

103 Alf Kwinter

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

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: Okay. We're on.

Respondent: Sure.

Interviewer: The date is?

Respondent: April the 8th.

Interviewer: April the 8th.

Respondent: 2013.

Interviewer: And I am – it's Eleanor Levine interviewing Alf Kwinter.

Respondent: Right. Let me turn this off.

Interviewer: Is that okay?

Respondent: Sure. I'm turning it on.

Interviewer: Lived at 67 Ulster from the late '40s until 1963.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: [0:00:30] And between the ages from two to about eighteen.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: Okay. I'm going to begin by asking you whether you have any idea, because you were very young, what prompted your parents to choose that neighbourhood?

Respondent: I don't think there was much of a choice in those days. First of all, anybody and everybody who came over from Europe after the war, as my parents did, all [0:01:00] went to one specific neighbourhood, which is downtown Toronto. It's not as if they had any choice of what suburb they were going to live in. [Laughs] Everybody migrated to downtown Toronto, which was the magnet for all post-World War 2 Jewish immigrants. The main reason, one of the main reasons probably was that it was in close proximity to Kensington, which was a Jewish market where my father had his store, which was not far from the schmatta district.

Interviewer: The schmatta. What does schmatta [0:01:30] mean?

Respondent: Schmatta?

Interviewer: [Laughs] Just because this is going to be transcribed.

Respondent: Oh. Schmatta is the colloquial word, the Yiddish word for rags. And of course, Toronto at that time, as I'm sure was Montreal, had a very large textile industry, and so many of the people who came over from the old country were pressers, cutters, tailors. It was called the schneiders. A very large percentage of men and women worked in the textile industry, [0:02:00] and that's why I think why they were attracted. One of the reasons they were attracted to that part of the city. I mean it was just a natural allure. That's where everybody went to, and Ulster Street of course. But this went on even before. I should say this didn't just happen at the end of the Second World War. My high school, Harbord Collegiate, had already been well recognized as a school that was virtually all Jewish, even in the earlier years. So downtown Toronto's where [0:02:30] the Jews all moved to.

Interviewer: And your father had a business in Kensington Market.

Respondent: My dad had a store in the Kensington Market at the corner. Actually on the very edge or in the Kensington Market really at the corner of Baldwin and Spadina called the Ontario Discount House at 378 Spadina Avenue.

Interviewer: And what was that business?

Respondent: He sold everything from crystal, to radios, to luggage, to watches, to pens, to all kinds of knickknacks, and [0:03:00] gifts of all sorts, cameras. And I grew up working in that store, loved working in the store, and I tell everybody that's where I really learned to become a lawyer. Not at law school, but at my father's store.

Interviewer: Do you have any recollection how old you were when you first started to work there?

Respondent: I was probably about eleven or twelve and I loved working there. We used to set up things outside the store. I used to love standing and selling things. [0:03:30] I just loved selling, and I loved decorating the store for Christmas with my mother, hanging up the – I think it was the Christian side of me, I don't know. Whatever. I loved putting up Christmas decorations and spraying that snow on the windows with stencils, and I often tell people that I do the same thing as my dad did. My dad sold items with no education. He sold luggage, jewellery, watches, and I'm selling today because I negotiate settlements for people [0:04:00] who have been maimed, or lost loved ones, or severely injured. And I am doing the same thing that he was doing; I'm just doing it in a different way.

Interviewer: So you learned from the best.

Respondent: I learned from the best.

Interviewer: Do you know how he started a business? I mean he came as a new immigrant with nothing.

Respondent: He was a peddler. My dad originally was a peddler, and he used to walk around with luggage going to little towns. He took me with him once on the train all the way almost to – past London towards Windsor and he'd sell to farmers. He'd set up little stands [0:04:30] at cattle auctions in Thamesville, London, Chatham, and my mother finally got after him to stop running around and driving around, or schlepping around, and got him to finally settle down and open up a store instead of running around. But he used to actually go into restaurants and come up to people, and he used to have watches up and down his arms. [Laughter] "Mister, you want to buy a

watch?" And he'd pull up his sleeve and he'd have fifteen watches on his arms, and that's how he'd sell watches. And [0:05:00] I was given a lovely award a few years ago by the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, and it was all lawyers and judges in the audience, as well as friends and family. I told everybody about my dad and how he used to come up to people and say, "You want to buy a watch?" And to this day, lawyers will come up to me and of course they'll say, "Hi, Alf. You want to buy a watch?"

