviewer:** You think of that ice rink and tennis, and then across the lane from there, there was some kind of sandy thing.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. There was some kind of – they had sort of a volleyball – it was volleyball, and then they took – I don't know whether they actually took [0:23:30] the sand out, but they just stopped using it. And I thought that was really bad.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** And the field still gets quite a bit of use from UTS. They're over there.
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent 1:** Quite frequently. So that...
- Interviewer:** And they maintain that, but they've closed it to the community.
- Respondent 1:** Yes, they have. Yeah. So yeah. It's a pity.
- Respondent 2:** I think the working class people who live here did sit on their front porches.

Respondent 1: Yes, they did. Yeah.

Respondent 2: Much more...

Respondent 1: Much more than...

Respondent 2: **[0:24:00]** ...than we do. We don't. We don't sit on our front porches.

Respondent 1: Well some of their porches are bigger too, you know. For instance, next door.

Respondent 2: It was the – you know, on both sides, right?

Respondent 1: Yeah, that's true.

Respondent 2: They would sit on their front and...

Respondent 1: And watch...

Respondent 2: ...and watch the street. Yeah.

Respondent 1: And people would pass by, and there was talk all the time over there.

Interviewer: Well when I first moved to Robert Street south of Harbord, that was a lot of Italian and Portuguese people – would be sitting outside and socializing. I became Italian and **[0:24:30]** Portuguese at that time. I enjoyed it. I'd be sitting outside at eleven o'clock at night, just enjoying conversations. So I know that kind of – Jane Jacobs called that "sidewalk living."

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Just being outside and enjoying your neighbours.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: But yeah, the new population, they...

Respondent 1: They don't do that that much.

Respondent 2: ...the professionals don't do that, right?

Interviewer: So that's another one of the changes.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: You talked about Harbord being dusty and shabby, except for Messis. **[0:25:00]** Porretta's. And the Harbord Bakery. And so that's another change that you're describing now.

Respondent 1: It's a very interesting street now. I think it's just...

Interviewer: Harbord?

Respondent 1: Yeah. Harbord, yeah.

Interviewer: How do you see Harbord now? How do you describe it?

Respondent 1: Well I find the mix of shops that they have there now is really interesting. Now admittedly, I haven't shopped there very much. Pierre does most of the grocery shopping in our house because he's the cook.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 1: I mean it sounds as if I do nothing, but that's not true. [Laughter] **[0:25:30]** He retired before I did by three or four years, maybe even more. Five years, I guess. So he took a – we used to do the meals together, you know. We got home, we got the dinner together, and then when I was still working, he started doing the meals. And when I retired I thought, well, we'd go back to sharing the meals. And he was very...

Interviewer: Territorial.

Respondent 1: ...territorial. Yes. [Laughter] As our daughter-in-law says, she went out to [0:26:00] help him one day, and she said, "Pierre sort of gives me the impression that he'd rather be in the kitchen on his own." [Laughs] And...

Interviewer: Is that your piece of territory? You like that?

Respondent 2: Oh yes, yes. Sure.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: I mean I cook, so...

Respondent 1: Yeah. He's very good too. He's very good.

Respondent 2: You know, things are located where I put them. [Laughter]

Respondent 1: Our daughter was here one day when Pierre wasn't, and I found her standing in the middle of the [0:26:30] kitchen saying – I said, "What's the matter, Megan?" And she said, "I'm just trying to imagine where dad might have put such and such." And she was trying to get into his mind because it wasn't in a place that she would have put it, so. [Laughs]

Interviewer: But she's right. It's his kitchen.

Respondent 1: It's his kitchen. Yeah.

Interviewer: Would you talk about please what you've done to the house? You bought it in 1964. It was run-down. What did you do in 1964, and what have you done – this is 2013, many years later. So what have you done through [0:27:00] all these years?

Respondent 1: Oh, well when we first...

Respondent 2: Are you talking about renovations?

Respondent 1: Yes, yes, yes.

Interviewer: All kinds of changes, including heating. Whatever. Pipes, anything. Yeah.

Respondent 2: Well we did a, initially a...

Respondent 1: A very quick and dirty...

Respondent 2: ...cheap renovation.

Respondent 1: ...painting because it was in – it was not only run-down, it hadn't been painted for years, but the last people who were in it, I don't know what the story was there, but there was one woman and there was a variety of kids, [0:27:30] and they were a black group of people. And the woman looked absolutely, totally depressed, and I didn't blame her, you know what I mean? I don't know what the story was behind it, but she was in a bad situation obviously, and she just couldn't keep the house. She couldn't keep the housekeeping done properly, and it was really a depressing place to try and do anything about. And now we – I have a couple of sisters who [0:28:00] were around at the time, and they helped us clean up. It was quite the job. And then we did some painting, as Pierre said. Just sort of quick painting so that it looks better because who knows? We may only be here for about five years, you know? [Laughter] So here we are, all these years later, and then of course, at a certain point we realized that we didn't want to move from here, and that we'd be quite happy to live here and in this neighbourhood into our old age, which is what we are now, eh? I suppose. Pierre's going [0:28:30] to be eighty soon, and I've already turned eighty. So that's what we did. And then incrementally, we did things, right? You have a better handle on that. You should tell her.

Respondent 2: Well yeah. We've renovated.

Interviewer: What kind of renovations? Which rooms would you have modified?

Respondent 2: Well when we moved in, there was one toilet that had been added at the back of the kitchen. [0:29:00] That was the – otherwise, it was the house from the...

Respondent 1: The standard house.

Respondent 2: The 1880s.

Interviewer: What year was this house built?

Respondent 1: In 1885.

Respondent 2: 1885 or something around then.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah. The row was built in that time. And they were very standard. This area here that we had made into cupboards was a hallway, and these two rooms were divided, you know. You could close – there's some doors, sliding doors that you could close between them, and I think, [0:29:30] as you say, people slept here. And the access was through the hallway mainly.

Respondent 2: Well you know, these houses, they're all the same...

Respondent 1: The same...

Respondent 2: ...basic model.

Respondent 1: Oh yeah.

Respondent 2: It's a real smart design, really.

Respondent 1: Yeah. There's a lot to be said for it because even when we came in, it took me years to realize it, but the architect had made sure that there was a window in every room. And that is brilliant. It really is brilliant because otherwise, you'd [0:30:00] feel very enclosed.

Interviewer: Yeah. That is very nice.

Respondent 2: And one of the changes we made when we first moved in was that the front upstairs was divided into two rooms. There are two windows up there, right?

Respondent 1: Yeah. There's very small bedrooms.

