

108 Roberta King

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 29th of April, and I'm sitting with Roberta King who lived at 94 Borden Street from 1976 to 2005. Let me ask you what were your ages at that time that determined some of the kinds of questions I ask you? So how old were you in '76?

Respondent: I would have been thirty-three **[0:00:30]** or so. Like that. Oh, I mean I can do the math, but my head start – early thirties.

Interviewer: And what was your situation in terms of family? Who you were living there with at that time?

Respondent: It was myself, my husband Ron Spire, and I had David, who would be five – my oldest – and Andrew, my middle – would have been about two.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Coming up to two. They both were about to turn two and five.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: So very young.

Interviewer: And very – you see, that's why I ask what your ages were because **[0:01:00]** I won't ask you about dating. [Laughs]

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you remember what prompted you and your husband to move into this neighbourhood? What was the appeal?

Respondent: Well as I said, I had – years before I lived on Rochdale, so I knew the area. And through our connection with somebody at Rochdale,

we were renting on Palmerston, and we wanted to get more space. It wasn't working out, [0:01:30] and I walk around with my kids in the wagon, and I saw a for rent sign on the house and got it. And it suited us very well.

Interviewer: And you stayed for many years.

Respondent: Yes, we did.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Big, big spacious house. It was like a farmhouse, and we had just come in from living in the country, so I needed the space. It worked out well.

Interviewer: What were some of the features of the neighbourhood that made it work out well?

Respondent: Well it was [0:02:00] quite different. There were a lot of kids. Families with young children. And there was street life. People out on their porches. There was a woman – you probably have heard of her – a few doors up north on Borden who used to sit out with her accordion at night and play. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Oh no. I haven't heard at all. Wow.

Respondent: And the kids would be out, you know, kicking around, and it was so close to everything. The [0:02:30] location was the best. And as I say, the house with space in it, and school at the end of the street was perfect.

Interviewer: So your children went to King Eddie.

Respondent: No, they went to Kensington.

Interviewer: Oh okay.

Respondent: Yeah. They went to Kensington. I had heard a bit about Kensington community school. I don't know. And I went down and saw it and I liked it a lot. I liked the principal, and so I put David in there.

Interviewer: [0:03:00] And it was a good school.

Respondent: It was. Well, there was some rocky bits that I won't go into, but yeah. The thing about it, I felt for me, it was open to me. I was welcome there. It was a lot of families in the school. Lorne Brown had a real open door community policy that I liked a lot.

Interviewer: It sounds to me as if community is something that you like because you said the neighbourhood was friendly.

Respondent: Well, even in Rochdale, you know? That was a co-op, [0:03:30] that was an attempt at a kind of community, and yeah. And also, it was an educational experience. The whole [indiscernible 0:03:36] thing came out and it was all how – back, right then – how to do – you want your children – how will they learn, what do they learn? Right back then it was clearly becoming clear to me that that had not been worked out. [Laughs] Right?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: So that was interesting to me. They had the open class, open room, you know, [0:04:00] part of the school was open...

Interviewer: At the Kensington.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: So that's what we did.

Interviewer: Would you talk a little bit more about the sense of community and the children playing outside in this neighbourhood when you lived here when your children were young?

Respondent: Well, my kids could find playmates on the street. They went to the same school. No, they didn't all go to the same school because there was King Eddie, there was Catholic school, there was Lord – no. It was a mixture, but they played on the – [0:04:30] I don't

know. I mean there was some nice kids and some not-so-nice kids. It was that whole drama of, you know, what are they doing now.

Interviewer: What about the adults? Was there a sense of community with them, or was it mainly the children?

Respondent: There was – well, again, half and half. Some of the parents of the kids you would get to know and share. You know, they would know where their kids were, their kids would go there. Others, not so much. **[0:05:00]** You know, it – different strokes, right?

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

Respondent: But, like, Dinny and Abraham became very close friends, and Josh lived with us pretty much. He was like one of my boys. Steve up the street. I knew his parents. Yeah. There was a young family just up – yeah. 106 because that's where Marion Isha is now. Steve and Mario. You know, it was good.

Interviewer: **[0:05:30]** Who made up the neighbourhood in terms of different ethnic groups and languages spoken? Who was here in '76 and then through the years?

Respondent: Yeah. Well I think there was a lot of Portuguese families on the street, and Asian. And it was starting to be more white middle-class people. Just beginning. But when I came in, more Asian and Portuguese, and you know, lower end. There were **[0:06:00]** student residences. There's some houses that are rooming houses for students. I don't know if they still are.