Interviewer: [Laughs] Lovely story. Yeah. What was Kensington Market like at that time?

Respondent: It was wonderful. It was virtually [0:05:30] all Jewish.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: And everybody knew everybody else, and the bakeries – I remember Lotman's really well. Lotman's Imperial Bakery and Perlmutter's Bakery. And we remember the butcher shops with the – we'd remember the fish stores. Remember the appetizer stores with the barrels. You know, I have another career. I don't know if I told you this or not, but I also do stand-up comedy, and I'm doing a show tonight for B'nai Brith, as a matter of fact.

Interviewer: Oh my. Okay.

Respondent: I also [0:06:00] do stand-up comedy and I tell stories about buying herring in the old stores. I'm sure it was the same in Montreal. You go in and you bought herring or pickles from a barrel. And all those stores you bought – or you bought a live carp. And they take out the carp and they'd take a bowling pin and smash the carp over the head with a bowling pin. [Laughter] And I can tell you one of my famous stories. I don't know if you want to hear it.

Interviewer: Please.

Respondent: I don't want to fill up your tape.

Interviewer: Of course. I'd love to.

Respondent: I went to King Edward school, which is right downtown Toronto. Bathurst and College. **[0:06:30]** And I was in grade two, and Mr. Knight had announced to the class that we were going to have a pet show-and-tell day, and you can bring a dog, or a cat, or a fish to school. And I went home and I said to my parents, **[indiscernible 06:45]** in Yiddish that I have to bring a fish to school. My father did – and you can see what's coming. My father went around the corner to the Kensington Market, he brought home a huge carp. **[0:07:00]** [Laughter] He put the carp in the bathtub as everybody did. In fact, it was a children's book now called, "There's a Carp in my Bathtub," that somebody wrote. And the next morning we got one of those great big grey tubs that everybody used to take a bath in on Saturday night with the two handles at the end, and I remember walking down Borden Street, no Lippincott – Lippincott Street...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: ...to King Edward school. I was on the back. I forget who was on the front, and we walked in and Mr. Knight was standing there with his bowtie, and he looked at it as if he was expecting it. He said, "Just put it to the back of the class." **[0:07:30]** And all the kids were totally freaked out. They had their dogs and their cats and their goldfish, and I walk in with a huge carp. The people were **[indiscernible 0:07:37]**, and every time the carp swooshed around with its tail, a gallon of water would go flying out of the tub. And every fifteen, twenty seconds you'd hear, "Splash. Splash." And the carp didn't make it through the weekend. But I often tell the story, and I sent that story to Stewart Maclean to the Vinyl Café, but they haven't read it yet. I think because of the animal lovers because the **[0:08:00]** carp dies at the end.

Interviewer: But what did the cats and dogs do when they saw this carp?

Respondent: I don't remember, but the carp never made it past the weekend. But I always tell everybody the story's as fresh today as it was in 1952. And to this day, people have stopped me in restaurants and they go, "Alfie Kwinter." I go, "Yes." "King Edward." I go, "Yes." "The carp." [Laughter] I will say, "Yes." [Laughter] That's my carp story. That story is posted on the internet under King Edward Public

School, if it's still there, under Golden Memories to celebrate
[0:08:30] King Edward School's fiftieth or eightieth anniversary. I
posted that story and it's a hundred percent true story.

Interviewer: It's a wonderful – my grandson is going into grade eight at King
Edward's next year. [Laughs]

Respondent: I'll walk by there. Once I was coming from the Toronto Western
Hospital and I was walking up to my office. I was going to go to the
Mars for lunch. I grew up in the Mars restaurant. And I popped into
King Eddie, and of course right away, somebody came up and said,
"Yes, can I help you?" They thought I was who knows what. I said,
"Actually, I'm a graduate of this esteemed institution. Is there a
room of the [0:09:00] memorabilia or anything?" They said, "No, it's
not here. It's kept somewhere else." But I met the principal and I
taught her, and she didn't even know, the King Edward school
song.