- Respondent 2:** And one of the bedrooms was – got so wide, you know?
- Interviewer:** Well if the house is just sixteen feet wide, and you had two rooms...
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Two rooms.
- Interviewer:** ...fitting [0:30:30] into the sixteen...
- Respondent 2:** Well we took out that one wall to make one bedroom at the front.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent 2:** That was...
- Interviewer:** It must have felt very wide after he did. [Laughter]
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Two rooms.
- Interviewer:** Two rooms. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** And then just gradually over the years we did other things. We put on an addition at the back.
- Interviewer:** One floor? Two floors?
- Respondent 1:** Two floors.
- Respondent 2:** Both floors.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Extended. The back bedroom was very tiny. The mid-bedroom was so-so, but the [0:31:00] back one was really not adequately – so we pushed right out into the backyard and enlarged the kitchen, and...
- Respondent 2:** I'm thinking, you know, what we call Megan's room, the middle room here, when we moved in, that was probably the big...
- Respondent 1:** The biggest room.

Respondent 2: ...the largest bedroom.

Respondent 1: Yeah. [Laughs] Probably was.

Respondent 2: Because the front was divided into two.

Respondent 1: Yeah, but we got rid of the two...

Respondent 2: The back bedroom was just quite narrow **[0:31:30]** across, and now it's the smallest bedroom in the house because we've...

Respondent 1: Yeah. We've widened everything else.

Respondent 2: ...enlarged the second floor and we've got, you know, a reasonable sized room at the back there. And the front is also a nice sized room.

Respondent 1: And we did think with the – we had to do things with – I remember the first year we were here, we realized the heating system was just not up to scratch. The drape in our room **[0:32:00]** at the front would move in the – you know, the windows weren't tight, and also the heating was just not adequate at all. And we had this infant, you know, who was born shortly after we moved in, and of course, I was very nest – involved at that point. I was really sort of – I didn't – I thought I was a tough lady. I wouldn't get all upset about a baby, but I didn't like this wind [Laughs] **[0:32:30]** flowing in. So we had to do the – we had to change the heating, and – was it cold to begin with? Or we did get gas eventually, I know that.

Respondent 2: Yeah. I don't...

Respondent 1: But I can't remember exactly when we did it, but...

Respondent 2: When we bought the house, I don't know what it was. But one of the things we've done is deepen...

Respondent 1: The basement.

- Respondent 2:** ...part of the basement. The part in the front of the house. Yeah, I left the **[0:33:00]** back that's under the kitchen the way it was where I can't stand up straight.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. I'm familiar with those. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So you went down deeper then.
- Respondent 1:** We went down, and we wanted to do all sorts of exciting things with it, but unfortunately when they were going down, they hit water. The stream apparently. A rivulet from the – what's the name of that?
- Respondent 2:** The Taddle Creek.
- Respondent 1:** Taddle Creek. Had a little – you know.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent 2:** Well.
- Respondent 1:** Anyway, it wasn't – it hasn't given us problems **[0:33:30]** really, but they did cement the...
- Respondent 2:** The space there.
- Respondent 1:** And there's space there. There's storage space. But we were thinking of a den, you know, and that kind of thing, but it just probably would not be wise. You'd have damp or get into...
- Interviewer:** What a story. You hit the creek. [Laughter] Oh.
- Respondent 2:** Well it came through somewhere around there, so we – you know, I said the Taddle Creek went through our basement. Whether that's actually...
- Respondent 1:** Correct.
- Respondent 2:** ...correct, precise, I don't know. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** **[0:34:00]** But it makes us all smile.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah, it does. It does. Yeah.

Respondent 2: And we – at some point, we had stairs go down to the basement, into the basement.

Interviewer: Right from here?

Respondent 1: Yeah, right.

Respondent 2: From outside.

Respondent 1: Outside. You go outside. You can get into the basement. It's helpful with storage and whatnot because the stairwell here is very narrow, as they are in most of these houses. And so this is a way to get in with something that's bigger that could be difficult. We haven't [0:34:30] used it that much, so – have we, when I think...

Respondent 2: What?

Respondent 1: That stairway.

Respondent 2: Occasionally it can be very useful.

Respondent 1: Well, it can, and that's why we...

Respondent 2: Get something into the basement.

Respondent 1: Then our neighbour is – poor man.

Respondent 2: It's very awkward to, you know – even a bicycle to put it through and down those steps inside the house. That can be useful.

Respondent 1: Yeah, it can be very useful. But it looks a little messy up there because our neighbour is – he's a very nice man, but he's got problems. I don't know what they are. He's [0:35:00] a carpenter by trade, and he's...

Respondent 2: He's one of the few who's not a middle-class professional.

- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah. Very, very nice man. Very helpful, but oh gosh, you can see the siding there. That siding has been there for about three years. He hasn't done anything with it.
- Interviewer:** So he starts things and never completely – you always look as if you're working in a – living in a work zone.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah. It does.
- Respondent 2:** He's nice, you know. He clears the snow for us in the front.
- Respondent 1:** He's a very nice man, but...
- Respondent 2:** He's a nice person, but he has a problem. [0:35:30] [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** Did you put air conditioning into your home?
- Respondent 1:** Yes, we did.
- Respondent 2:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** When would you have done that?
- Respondent 1:** That's quite a while ago, I think. We had one particularly hot summer, and after that you said, "We've got to do something about it."
- Respondent 2:** Well we had a window air conditioner before, and now it was interior.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. And it just wasn't – it's the whole house.
- Respondent 2:** We've had three air conditioning systems over the years and they didn't work properly. And finally, [0:36:00] I think the last...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, it's the last one. So we must have had it for about twenty years, would you say? Twenty years?
- Respondent 2:** What we have now?

- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Well, not the one we have now, but our...
- Interviewer:** Air conditioning.
- Respondent 1:** ...air conditioning attempts.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. I've been very frustrated because we'd spend money on whole house air conditioning, and worked very poorly.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So you'd spend the money and do all that [0:36:30] work, and have them intruding in your life if that doesn't work.
- Respondent 2:** The third time...
- Respondent 1:** It's worked. I think they learned how to cope with flat roofs, eh? That's what they said was the problem upstairs, you know? And one of the reasons you want air conditioning is for the sleeping, of course, and if it's not working there, it's not – of course, you can always...
- Respondent 2:** No, the rooms underneath the flat roof get very hot.
- Interviewer:** Well and especially as you go up, it gets hotter and hotter. You know, as you're walking up the stairs...
- Respondent 2:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** ...you can feel that change. [0:37:00] Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** I'm coming back to the stores again. Is there anything interesting through the years that has changed on Bloor Street, on College Street?
- Respondent 1:** Oh, College Street we're not that familiar with.