Interviewer: What was that like? How were the students behaving?

Respondent: Oh, loud. And they offered my kids alcohol.

Interviewer: So they were not...

Respondent: Oh, they were. They were. They were not close to me, and you know, my kids are just, you know, should have been more well educated at home about – I had no idea [laughs] that was even a **[0:06:30]** possibility, but you know, you learn as they learn anyway.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: But no, they didn't – it was – I didn't have concerns about really – my kids coming and going freely, and they played a lot in the back alley. Croft. And I certainly always kept an eye out, and we always kept an eye out. I know some of the parents would [laughs] – would just maybe not even be there. I don't know. You know...

Interviewer: Tell me about Croft and your children playing in **[0:07:00]** the lane.

Respondent: Oh, well that was the playground. Croft, and the playground at King Eddie. They would ride their bikes up and – that's where they learned to ride their bikes.

Interviewer: In the lane.

Respondent: The wagon.

Interviewer: In the lane?

Respondent: In the lane. That was where they always were, and you know, I'd sit out and watch because there were cars. Not so many, but yeah. And that's where all the kids would end up kind of.

Interviewer: So the lane was a wonderful place.

Respondent: It was.

Interviewer: I guess it was a little less busy down the street.

Respondent: Yeah. In the evening, they would be more because if there **[0:07:30]** were people out, like adults out, they'd be in the front, but their main thing was up and down, up and down. Endless. And it's funny. I have this one memory. My middle son was born at the end of November, and I have this picture – I have this memory of his birthday party and they're all out on Croft riding their bikes in t-shirts.

Interviewer: Warm November.

- Respondent:** At the end of November. [Laughter] It was fluke day. It was just a fluke warm day.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** But...
- Interviewer:** But it was in the lane.
- Respondent:** [0:08:00] Yeah. Always. [Laughter] That was always where they would hang out.
- Interviewer:** I still see it happening...
- Respondent:** Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...and I play with my grandson in the lane sometimes.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** It's the easy way because, you know, you just watch the end, and if there's a car, you know, then...
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. And there is less traffic there than on the street.
- Respondent:** Yeah. There was also a lot of Central Tech students would come hang out down there too, but that didn't bother me. Sometimes there'd be a part missing out of my car. That did bother me, but then that's urban life.
- Interviewer:** Like a mirror or something like that?
- Respondent:** Like [0:08:30] other things. Starter motors and things. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** Well I had for a while this part that the hood didn't lock.

Interviewer: Oh, so they would help themselves to...

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. Well, yeah. It's the city.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent: So. And you know, my kids – I think they got a great education growing up in the city at that time. The Toronto District School Board, the old one, was just getting – like heating up to a fine kind of, **[0:09:00]** you know, vision about what school could be. And Kensington was good, and meeting all the different kids in the city and all the different stuff going on was really rich because we had come in partly because we were living in the country, and we were thinking this isn't so good. We need to do something, so. And then they were in St. Stephen's daycare, and then I got involved on the board there because they were **[0:09:30]** there, and I got really interested in daycare. And then through being on the board I got connected to other – well, Olivia was on the board, and other people in the community. And yeah. I'm still very – I know – I love this – I know every nook and cranny, I think...

Interviewer: Of this neighbourhood.

Respondent: I think my spores are everywhere. [Laughs]

Interviewer: It sounds to me as if – well, **[0:10:00]** I'm not ignoring the fact that they would help themselves to parts of your car, to pieces of your car. [Laughter] But it sounds as if it was a fairly safe neighbourhood.

Respondent: I felt it – well, I also found – you know, I would say it was, but I would go out in the alley before my kids came out. I would check things and I found – I found the syringes. I found this set of brass knuckles that I have to this day because it's like who leaves their brass knuckles? [Laughs] I don't know. **[0:10:30]** But no, it never – it never really bothered me. I just thought this is part of the deal and...

Interviewer: Yeah. Well I guess you're saying city living or just living...

- Respondent:** City living. And we weren't in a gated – we were open to the community. And you know, by choice to see – wanted to see what was going on. And it's very mixed. Very colourful, you know?
- Interviewer:** [0:11:00] What are some of the characters...
- Respondent:** Street characters...
- Interviewer:** ...that you remember?
- Respondent:** Oh my god.
- Interviewer:** There must be a few that you remember most clearly.
- Respondent:** Oh my god. Yeah, well there's some of the older guys on Borden who, I guess, they were on Workman's Comp or something, and they would walk up and down the street or lean on their fences all day and talk to everybody. There were those guys. And there were some hard cases from the Market. The walking wounded, as we called them.
- Interviewer:** And what do you mean when you talk about that?
- Respondent:** [0:11:30] Suffering from hard knocks, I always think.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** But you know, maybe mentally not so stable. Sense of desperation kind of thing.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. So would you have been more protective of your children...
- Respondent:** Not at all.
- Interviewer:** ...if you saw them around?
- Respondent:** No.