Interviewer: And you taught it to her?

Respondent: I sang it for her. I remembered every word, and she didn't even
know there was a school song. I sang it for her. Is that funny or
what?

Interviewer: I interviewed her father because he was the vice-principal at
Central Tech, and one of the people I interviewed is the father of...

Respondent: Is that right?

Interviewer: ...this woman who's now the principal.

Respondent: Isn't that funny?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: [0:09:30] So it shows you. And that's right. I think she told me that
her father had gone to Harbord, if this is the same principal. I don't
remember. But anyway...

Interviewer: But Kensington Market played a big role in your life...

- Respondent:** Very much so.
- Interviewer:** ...and your father had his business there and...
- Respondent:** That's where we bought all our groceries. We bought our birthday cakes there. When you bought a chicken, the blowtorch. I remember they used to blowtorch – did you ever see that?
- Interviewer:** No.
- Respondent:** They would flick the chicken.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Flick meaning?
- Respondent:** They'd pluck.
- Interviewer:** Okay.
- Respondent:** They'd pluck all the...
- Interviewer:** [0:10:00] After it was dead. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Yes, yes. They'd pluck all the feathers off the chicken...
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** ...and then they'd take a blowtorch and burn all the pinfeathers off. And I remember the smell of the burning flesh of the chickens. That was one thing you remembered. The carp I remember. The fish stores. The pickle barrels. And Daiter's cheese store I remember very, very well. They had every kind of cheese under the sun. Old Mr. Daiter behind the counter. Mr. Daiter had a degree from Guelph. Agricultural college. [0:10:30] How unheard of in those days for a Jew to go to agricultural college.
- Interviewer:** And also for them to have university educations.
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. And he had a fascinating store, selling all kinds of cheeses under the sun. And yeah, my mother bought my clothes in

Kensington Market, and it's very funny because I'll tell you why. The idea was to get out of downtown Toronto, and to move north as fast as you could. And when my children were growing up, we were already – we were living in the [0:11:00] Bayview and York Mills area. But there was a place down on Spadina Avenue near where my father's store was called Chocky's.

Interviewer: Oh yeah. I know Chocky's, and I know Chocky. Yeah.

Respondent: The idea was that you didn't want – I felt self-conscious, and I had an inferiority complex because my mother bought my clothes in Kensington, whereas once you moved north, your mother bought your clothes at Lawrence Plaza. A store called Morgan's was the store, or Eaton's, or Simpson's.

Interviewer: Yes. Okay.

Respondent: Or Yorkdale.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: [0:11:30] And here my mother was buying my clothes in the Kensington Market, which of course...

Interviewer: Even after you moved north?

Respondent: No. This is when I lived downtown.

Interviewer: Oh. Got it.

Respondent: Yet when my children were growing up, suddenly everybody was going down to Chocky's to buy their clothes. Not only that, but they were wearing sweatshirts that said, "Chocky's of the Avenue." And I remember saying to my wife, "We've just come full circle" Now everybody is running downtown. Just like today, everybody wants to live downtown. And when I was growing up, you couldn't [0:12:00] get out fast enough. And as I say...

Interviewer: So do me a favour. Stay with that for a minute. What was the attitude. You couldn't get out fast enough. What was that about?

Respondent: The attitude was as soon as your parents became – achieved any level of success, the first thing – when I do my comedy show I talk about this. Mainly I talk about driving. I can do my whole routine here. The first thing, the "greenies." You know what I mean by the "greenies"?

Interviewer: But you have to tell the tape that.

Respondent: [0:12:30] You know what I mean by the "greenies."

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: The "greenies" were the immigrants who came over, like my parents. The first, other than a home, the first thing the "greenies" bought when they succeeded was?

Interviewer: A car.

Respondent: And what car did they buy?