- Respondent 2:** Too far from College Street.
- Respondent 1:** No, we don't do much on College Street, but Bloor Street...
- Respondent 1:** Except the computer stores. I notice that.
- Respondent 1:** The – Bloor Street. Yes. There's – well I think the **[0:37:30]** old Dominion that they had is now the Metro. The Metro has a little bit of the – to my mind, a bit of the French in it, you know? It's a French company apparently that runs it. And they seem to have moved with the times about things that they provide. And there used to be – remember the Elizabeth Delicatessen on Bloor Street? Do you remember that?
- Interviewer:** Hungarian?
- Respondent 1:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent 1:** And it just disappeared one day.
- Respondent 2:** It was a Hungarian – it was more strongly **[0:38:00]** Hungarian than it is now. That strip of Bloor Street.
- Respondent 1:** Right. Right. It was.
- Respondent 2:** There were several Hungarian stores, I think.
- Respondent 1:** There was a big Hungarian restaurant where the bookstore is now.
- Interviewer:** There's one. Country Style is still there, but I think all the others are gone.
- Respondent 1:** They're gone, yeah. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Okay. So one was the Hungarian influence, I guess.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. And they had a lot of very, very good spiced meats and that kind of thing. I used to go there, but they looked very – they looked

at you very disdainfully, I felt. They felt that [0:38:30] they were Hungarian and you weren't, and you didn't know what you were, but they didn't care what you were. It was sort of – you had to be – you had to have your ego quite high when you went in there because otherwise they'd make you feel that they were doing you such a favour to sell you this. And most of the time it was quite expensive. I didn't go that often because I thought it was too expensive.

Interviewer: That one particular Hungarian store.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah. And I think that, you know, we've known other Hungarians [0:39:00] in our life. I don't...

Respondent 2: It was quite a high-class Hungarian...

Respondent 1: Yes, it was. It was.

Respondent 2: The Hungarians would come in from...

Respondent 1: All over the place, yeah.

Respondent 2: All over.

Respondent 1: Because they would provide things that these people needed from...

Respondent 2: It's like Harbord Bakery. The Jewish people still come back and get there good stuff from the Harbord Bakery.

Respondent 1: For the Jewish holidays, they're always there. Even now, they go there all the time.

Interviewer: Oh, they really line up around some of the holidays. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Because it is – it's a joy that place. It really is. We get such a kick out of Rafi [0:39:30] too. Do you know Rafi?

Interviewer: Oh, he's a good friend of mine.

Respondent 1: Oh, is he?

Respondent 2: He was just a young fellow, you know, when we moved in.

Interviewer: So you knew Goldie.

Respondent 2: Yes. He went to university, got a degree, and then decided that he'd stay at the bakery.

Interviewer: Well I think first he went off to New York and did a sociology degree there, and eventually came into the bakery. He didn't do it too quickly, but he's certainly been in charge for a long time.

Respondent 1: Yes, he has.

Interviewer: With Susy, his...

Respondent 1: With Susy. Oh...

Respondent 2: Did you know the parents there?

Interviewer: Oh, well I knew [0:40:00] Goldie.

Respondent 1: Goldie. Yeah.

Respondent 2: Goldie.

Interviewer: I didn't know Albert.

Respondent 1: I didn't know the father there.

Interviewer: Yeah. And he worked in the back anyway...

Respondent 1: Yes, he did.

Interviewer: ...but I never met him. Yeah.

Respondent 1: But Goldie was quite something too. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

- Respondent 1:** She was really – I enjoyed her a lot, and Rafi we've – and Susan. Susan is such a nice person. She is just so nice, isn't she?
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** She just...
- Interviewer:** Great. Yeah. Anything else about Bloor Street? You talked about the Hungarian [0:40:30] restaurants.
- Respondent 1:** The Hungarian restaurant, and what were some of the other places that were along there?
- Respondent 2:** The banks have gone on the corner.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Some of the banks have gone. Yeah. There were several banks.
- Respondent 2:** Except one. I guess there's still one on Bathurst on the north side there.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, there is.
- Respondent 2:** And...
- Respondent 1:** The bookstores that came along. I really like the Book City.
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Isn't it something? It's been here for quite a while now, and it started – it was – he was a very canny businessman. I [0:41:00] think he started sort of slowly, you know, and built up his collection, and it's really good now. It's just...
- Interviewer:** Well, and so far he's staying afloat. A lot of bookstores aren't because of the big, big bookstores. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah. He's...

- Respondent 2:** I'd been rather disappointed in that strip of Bloor Street. I guess it still caters to the student population a lot.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. There's the...
- Respondent 2:** The cheap food, you know? The good restaurants are on Harbord Street.
- Interviewer:** [0:41:30] Yes. Interesting that that's happened.
- Respondent 1:** It's interesting. That's interesting that that's happened because – and what's the name of the paper place or where they do printing and whatnot?
- Interviewer:** Midoco.
- Respondent 1:** Midoco. Yeah. There's Midoco. They're good. They have a lot of stuff that any time – almost any odd thing I want, I can find there. And they're a friendly group of people too. And then what's the place on Robert and Bloor [0:42:00] on the south side?
- Respondent 2:** Kinko?
- Respondent 1:** Kinko. Kinko. Kinko has been there in some manifestation for quite some time now, and they're good about moving with the times too.
- Respondent 2:** You remember what was there before then?
- Respondent 1:** What was there?
- Respondent 2:** The medical...
- Respondent 1:** Oh yes. Yeah. That's right. That medical place. Oh. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** And they moved to Bathurst and Dupont?
- Respondent 1:** Yes. Yes, they did. It was a pharmacy, and that was another story that was...
- Interviewer:** Was that Starkman's?

Respondent 1: Starkman's. Yes. Starkman's.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 1: Yeah, [0:42:30] it was there on that corner. And it was really a very interesting place because some of the people who were the servers – it took me a long time to figure out – finally somebody was able to tell me. They were pleasant enough people, but they looked frightened, and I thought I don't think I'm that intimidating. Why do they look so afraid all the time? They're perfectly polite. I was very polite with them. And I mentioned this to somebody else and he said, "Oh, didn't you know?" Most of those people had been [0:43:00] in the camps and they were highly educated. They were pharmacists, you know, and whatnot. And I just – that really broke my heart, you know, in a way. But then I said to myself, "Well good for them." You know? They're functioning, they're doing a good job...

Interviewer: But you saw that there was some damage or something.

Respondent 1: Yeah. And I just – and at first I thought maybe I am being too – you know, I would like this please or something. Maybe I was too forthright in my request. [0:43:30] I didn't know. But one day, one of my kids – I forget whether it was Ivan or Megan, she was just a baby in arms. [Laughs] She had a monumental pee. She peed all over their floor, you know? She had a diaper on, but [laughs] – and they were so nice about it.

Interviewer: Oh, you remember that.

Respondent 1: I remember. They were sort of – never happened before or after, you know? And it just – sometimes you [0:44:00] – I would never have – our daughter looked surprised too. [Laughter] Very surprised. You know, I was holding her in my arm, and she just...