Interviewer: No. So you didn't feel that they were a danger?

Respondent: No, no. No. They're not a danger. And also, I really, you know, wanted my kids to know about life in a community.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: I was very protected. I [0:12:00] grew up in the suburbs, and all I could think about was getting out and getting downtown.

Interviewer: You sure did. Well you also mentioned before I turned the tape on that one of your sons is still living right here on Borden Street.

Respondent: Yeah. He left for a while after I moved out. But then he's got a room in the house right next door. I think it's temporary, but it's been temporary for a while.

Interviewer: Yeah. But he's here because...

Respondent: And the other thing about my kids, they have friends [0:12:30] that they've had since daycare. Since junior kindergarten.

Interviewer: Since Borden Street. Wow.

Respondent: And they still are all connected, and that's so – I think that's so amazing and foundational. I never had that. They were connected right from the get-go.

Interviewer: And you're still in touch with Dinny?

Respondent: Absolutely. Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Because she gave me your name.

Respondent: Oh yeah. No, I'm in touch with Dinny.

Interviewer: But you're still in touch with her.

Respondent: Well Josh and Andrew – Oliver, my youngest, are very [0:13:00] close, and...

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: And yeah. I will always be close with Abraham and Dinny.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And Naomi and Josh.

Interviewer: Do you remember when they changed the streets in terms of the cars going all the way from College to Bloor? Do you remember when that change happened?

Respondent: You mean when they...

Interviewer: The maze.

Respondent: ...mazed it?

Interviewer: What do you call it? Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: And did you have any feelings about that?

Respondent: Well I was happy to interfere with the traffic because, you know, **[0:13:30]** it can be used – I mean it's a huge – it has grown to be a horrific issue in the city, I think.

Interviewer: Meaning what?

Respondent: Just the cars.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And the level of driving skills. [Laughs] And now, and now I think it just seems less – you know, you used to be able to sit out on your porch and sort of – but now people don't tend to use their fronts as often, **[0:14:00]** I don't think.

Interviewer: Did you use your porch a lot?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: When you first came here?

Respondent: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: You did?

Respondent: I had it so it had a gate, so I could look at the kids. I'd leave the front door open and they'd go out on the porch. We had toys out there, and they'd hang out and whatever.

Interviewer: So it was an extension of your home.

Respondent: Oh absolutely.

Interviewer: Right to the sidewalk, in fact.

Respondent: Well, I would shut the gate so they'd stay, but yeah. I mean it certainly was an extension, as was the backyard and...

Interviewer: And the back lane, in fact. [Laughs]

Respondent: And the back lane.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And also, you know, I was one of the mothers – and there was Dinny and me, [0:14:30] and oh, we had another friend, Norah, who lives on Brunswick, and we kind of sometimes pooled. Like if there was a mother there, we'd say, "Okay, I'm going to go to the Market." "Okay. I know you're going to the Market. I got them."

Interviewer: Watch?

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. So there was a lot of – there was a bit of that, so that was really nice because that really builds community.

- Interviewer:** Yeah. I was just thinking of exactly that. That is a sense of community.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** The children knew the parents...
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...and the parents knew the children, and you cared about them.
- Respondent:** And it was even mixed too because [0:15:00] Steve's mom and dad would eventually – at first not, but – and they were a young Portuguese family. And then at some point they said, "We'll leave Steve with you. We're going to go out." And I'd say, "Yeah," and they'd be fine. So it wasn't just, you know...
- Interviewer:** The Caucasian...
- Respondent:** Yeah. It was kind of...
- Interviewer:** And let's go in that direction a little. How much mixing and a sense of community was there with the different groups, different ethnic groups?
- Respondent:** Well a lot depended, of course, on the ages of your children because that would be the magnet. [0:15:30] I mean we have to have reasons. On Halloween when everyone would be out. I found that there was more mixing for me with the Portuguese at first because they had kids my kids' age.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** And Mario's parents were still there, and Steve and Ricky.
- Interviewer:** [Laughs] There's a story that goes with that, right?
- Respondent:** Yeah. But I don't know. That's not my place to tell it really. But yeah. But there [0:16:00] weren't a lot of Asian kids on my street, but in daycare they mixed a lot with all the kids because then they

had like an open – and I guess that's about all I can think of that were here pretty much. Yeah. So I mean for my kids, it was – if they were on the street, then they were a potential person to play with, or from school, or from the [0:16:30] daycare. Those were all them.