Interviewer: A Cadillac?

Respondent: A Kedilak.

Interviewer: [Laughs] A what?

Respondent: A Kedilak.

Interviewer: A Kedilac. Okay. .

Respondent: A Kedilak. And the funny thing is the "greenies" could only drive on three streets and they were?

Interviewer: Spadina?

Respondent: Number one.

Interviewer: [Laughs] [0:13:00] College?

- Respondent:** Collega Street. [Laughter] Okay? Collega means "My friend." Yiddish. College, Collega, Bettist [Bathurst].
- Interviewer:** And Bettist.
- Respondent:** Bettist Street. And there's stories that I tell about one of my parents' friends, Mr. – I won't mention a name – who made a wrong turn and ended up on the Queen Elizabeth Highway and right away pulled over. And gets out of his car and is standing beside his Cadillac like this. "Oy, oy, oy, oy, oy." [0:13:30] And of course, right away the police came over and said, "What's the problem, sir?" He said, "I don't know where I'm going." The officer says, "Where did you come from?" He says, "Poland." [Laughter] And so...
- Interviewer:** So they had this little shtetl right in the area of College and Bathurst.
- Respondent:** It was very much almost a shtetl because you had your shuls. I had my bar mitzvah at the Hebrew Men of England.
- Interviewer:** Where is that?
- Respondent:** The Londoner shul, which was directly across the street from my father's store.
- Interviewer:** Right in the Market.
- Respondent:** No. It was on Spadina Avenue...
- Interviewer:** [0:14:00] Right.
- Respondent:** ...and it was a little bit east, and it was on the east side of Spadina. I don't know what's there now, but it was a very large shul. Remember where the old Switzer's used to be?
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent:** Across the street from Switzer's.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

Respondent: It would have been up the street from Shopsy's, north of Shopsy's, and it was hit by lightning and it burned. It burned down.

Interviewer: The shul burned down.

Respondent: And it was the Hebrew Men of England. Mom left her London synagogue in England, and the bimah was right in the middle of the shul as opposed to the eastern wall. And **[0:14:30]** there were so many shuls. There's still shuls in the area. You still have your shul down on Bellevue. The – what's it called? There's a couple. The Minsker is still there, and they renovated some of them. They're beautiful.

Interviewer: Yeah. Some of those have had a real revival.

Respondent: Revival.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: There's been a tremendous revival. The one on – the Narayever is now the New Narayever.

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Respondent: It's now...

Interviewer: And that's a thriving shul.

Respondent: ...a reconstructionist. Yeah. So it was – you know, it was a **[0:15:00]** real community. Everybody had their corner store. We had the **[indiscernible 0:15:03]**. We called it the **[indiscernible 0:15:05]**. That was one of our stores. The shul that we dovoned at was at Brunswick and Ulster. It was a shteeble. You know what a shteeble is?

Interviewer: Yes, of course. Do you want to say it for the tape?

Respondent: A shteeble is a little house.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And little homes were converted into synagogues, and that's where we dovoned. And the late Rabbi Kelvin [indiscernible 0:15:24], his father was a rabbi. Rabbi Kelvin from Beth Emeth, who is now gone. His father was a [0:15:30] rabbi at our shteeble.

Interviewer: So the Narayever was there...

Respondent: But it was an ultra-Orthodox shul.

Interviewer: Oh. And now it's egalitarian.

Respondent: Yeah. The Narayever was an Orthodox shul, and I went to the YMHA. Was originally at Brunswick and College.

Interviewer: And you went there.

Respondent: And I went there, but really it was – by the time I started going to the Y, it was already at Bloor and Spadina. The JCC where the what-do-you-call-it is now. The – what do you call it?

Interviewer: The Miles Nadal.

Respondent: The Miles Nadal Centre. That was our Y.

Interviewer: And [0:16:00] did you use that place?

Respondent: All the time. But I also went to the Kiwanis K-Club.

Interviewer: What's that?

Respondent: I went to the K-Club.

Interviewer: I don't know what that is.