Interviewer: Oh. Saturated her diaper.

Respondent 2: You're talking about Megan?

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Oh.

Respondent 1: When she was just a little kid.

Interviewer: You know, you said something that is becoming clear to me, that wherever people have lived between Bloor and College, that's the area they know the best because when I asked you, I said, "What about Bloor or College?" You said, "That was too far."

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: So people **[0:44:30]** know – you know, Sussex, Harbord, and Bloor, but College was not quite your neighbourhood.

Respondent 1: No.

Interviewer: No.

Respondent 2: Yeah. I cycled down to the Kensington Market all the time though.

Interviewer: You just anticipated where I was going exactly. That was my next question because of...

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. What about Kensington Market?

Respondent 1: Yeah. He goes there all the time. Yeah.

Interviewer: You go there now all the time.

Respondent 2: Yeah. That's why I asked you to come in. Nine-thirty, sort of when this is over, I'll have time to go down **[0:45:00]** to the Market.
[Laughter]

- Interviewer:** What do you do in the Market? How do you use it? And how have you used it through all these decades? [Laughs]
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Well he's gone there all the time, ever since we came here.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. I shop around and I'm – I notice it's changing. There are more expensive places like **[0:45:30]** Sanagan's, the meat place that has now gone into where the European – whatever they call them. European butcher, and that big place. You know the one?
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
- Respondent 2:** It's now a more upscale meat place. And I go to Hooked, the fish store, which is new. I go to – I go into all the **[0:46:00]** different fruit and vegetable places, and oh, where is it I get...
- Respondent 1:** You get grains.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. House of Spice for...
- Respondent 1:** You get grains and spices and all that.
- Interviewer:** How often do you go to the Market? Average.
- Respondent 2:** Twice a week at least.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent 2:** Because on the bike, it's quite convenient, you know?
- Interviewer:** Of course.
- Respondent 2:** If you have to walk all from here, it's...
- Interviewer:** **[0:46:30]** So you have some good baskets on your bike?
- Respondent 1:** Yes, he does.
- Respondent 2:** Oh yes. Oh yes. I insist on that.

Interviewer: So the Market is a big part of your life and it has been since 1964.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: I don't know about since 1964 because I was working. I don't know how much I went down there in those days. Certainly since I've retired, and that's twenty years now, it will be.

Interviewer: Oh. So you retired fairly young.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yes. Sixty.

Interviewer: [0:47:00] Yeah.

Respondent 2: I can't – I don't remember. I mean I was working. I couldn't do what I do now, right?

Respondent 1: That's true. That's true. I suppose we didn't go down there then.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: You said you don't have a car. You used to have a car?

Respondent 1: Yes.

Respondent 2: Yeah. We did. Merlyn has never driven.

Respondent 1: I have an eye problem. I don't see properly to drive.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. When did you stop [0:47:30] using the car?

Respondent 1: I would think about four or five years ago.

Respondent 2: Yeah, I was going to say five years.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: Something like that.

Respondent 1: Because you gave it to, or you sold it for very little money to...

Respondent 2: Yeah. My eyesight is declining, and I found that driving was [0:48:00] tiring. It would exhaust me as I got older. I was – this was becoming clearer and clearer, and since we live here, and since I get around on a bicycle, I said – I was finding that the car was sitting in the backyard. Sometimes the whole week, two or three weeks would go by and I wouldn't use it. So I said, you know, [0:48:30] why spend money on a car? I mean – so...

Respondent 1: We take cabs.

Respondent 2: I only owned three cars in the whole time I...

Interviewer: Each car had a long life.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: ...was an adult. Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Generally, he's worked within biking range.

Respondent 2: I worked a lot of the time at College and Bay.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent 2: So I even would come and have lunch with my family.

Interviewer: Oh wow.

Respondent 1: [0:49:00] Kids would come from Huron Street School...

Respondent 2: Huron Street School.

Respondent 1: ...and they were there.

- Respondent 2:** That was unusual, I guess.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Yeah, it was.
- Respondent 2:** I could do that.
- Interviewer:** How have the streets changed in terms of direction of traffic and flow of traffic?
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah. That was an issue at one point because, in fact, the maze was created. Richard Gilbert knows about the maze, [0:49:30] and he and Pierre put their heads together and because what was happening...
- Respondent 2:** There used to be one-way, all the way down to College, right?
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. And people were using it, like Spadina.
- Respondent 2:** One-way south and the other way one-way north.
- Respondent 1:** They were speeding.
- Respondent 2:** So people would use it as a shortcut, and that's why the maze was created.
- Interviewer:** So you and Richard worked on that together.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Good.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah. And we were concerned. There were a lot of children in the area, and we just thought gosh, this is dangerous.
- Respondent 2:** I did it on – I guess [0:50:00] I supported it on principle, although I realized that what it means is that people would – since they couldn't go all the way down, there'd be more traffic...
- Respondent 1:** More traffic on our street.

Respondent 2: ...on this street than on...

Respondent 1: But it was better than them because they were going way too fast.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent 1: They went way too fast.

Respondent 2: One of the reasons I bought the house here was – I say, oh yeah, it's a quiet – you know, it doesn't go very far. It's a [0:50:30] quiet street.

Interviewer: Until you [laughter] – thank you very much, Pierre.

Respondent 2: They can't. They can't speed along here.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: There's more traffic as a result of the maze on this part.

Respondent 1: I thought it was very – you know, I guess Richard – I think he was councillor at the time, wasn't he?

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: I think he was.

Respondent 2: It was one of his...

Respondent 1: One of his. And he did a really good job of pushing it through. And I was very grateful as a mother because kids who have to be [0:51:00] outdoors all the time, as ours were, it was a worry, you know?

Respondent 2: I guess this was probably one of the very first of these local mazes. I think it's been copied...

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent 2: ...elsewhere.

Respondent 1: Yeah. And they caused a lot of difficulty in some areas. Remember, there was a big to-do in the papers about the one in north Toronto that they had set-up, and it was rather interesting because we'd got our thing through without any trouble. [Laughs] **[0:51:30]** And the people in north Toronto – there was quite a group who didn't want the maze there, and that became a real...

Interviewer: Well I could just see somebody's at Bloor and they're racing down to College.

Respondent 1: Yes.

Interviewer: I have had, in my interviews, I have people – I've listened to people talk about how it improved for the young families.

Respondent 1: Yes.

Interviewer: So really, it's come up in the interviews when we've talked about roads.

Respondent 1: Interesting. That's interesting.

Interviewer: Yes, it has.

Respondent 1: Very interesting.

Interviewer: For people who have been here for a long time, and **[0:52:00]** their children were **[indiscernible 0:52:01]** of your children. So they would say thank you very much. [Laughter] And I didn't know that you had been part – I had heard Richard's name. I hadn't heard your name.

Respondent 2: Oh, well here's the prime mover, I think.

Respondent 1: It was him mainly, but you helped. It's because you knew things about traffic plans and whatnot, and that was...

Respondent 2: I guess I was on the residents' association.

- Interviewer:** Oh, were you?
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Oh yeah. I was President at one point.
- Respondent 1:** One point, yeah.
- Interviewer:** Ah. When was that? Do you have some idea?
- Respondent 2:** Early on.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. [0:52:30] Early on.
- Respondent 2:** The late '60s.
- Respondent 1:** The late '60s, I would think. And then...
- Respondent 2:** I wasn't particularly active after that initial concern about...
- Respondent 1:** The buildings.
- Respondent 2:** ...high-rise apartments.
- Interviewer:** So it was formed really to stop that from happening, but so you formed and you became very strong at that time.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** Because you had a real focus.
- Respondent 2:** And then for a while, there wasn't...
- Respondent 1:** An issue.
- Respondent 2:** There weren't many issues, and I guess [0:53:00] in my time, I've got rather...
- Respondent 1:** Quiet.

Respondent 2: ...inactive. Not totally inactive, but I think it has become much more active in recent years.

Respondent 1: Yes. Much like the Annex. You know, it's a very, very organized group, and ours isn't quite so organized. But it's come back, I think, and from the beginning. And it was interesting because the **[0:53:30]** – I think sometimes the politicians and whoever, and the developers, felt that this area was largely immigrant, and so he could just push people around, you know? Unfortunately, that's what some developers think they can do. And they were very annoyed. Like this one man who talked to me, he says, "You've got this lawyer, got this town planner there. [Laughs] They're making a mess of things." [Laughter]

Interviewer: For some.

Respondent 1: And making it important for the people who wanted to build there. **[0:54:00]** It was – and that sort of upset me because I thought that's not fair to the immigrants, you know? To just sort of dismiss them as their views or not.

Respondent 2: No. They believed this was progress.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well...

Respondent 2: Build these nice, clean apartment buildings instead of...

Interviewer: All these tiny little houses.

Respondent 2: Old houses.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well, if that's progress, we're still fighting progress. [Laughter] We are.

Respondent 2: **[0:54:30]** Yes.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

- Interviewer:** Because we're very active. That's certainly an issue for us today in 2013.
- Respondent 2:** But they're starting to understand that, that it isn't necessarily a socially ideal form of housing at all. Just a totally car-oriented society. It's not something we **[0:55:00]** should be promoting.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Well living without a car, because of where all of us live, I think can be easy and not a hardship. And if you take taxis, not expensive.
- Respondent 2:** That's one of the things I thought when I got rid of the car, you know? You save so much money not having a car that you can afford quite a few taxis.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. And it's still less expensive. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** We do a lot of **[0:55:30]** walking, and I think – you know, we always have done quite a bit of walking.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. You do.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** I save energy by cycling. [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** What can you say about – through the years – about the safety of this neighbourhood?
- Respondent 1:** Oh, I find it very safe, and through the years I've never been worried about being out at a meeting and coming home. Of course, **[0:56:00]** most of the meetings are fairly close by, so maybe that has something to do with it. But I've never – that has never worried me at all. And sometimes people worried about their kids – now, I must admit that since our kids had to cross Spadina, for several years, I went and collected them at noon and took them back, and picked them up after school. And we walked, you know? Because I don't drive. But **[0:56:30]** I was never worried about anybody doing

anything to my kids. I think maybe that has changed a lot now because there's been a lot of – well, I shouldn't say a lot, but there have been incidents of kids being picked up and put in a car, and taken away, and abused or whatever. But I never felt that about my kids. And my kids at a certain stage, they felt they were able to do the necessary on **[0:57:00]** their own, and they wanted to be independent. So I just made sure that they did not try to cross when the light was red. And I pointed out to our son in particular, because he just thought that everybody saw him. Had to take him and show him a truck. I said, "A truck cannot see you there on the corner." You know, you have to make absolutely sure that the truck has stopped before you go. And he got that. Most of the time he just thought, "Well, everybody **[0:57:30]** knows me in the neighbourhood, so they'll all stop for me."

Interviewer: It's not so simple as that.

Respondent 1: He's the kind of kid who talked to everybody, and that was a bit of a worry because he talked to everybody. But no, I don't think they felt unsafe, do you? Our kids?

Respondent 2: No.

Interviewer: And you too.

Respondent 1: No.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: If you're looking for sources of conflict, I think there is **[0:58:00]** the conflict between the young people who live here, students, and some of them aren't necessarily students, but...

Respondent 1: Anymore.

Respondent 2: ...young people who are not a family group and the rest of us. That is a problem. They have different **[0:58:30]** priorities, different interests. You know, they like to party.

Respondent 1: [Laughs] We've had some big parties.

- Respondent 2:** I don't know if any of the other people you've talked to have mentioned that kind of thing.
- Interviewer:** Yes. And I've lived with it too.
- Respondent 2:** You've experienced it. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** For sure. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** We have a house next door, which has been owned by somebody who lives in Hong Kong for a long time, and **[0:59:00]** a company – they hire someone to manage it, and that company is based somewhere north of Steeles. You know, Richmond Hill, I think.
- Respondent 1:** And they never come down. They just...
- Respondent 2:** They don't – we've had a series over the years since that Italian family moved out a long thirty years ago. They were lovely. **[0:59:30]** Just wonderful having – you know, the girls came and babysit our kids, you know, right next door with the mother as a back-up. [Laughter] That was...
- Interviewer:** And you had two generations of babysitters.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** We got along very well with them. But since then, while we've had...
- Interviewer:** Thirty years of that.
- Respondent 1:** Well it's...
- Respondent 2:** We had one place where there were drug addicts, young people...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. That was **[1:00:00]** bad news. Yeah. And we had to move on that, but it took me a long time to realize.
- Respondent 2:** They trashed the place when they left.

- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Yeah. It was...
- Respondent 2:** Which somehow I think had an effect on the company. They said they had to spend a lot of money fixing it up.
- Respondent 1:** They had to. And apparently, we've had several good people, good groups recently. They'd been pretty good.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Well it's the same group that's been changing. They're musicians.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. And they're quite good.
- Respondent 2:** And they practice, they [1:00:30] practice in the basement next door, and sometimes it can be quite loud.
- Respondent 1:** But not very often. They're much, much better than they used to be about it.
- Interviewer:** But you have had three decades of people moving in and out, and not really caring about the property or the neighbourhood.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** And especially the next-door neighbours.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah. That can be – it's had its moments when it wasn't so good. One time, our daughter was staying over here, and she's quite [1:01:00] a commanding personality. She's about five-nine, and you know, she's not – but she has this sense of self that people respond to, and she went over at about three in the morning one day, and she said, "Listen, I'm close to your age. This is ridiculous. You can't expect people in the neighbourhood" – because people on Robert Street were hearing them too, you know? People just – the noise was just horrific. And...
- Respondent 2:** They had a big party, and it was crashed...