Respondent: The K-Club was a club at the corner of Bloor. It was on Bathurst Street, south of Bloor on the west side under a church. And because so many of my friends were not Jewish growing up, I was brought there. It was basically a – it's a wonderful place where it

kept me off the streets, I'd like to say, because my parents were both working in my father's store all the time. [0:16:30] So I almost raised myself. The K-Club saved me. I loved it because I learned to play floor hockey there. I learned to play basketball there, I learned to play ice hockey there. I learned to play chess there. And they sent me to summer camp. They had a camp.

Interviewer: At K-Club?

Respondent: They had a club called Camp Kiwanis that cost twelve dollars for two weeks. I didn't know it was a club for underprivileged children. I didn't realize. I thought all camps cost twelve dollars for two weeks. [0:17:00] I remember it went up to fifteen at one point. But every time you came, you brought a quarter and it went into a little cup, and you saved up over the winter so you could go to camp for two weeks. And it was fabulous. And it was fabulous. There was a little bit of anti-Semitism. Not a lot. Some people had learned things from their parents, but it was terrific. And I spent a lot of time there. But for social things, meeting girls, etcetera – because the K-Club was all boys.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: You went to the YMHA at Bloor and Spadina.

Interviewer: [0:17:30] And did you do anything else at the YMHA?

Respondent: Yeah. I belonged to a club, and we had dances and socials. And it was very much a social thing. And everybody hung out. That's where the kids from up north came down to hang out. And then they go back north, and they'd say, "Oh, you're still living at Ulster Street. Oh, that's too bad."

Interviewer: Oh my god.

Respondent: "Oh, you're still downtown."

Interviewer: And did you feel that way too to some extent?

- Respondent:** Yeah. The kids – yes. When the kids moved up north, they [0:18:00] became sort of elevated. In fact, we used to hitchhike. We always hitchhiked everywhere we went. We used to hitchhike up north. We got north of Eglinton. The air got cleaner. It sort of was like you're going up the mountain. You're [indiscernible 0:18:14]. It really was very exciting to go to dances at these northern schools, and to go to Lawrence Plaza was like, wow.
- Interviewer:** So a lot of that must have been quite new up at Lawrence. I mean you were living in a house that was probably built in 1900 or [0:18:30] 1880.
- Respondent:** Yeah. They were building around Lawrence, but they were really building in Bathurst Manor. A lot of people like my cousin and my late partner all moved to Bathurst Manor. That's where they were building, Sheppard and Bathurst into homes up there. And you know, and that's where it was very exciting to go up there because it was new. Everything was new. You know, whereas we lived in an old house.
- Interviewer:** Okay. Let me stop you there for a minute. I'm wondering, you moved there around 1948 approximately. You [0:19:00] and your mother and your father.
- Respondent:** And my two brothers.
- Interviewer:** Oh okay. What number are you?
- Respondent:** I'm the oldest of three brothers.
- Interviewer:** Okay. Did anybody else live in that house with you?
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** Okay. That's what I'm asking you.
- Respondent:** When we first came to Canada, my uncle, my father's brother came over with his wife and two children, a boy and a girl. They lived upstairs, we lived downstairs.

Interviewer: Okay. That's where I'm going with it.

Respondent: My Uncle Neftali...

Voice: Mr. Kwinter?

Respondent: Yeah?

Voice: Mr. Sandberg is here.

Respondent: [0:19:30] My Uncle Neftali who had come to Canada before the war had done very well, and he brought my father and his brother over. They bought the house originally, which I guess they gave to my parents or sold it. I don't know how it worked. But they lived upstairs, we lived downstairs, and then they moved very soon after that. They moved out and they moved north and we stayed there. Today, my cousin who lived upstairs, we both live in the same building in Florida. He lives in the same condo as me, so we're always joking that we [0:20:00] still live in the same building. This time I live upstairs and he lives downstairs. I'm on the seventeenth floor, he's on the sixteenth floor. So.

Interviewer: Can we continue for a few minutes, or should we stop?

Respondent: Sure. I have a few minutes.

Interviewer: Okay. You said to me that the neighbourhood was very Jewish at that time?