- Respondent 1:** [1:01:30] By other people. It was just a mess...
- Respondent 2:** ...by people they didn't know.
- Respondent 1:** But the interesting thing was as soon as she said that, they just closed down immediately and they took off. I just thought wow, I'm going to phone Megan.
- Respondent 2:** She lives at Lippincott.
- Respondent 1:** Lippincott. I'll phone her if I run into trouble.
- Respondent 2:** South of Harbord.
- Interviewer:** Oh, so near me.
- Respondent 2:** Yes.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** You live on Lippincott?
- Interviewer:** I live on Borden south of Harbord. Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** So it's been an interesting experience. And sometimes, actually we got to like some of the kids who live [1:02:00] next door.
- Respondent 2:** They're basically nice...
- Respondent 1:** Very nice kids.
- Respondent 2:** ...fortunately. You know, we could talk to them.
- Respondent 1:** You can talk to them, and they are reasonable. But we had some – well, that drug scene. I couldn't imagine how stupid I was because the lady on the corner, Linda, figured out right away and she sent her husband, Danny, over to say, "We've got to do something. You know, this is a drug"...

- Respondent 2:** It was hard to know who actually lives here.
- Respondent 1:** You couldn't find out who was – you know? And they all just looked zonked, and why **[1:02:30]** I didn't think that it was so – you know, we called the authorities and they did take them out, and it's sad in a way. But it sort of...
- Respondent 2:** And before that, we had a couple of high-class prostitutes...
- Respondent 1:** Prostitutes.
- Respondent 2:** ...from Eastern Europe, I think.
- Interviewer:** Just next door?
- Respondent 2:** They were quiet. [Laughter]
- Respondent 1:** No, they were very quiet. And they did...
- Respondent 2:** They just get in the taxi and go off.
- Interviewer:** Oh, so they didn't work here.
- Respondent 1:** They didn't work right here. **[1:03:00]** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** They were Russian. Yeah. That was quite funny. One of them came over one day and asked if we had a rake.
- Interviewer:** Yeah?
- Respondent 1:** She wanted to do something with the garden in the front, which she – I produced the rake, and she did her bit, you know, and they were – it's been quite the story. House next door. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Just a little more interesting than you bargained for.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. The noise at times was – you know, that can be...

- Respondent 2:** And Francis on the – he can be quite [1:03:30] noisy at times. He suddenly decides to get moving and do something, you know? [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** So you hear banging.
- Respondent 2:** We sit down to dinner. Oh, there's Francis. [Laughter] The walls aren't that thick here, you know? So we do hear our neighbours. [Laughs] But I guess we get used to it.
- Respondent 1:** It's interesting, and there's an interesting group of people who live along here. We don't know all of them anymore. There's one house that's still vacant there. Raja's [1:04:00] house. I don't know what's happened there at all. I think they sold it, and then you know...
- Respondent 2:** You can always tell – talking about young people and the others, you can always tell where the young people are living. It's the ones who are in good health and robust, and could clear off the snow. But they're the ones who don't, right? [Laughter]
- Respondent 1:** It's not anybody's job.
- Respondent 2:** Walk along the sidewalk and there's a place that hasn't been cleared. A bunch of [1:04:30] students in there. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** So is this a block where you've gotten to know your neighbours?
- Respondent 1:** Quite a number of them, yes. We know the Barnetts. Do you know the Barnetts?
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** They've been here a long time.
- Respondent 1:** They've been here.
- Interviewer:** I interviewed them.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Okay.

Respondent 1: Not as long as we have, but they've been here for a long time, and our kids babysat their kids. [Laughs] In fact, Anna said one day, they came home, they'd been out later than they expected, and Megan was babysitting and she was zonked out on the couch. She was a [1:05:00] teenager and I was sixteen, seventeen or something like that. And I looked down at her and I said to Bob, "She looks so young and we left our kids with her." [Laughs] I said, "Well, you know, she would have done something." And she said, "I know. I know." You know, she was perfectly capable of waking up and doing the necessary for our kids, but she was just appalled at how young she looked when she was asleep there. So yeah.

Interviewer: But they have been here – not quite as long as you, but I know that when they bought [1:05:30] their house, it was the same attitude, that it's a slummy neighbourhood.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah. Well one of my sisters who lives in Thornhill, she called it outright a slum. She was very annoyed with us. And she's had to change her tune. She did apologize a few years ago. She said it really is an interesting neighbourhood now.

Interviewer: But she wasn't so far off at that time.

Respondent 1: No, she wasn't. No, she wasn't. But it was a little unkind. I thought that was not...

Interviewer: Yeah. Even if you thought it, you were moving here.

Respondent 1: Yeah. I didn't want to...

Respondent 2: Well yeah, [1:06:00] when we moved in here, I think that was the majority opinion, you know? Why aren't you out in the suburbs? Can't you afford it? You know?

Interviewer: When I first came to Toronto very briefly, that was 1968. I lived on Robert Street just north of Harbord. I had one baby at the time and pregnant with a second, but we rented the second floor. The landlord lived on the first floor, and then we rented out the third floor. [Laughs] That was 151 or [1:06:30] something like that. But I know my mother visited from Montreal, and I could just see her

feeling, "What is my daughter doing here?" She had that same perception. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: Yeah. It was very common in those days.

Respondent 1: Yes. But all of us love it, don't we?

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: I mean this neighbourhood.

Respondent 1: Yeah. It's why we're still here, you know? It's why we're still here. We know people.

Interviewer: I think we've – oh yeah. I want to ask two other things. What about institutions? Schools, and [1:07:00] churches, and synagogues.

Respondent 1: Schools? We were very pleased with Huron Street School when our children went there. They were very, very good with them. They both went – no. They didn't both go to the same high school. Our son decided to go to Northern Secondary. They had a program there that they thought he would enjoy, and he did. He had a good time in high school. And our daughter went to Jarvis.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent 1: And it was a very [1:07:30] good place too. I think they did a very good job. They both went on to university. Ivan went to Waterloo.

Interviewer: So you lived right, you know, a five-minute walk from the University of Toronto.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Funny story about that. Our son, Ivan, he's always known the area over that – the other side of Spadina. It's U of T. [Laughs] [1:08:00]

He didn't realize that that was the University of Toronto. It was just U of T. [Laughter]

Respondent 1: He's an interesting type in many ways, and he learned a lot since then, hasn't he? But he has this attitude about places that he likes. He really, really likes them and he's – they've been lucky that way, and they made friends with people who grew up in the area too. Some of those very long-term friends. [1:08:30] And Megan in particular, our daughter, she has several friends that she met in kindergarten at Huron Street School and she's still got them, you know?