Respondent: Very Jewish. Except I had a lot of friends who were Ukrainian.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. In the neighbourhood? They lived there?

Respondent: Yes. They were Ukrainian in the neighbourhood, and some are still very close friends of mine, but I think with some of them, their [0:20:30] parents weren't enamoured I think with the Jews. I remember having some friends who were Ukrainian who were very close friends of mine who I was never in their home. And I suspect today that the reason I was never in their home was that their

parents had certain feelings that they brought with them from the old country. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. I don't think we have to suspect it. Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: So the neighbourhood was largely Jewish.

Respondent: Jewish.

Interviewer: What language did you speak at home?

Respondent: I grew up in a [0:21:00] Yiddish-speaking home. Always spoke Yiddish to my parents.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: Answered in Yiddish, whereas my brothers always answered in English.

Interviewer: Yeah. That was the difference between...

Respondent: That's right. And today, I'm still fluent in Yiddish and I actually do Yiddish stand-up comedy. And I can do entire shows in Yiddish, but it's difficult to find Yiddish-speaking audiences because either they're hard of hearing because they're so old, or they fall asleep.

Interviewer: [Laughs] And they have to be our generation...

Respondent: They have to be our generation.

Interviewer: ...because they understand...

Respondent: Except I did a show in Melbourne, Australia to a full house of Yiddish speakers.

Interviewer: [0:21:30] Whoa.

Respondent: Younger people. My son was in law school in Sydney. We travelled around. My wife and I travelled around Australia and I did a show in Melbourne to a full house of Yiddish speakers. The funny thing about that is that when Australians speak English, they have an Aussie accent.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: When we speak English, we have a Canadian accent. But when you speak Yiddish, you both sound the same. Isn't that fascinating?

Interviewer: Well after I turn the tape off, I'm going to ask you about these performances. Where did the kids play when you were growing up?

Respondent: In the lane.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: In the lane, and [0:22:00] in the schoolyard. We had a lane right beside our house, and there's like a parking area, a bunch of garages. We played baseball there, we played in the lane with our bicycles, or we went to King Eddie's schoolyard, or Central Tech was just up the street.

Interviewer: Yeah. It's right there.

Respondent: We went to Christie Pits swimming.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: And yeah. And everything was very neighbourhood-oriented. Played in the streets. Street hockey.

Interviewer: So the kids were right there and on the street without the parents...

Respondent: [0:22:30] Kids were on the street.

Interviewer: ...hovering.

Respondent: That's right.

Interviewer: Did you have a backyard where you were?

Respondent: We had a small backyard. Yeah.

Interviewer: And was that used in any way at all?

Respondent: We buried our turtles there when they died.

Interviewer: [Laughs] That was its grave.

Respondent: Yeah. Not much. Not much. Yeah, it was a small backyard. I don't remember too much happening there.

Interviewer: Now you are on Ulster, which is the main street. Did you have a front porch?

Respondent: Yes. Our house is still there. It looks exactly the way it did when I lived there.

Interviewer: I'm going to go look at it.

Respondent: 67 Ulster.

Interviewer: Did anybody [0:23:00] use it? Or the front porch?

Respondent: Yes, at night. Hot August nights, people sat on their front porches because for some reason, I think in those days, summers used to be hotter than they are now. I don't know. Maybe I'm imagining it.

Interviewer: Well nobody had air conditioning.

Respondent: Yeah. That's right. People sat out on their front porches and they spoke, they talked to each other. We had the Freedmans next door.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: And then the Schwartzs next door. We had a lady across the street who threw brooms at dogs. [0:23:30] And we used to call her the old witch. When a dog came on her lawn she'd – I remember two

things. When a horse came along, the horses – because milkmen had horses, junkmen had horses, and the horses pooped on the street. She'd come running out to pick it up for her lawn.

Interviewer: Oh my.

Respondent: She'd always come running out.

Interviewer: So she saw it in a very positive way.

Respondent: Yeah. She scooped up the horse poop and put it on the lawn, and if a dog came on or kids came on, she'd throw brooms.