Interviewer: Now Megan's living on Lippincott.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Where's Ivan living?

Respondent 1: Bangkok. [Laughs]

Respondent 2: One extreme to the other. Couldn't be much closer than Megan.

Respondent 1: Yeah. And she's wonderful. She's been – I have some older sisters who are not well at all. They're very frail and whatnot, and she's been helping out [1:09:00] tremendously with them. And we miss our son a lot, but what he wanted to do was teach computers. You know, be the computer person in a school. And they were cutting back on all that kind of thing here in Toronto, so he's had – he spent five years in Mexico at a private school there in Monterrey, and then he was in...

Respondent 2: He was on Baffin Island first.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Baffin Island. That's the only place in [1:09:30] Canada where he could get a teaching job when he graduated from – yeah. It was unbelievable. He was in Cape Dorset for two years, and then it was still the same situation. There were just no jobs for teachers, so he said, "Okay." You know, and he ended up going to Monterrey, Mexico, and then he went to Beijing for seven years.

And now he's in Bangkok. He's been there three years? I guess he's in his fourth year.

Respondent 2: So he teaches at international schools all over the world.

Respondent 1: Yes. And they have this thing there. [1:10:00] They have exactly what he wants. He's the computer person for the school and he teaches all – he likes the variety in the ages of the kids that he teaches. He's usually in a K to nine school, but sometimes it's K to ten or something like that.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 1: It just depends on the – and he likes the variety of the ages and, you know, he's – I think he's very good.

Interviewer: What language is he speaking there?

Respondent 1: He's speaking in English. He's speaking in English. [1:10:30] And he's married, and he has two little boys, so – and they come home every June.

Respondent 2: We'll see him soon in June.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: We've seen him on Skype now.

Respondent 1: Yeah. He's on Skype, and Skype is really valuable. You can see that the younger one is just over a year, and boy, every week they change when they're that age.

Interviewer: Yeah. Thank goodness for Skype. Yeah. [Laughter]

Respondent 1: Yeah. Do you use it too?

Interviewer: Well one of my sons lives in San Diego. He has two children. Another lives in Montreal. He has four children.

Respondent 1: Wow.

- Interviewer:** So – well, I go to Montreal every two [1:11:00] months, but yes. Skype is fabulous.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. It really, really makes a difference too.
- Interviewer:** Well your son loves the world.
- Respondent 1:** Well, I guess so. He just...
- Respondent 2:** He worked – when he first got married a few years ago, he worked at...
- Respondent 1:** Branksome Hall.
- Respondent 2:** ...Branksome Hall.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, he taught there for a couple of years.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** And the Junior School.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** But he was working so hard there, he said they had – preparing stuff, and he [1:11:30] didn't get to see his family much.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Yeah. That's a known thing about private schools. If you're a teacher there, it's your life. And he just figured that this was ridiculous, you know? And also...
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. And that's not true in these international schools.

Respondent 1: No, it's not. No. We're talking about private schools here.

Interviewer: So he took his life back.

Respondent 1: Yeah. And he just found it overwhelming, you know? And he enjoyed it [1:12:00] in a way. You know, the kids were good. And he was the only male teacher in the lower school. Branksome Hall. I always keep forgetting which one it was. And they were just absolutely thrilled, these girls, to have this male teacher. It was quite funny.

Respondent 2: So churches.

Respondent 1: Oh churches. Oh yeah. I go to – now I'm an active member. I have to confess my sins. I'm an active [laughter] member of Trinity-St. Paul's United Church, which is a [1:12:30] very, very interesting place. You'd laugh at this. At Easter service, every Sunday, our Ministers ask if there's any people here for the first time. You know, and of course, Easter Sunday is quite the day because that's when the – it used to be the ladies got their Easter hats and went to church the one time of the year. Maybe at Christmas as well, but you know how people are. Anyway, this one young man stood up, and he said, "Well," he said, "Actually, I'm usually an Anglican." [Laughter] [1:13:00] And everybody laughed. We couldn't help it, and our ministers are really, really good. And Hans van Nie, one of our ministers, said, "Oh," he said, "That's perfectly acceptable. We have everything here." And it's true, you know? Muslims come now and then and...

Interviewer: Is this the one on Bloor Street?

Respondent 1: Yeah, on Bloor Street.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 2: Right down the block here.

Respondent 1: And it's the Tafelmusik Church too.

Interviewer: I know. It has so many other programs in it too.

Respondent 1: Yeah. I was – I now and then boast about this, because I think people should [1:13:30] know if it weren't for Trinity-St. Paul's Church, Tafelmusik probably wouldn't exist because when they were trying to get their thing together, the woman who plays the big bass, Alison Mackay, or Mackay, I guess she pronounces it, she and her husband are members of our church, and they couldn't find a venue that they could afford, you know, to get going? And [1:14:00] these musicians are just brilliant. They're all soloists, do you know? They're just terrific. Anyway, she came to the church and she said, "You know, we can afford to pay you something that's almost an honorarium for a while here. Could we possibly use the facility?" Well, we had meetings. One thing about the United Church that's not good, you have a million meetings. Subcommittees all over the place. But we finally got to the stage – we were going to vote whether we were going to do this or not, [1:14:30] and everybody was ready to vote yes. And then one of the elderly gentlemen said, "Just a minute here." [Laughs] And his brother said, "Oh, for Pete's sakes, George. We'd had a million meetings and we're going to vote now. No more 'just a minutes.'" [Laughter] And so anyway, we voted to have them come and use the facility, and the rest is history. And I think that's the kind of community they are. Somebody [1:15:00] has a problem, you know? If they can manage to accommodate or help in any way, they do. And the individuals, I'm still meeting people there. I've been going to that church for a good thirty-five years, and I'm still meeting people there who were there when I started, and I didn't realize they were doing things out in the community that are just so incredible. One woman did Meals for Wheels for forty years, if you can imagine it. And I just [1:15:30] found that out not very long ago. And they're that kind of community. They just are amazing.

Interviewer: I know sometimes when I'm walking on Bloor in the evening if I've had dinner with friends, I'm walking, and I think they have AA meetings. I know there are a variety of kinds – because I see people outside taking a coffee break, or having a cigarette, and then they go back in. I know it's a real community centre.

Respondent 1: It's an amazing place.