Interviewer: So she liked the horse poop much more than she liked dogs.
[Laughs]

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

Interviewer: **[0:24:00]** You mentioned briefly, and I'd like to just return to it a little – the stores, the corner stores. And also horses. So how – the horses, the stores. Just tell me about the shopping in addition to what was happening with Kensington Market.

Respondent: Well first of all, the stores were – there were corner stores everywhere. One was Smith's at Brunswick and Ulster. Then it was the **[indiscernible 0:24:23]**. Never did know his name. Just the **[indiscernible 0:24:25]** [laughter], which means of course "the old Jew."

Interviewer: So that's what your parents called it.

Respondent: The **[0:24:30]** **[indiscernible 0:24:30]**. And then it was Bojko's. They were Ukrainian. At the other side. And then there was – because there was a Ukrainian hall around the corner from us. And then it was Mike's across the street from Bojko's. And we used to collect bottles, would cash them in for two cents a bottle, and collect hangers. And we used to shovel walks for money. And I sold programs at the Exhibition and at the ballgames, and scalped tickets. And any way we could find to make money, we would find

to make money. Anywhere we could. We were basically street kids...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: [0:25:00] ...who raised ourselves, and managed fine. Nobody had peanut allergies. [Laughter] Nobody carried – what do you call it? Anaphylactic needles. Nobody worried about this or about that, nobody got poisoned. Nobody put cleanser on their hands every day. Somehow we survived.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. Was the neighbourhood considered a safe place?

Respondent: Yes. Yeah. And in fact, the first time I heard of a stabbing at Harbord Collegiate, I was shocked. And now there's [0:25:30] stabbings, shootings at Central Tech. The neighbourhood was basically considered a safe place. I mean we hitchhiked everywhere. We hitchhiked.

Interviewer: Well, and that was way beyond the neighbourhood.

Respondent: We hitchhiked to the Exhibition. We hitchhiked to go up north. Sure. It was considered safe.

Interviewer: What about getting from one place to another? Who had cars? Who used public – what was...

Respondent: When I turned sixteen, my dad turned over his car to me because he was a terrible, terrible [0:26:00] driver. [Laughter] And I started driving. The kids at Harbord, some of them had cars. They were working and they bought cars. And anybody who had a car was the hero because you took everybody. I remember the night, the day President Kennedy was shot. We used to go to Harvey's in Richmond Hill. The original Harvey's. The very first Harvey's was in Richmond Hill and we'd all jump into somebody's car. We'd all drive to Richmond Hill. It must have been an hour's drive in those days. A very long, long drive. We'd all go to Richmond [0:26:30] Hill to the original Harvey's for a hamburger. And I remember going the night that Kennedy was shot. It was a Friday. I'd written an exam that day.

- Interviewer:** We all remember that, don't we?
- Respondent:** Yeah. And I remember going to Harvey's. But yeah, some of us had cars, and anybody who had a car was a gantseh k'nacker, and was a big shot.
- Interviewer:** And was public transportation available?
- Respondent:** We had streetcars.
- Interviewer:** On which streets?
- Respondent:** We had streetcars on Bathurst and on Spadina, and on College. Always had streetcars.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Buses I don't remember so much. Buses when you went north. **[0:27:00]** I remember you took a streetcar to St. Clair. If you wanted to go up to Sheppard and Bathurst it was two fares. You could take a streetcar to St. Clair, and St. Clair was the loop. That was where the car looped around and came back, and at St. Clair you got on another bus. A bus and a streetcar. And when the bus hit Lawrence, you had to put in the second fare.
- Interviewer:** Because that was out of the city.
- Respondent:** That's right. [Laughter] A double fare.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Okay. I think we're going to stop. This has been totally delightful. [Laughter] But I know you have a client waiting.
- Respondent:** I could go on for hours.
- Interviewer:** Well...
- Respondent:** Feel **[0:27:30]** free to come back.

Interviewer: Okay. [Laughter] I just want to say, Alf Kwinter, thank you very much.

Respondent: It's a pleasure.

Interviewer: It's a pleasure.

Respondent: I'm happy about it.

[00:27:36]

[End of recording]