- Interviewer:** Yes. I'm aware of that.
- Respondent 1:** An amazing place.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Some people aren't, but...
- Respondent 2:** When people ask me where I live, I say **[1:16:00]** halfway between Tafelmusik and the Harbord Bakery. [Laughter] The perfect location.
- Interviewer:** It is a very good description.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** They look a little puzzled. [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** Those of us who live here would...
- Respondent 2:** I usually have to explain some more, but...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. It is a – as I say, it's one of the things that keeps me going, you know? The...
- Respondent 2:** She sings in the choir there.
- Respondent 1:** I sing in the choir as well, and we have a wonderful choir director and the music there is **[1:16:30]** terrific. He does all kinds of – his background is Mennonite, but believe me, we sing African chants, we sing Indian things. He's just really amazing, and a lot of Bach, and I love Bach. So it's a great place.
- Interviewer:** You know what? I agree with you. Whatever I know, and I'm sure I just know the tip of the iceberg, I know it's a wonderful, wonderful institution. And a kind place, and a generous place.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. It wasn't always, you know? It wasn't always. It started to change just around the time we moved in here. **[1:17:00]** They had an – and this happens in any religion, I guess. They had a minister

there who was very, very rigid about everything. About Christianity or whatever. And he was there for twenty-five, thirty years, and they finally – the congregation – you know, he wouldn't go for anything about doing anything in the community or talking to the Catholics on Bathurst Street, or the Jews on [1:17:30] Spadina there, you know? Just were not – he wasn't interested in doing anything like that. And the congregation was. So they asked him to leave. They asked him to leave. And then we got some very, very good people for – well, since I've been there, we've had only one person who wasn't really, really good. The others had – the ministerial staff has just been amazing, absolutely amazing.

Interviewer: So it's a place that's kind of opened its doors and its heart.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And you're a part of that.

Respondent 1: [1:18:00] Yeah. And that's the way I think we should be, you know? My father was a minister, as I was telling you. That's the way he was. My gosh, you know? Didn't matter what you were. He used to go and they used to think it was very funny. In one community, we had a lot of Belgian farmers who'd come as immigrants, and my dad was a farmer's son. And so he would – when he was tooling around in his car going someplace or other and he saw one man, [1:18:30] usually a Belgian trying – struggling with something he was doing in the field. He always had his overalls and his work boots in the car, and he put them on and go and give these people a hand. So that most of the Catholic community knew him really well, and he – and he wasn't proselytizing. He was just helping him out for an hour.

Interviewer: So you grew up seeing the church as something much more than just come and pray.

Respondent 1: Oh yes.

Interviewer: And wear your best clothes.

Respondent 1: Oh yes. Oh.

- Interviewer:** And that's what [1:19:00] your church is doing now, and you're part of that.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. It's really amazing.
- Interviewer:** So that's an important place for you, but it's an important place for many people. Not only in the neighbourhood, but in the city.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. I think it is because it has such a range, you know? There's more PhDs in that congregation that you – and I'm always finding out another one that I didn't know about. You know, they are very – most of them are very bright, but they're also very kind and concerned [1:19:30] about their society, so.
- Interviewer:** That's what it's about.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Okay. I'm not going to ask more questions, but I'm wondering when you know that I was coming today, were there any subjects or stories – was there anything you were thinking you would like to share with me while we were talking about the neighbourhood, and your having lived here for half a century? [Laughs]
- Respondent 2:** I think I've brought up a couple of things up while we were talking, right? I've already...
- Respondent 1:** I think...
- Respondent 2:** [1:20:00] thought of. You thought we might have photographs, but we didn't find anything.
- Respondent 1:** Well, we had our upstairs bathroom redone, and we had to move things around for the workmen to work, and I don't know where – but I just thought we had some photographs of events that we had. You know, sort of picnics on occasion and things like that, but that's [1:20:30] a long way back, and maybe they got tossed. I don't know.

Respondent 2: They've done that more recently.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Well if you come up with any of these pictures, call me because what I was doing in the past is I came with my camera and took pictures of the pictures, but Richard is going around with a scanner. So if you discover some of them...

Respondent 1: Yeah. Okay.

Interviewer: ...get in touch with me or with Richard.

Respondent 1: Because remember that time I took Ivan as a baby down to City Hall [1:21:00] with Morris Fine?

Respondent 2: Oh yes.

Respondent 1: To protest something or other? And [laughs] that was really funny because...

Respondent 2: That's right.

Respondent 1: ...oh, we wanted a parkette at Ulster and – what's that little parkette? Brunswick and Ulster.

Respondent 2: It's named after the woman...

Interviewer: That woman...

Respondent 1: Margaret Fairley.

Respondent 2: Margaret Fairley.

Respondent 1: Margaret Fairley.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent 1: Anyway, we wanted a park, and somebody got the notion that we needed to go down – and at that point I was at home, and [1:21:30] our son was – I think he was about a year or something. And Morris

for some reason had a free day. I don't know what – anyways. Do you know the Fines? Morris Fine on Brunswick?

Respondent 2: Right across from Rose Schwartz there.

Interviewer: Should I meet him? Has he been here for a long time?

Respondent 1: Yeah. He has been here for a long time.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: I'll check him out.

Respondent 1: But he's sort of a curmudgeon urban planner a little bit. [Laughter] Anyway, he and I and Ivan [1:22:00] went down, and they were saying ridiculous things. The councillor was saying, you know, "There aren't any children in that area." And Ivan, he was a funny baby in many ways. He'd go, "Ho, ho, ho." You know? [Laughs] And it became hilarious. You know, and he didn't have any hair at that point. His hair came in later, but he'd kept making sort of almost Bronx cheers, you know, whenever anybody said a negative thing about the park. [1:22:30] And it became – yeah. And I wasn't – and it just – it changed the whole atmosphere, you know?

Interviewer: That's great.

Respondent 1: And they actually made the little parkette. The Margaret Fairley parkette.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 2: It was an early achievement, wasn't it?

Respondent 1: Yeah. But it was such a – you know, and Morris said to me, "You got some kid there, Merlyn." [Laughs]

Interviewer: So he was your best ally that day.

Respondent 1: He was. He was. He was a people-person, and he has been ever since he was an infant. It just...

Respondent 2: Yeah. That's right.

Respondent 1: And he [1:23:00] just – he'll talk to anybody, anywhere, anytime, and enjoy their stories, you know?

Interviewer: And that's what he's doing in so many different places.

Respondent 1: Yes, he is.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well, Merlyn and Pierre, thank you very much.

Respondent 1: You're very welcome.

Interviewer: You've talked a lot – wonderful stories, and you're talking about a span of so many years, so it's been very valuable. Thank you very much.

Respondent 2: It was nice meeting you.

Respondent 1: If you think of anything else that you might like to ask us on occasion, you know, that your mind just thinks, "Hey, you know, what about that? [1:23:30] Did you have anything to do with that?" feel free to give us a call.

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

[01:23:34]

[End of recording]