Interviewer: So all the kids played with each other.

Respondent: They did. They did.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah. I mean the language could be a barrier, you know, at some point, but...

Interviewer: I suppose the younger children, if they spoke Portuguese at home or Mandarin, that they didn't know. But by the time they got to age six and they were going to school, then they all learned English.

Respondent: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Interviewer: So it was more possibility of the children communicating with language.

Respondent: My kids learned how to [0:17:00] swear in all the languages. [Laughs] They learned all the derogatory names for things. [Laughs]

Interviewer: You must have been proud.

Respondent: I was.

Interviewer: That they were multilingual.

Respondent: Well. [Laughter] They certainly have that in their makeup now. Like they, you know – it's funny because at one point when I was working with educators later, this is years later, and Olli, of course, was born later, so he was younger. And we were thinking of getting out of the city back to the country because we had land there now, and [0:17:30] this fellow, Tim Curran, said to me, "Promise me you

won't take Oliver out of Toronto and put him in high school at Fenelon Falls." [Laughter] "Promise me you won't do that."

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: And we talked about it, and I thought he's right. This is where they need to be. This is where they're going to get the best.

Interviewer: So you freely enjoyed living out in the country, but also living in the heart of the city.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: But not on a major street. A quiet street where there are busy streets around.

Respondent: Well it is kind of a major street, [0:18:00] but a bit quieter. But it's not like living on...

Interviewer: On College.

Respondent: ...Davenport or yeah. It was a little quieter.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: But a busy street nonetheless. Always something going on.

Interviewer: Yeah. And a kind of vital street. It sounds like there was always something human going on.

Respondent: There was.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: There was. Really good, lucky place to land.

Interviewer: Would you just tell me which your – the east-west street that was closest to you, what street was that?

Respondent: Well we were almost in the middle between College and Ulster.

- Interviewer:** [0:18:30] Okay. So...
- Respondent:** Those were our top and bottom.
- Interviewer:** Would you talk a little bit about both of those streets in terms of stores? Anything commercial on Ulster or College?
- Respondent:** Well Ulster had the park store, as we call it. The store across from the park on Brunswick.
- Interviewer:** It's a corner store.
- Respondent:** Margaret Fairley Park, which was big. That was the first place they could walk to. That was the first place they could ride their bike to. And one day, when Oliver walked out of the [0:19:00] house at two, walked out of the house, he walked to the park by himself.
- Interviewer:** Did you realize he had gone? Or he was gone?
- Respondent:** I got in the shower and I told my husband and my two older children, "I'm in the shower now. Keep an eye on Oliver." Came out of the shower, and where is he?
- Interviewer:** And he was in the park. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** The worst moments of my life.
- Interviewer:** But he was okay.
- Respondent:** And it's funny. There were all these people at the park. [0:19:30] This is a – and I ran. And it was unusually busy. It was a nice day and it was packed. And it's like I am panicking, and I am trying to get my eyes to look, literally look, look, look, look, look. I don't see and I run around, I run around. Then I come back, look, look, and finally this woman came over and she put her hand on my arm and she said, "He's here. Come with me." And she showed me Oliver. She had seen him walk up, [0:20:00] she thought he was with two men, but they kept going, and he turned in and she thought this is weird. And she kept her eye on him the whole time. She saw me

come and with pinwheel eyeballs, and she said, "Oh. There." And then I came back and she tried – but finally she was waiting for me and she got me and she said, "There he is. I think I know who you're looking for."

Interviewer: Oh. She saw.

Respondent: So that was a bit – that park was a great resource because it's tiny, and it was a very quiet spot. Just off Ulster there, **[0:20:30]** it was just the perfect size. You could see it all, you know?

Interviewer: You know they're doing major renovations to it right now.

Respondent: I didn't know that.

Interviewer: Yeah. And it's going to be fabulous. I mean, it's a wonderful park.

Respondent: Yeah, it is.

Interviewer: Already.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: But they're going to make some improvements. So it still gets a huge amount of use.

Respondent: Yeah, I imagine.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And there were a lot of kids. I don't know. People tell me there's not so many young families around.

Interviewer: We don't notice many, but there certainly are.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: [0:21:00] There were also – you could go on Brunswick. Well, Norah and Rod were doing masters at U of T, so there was a U of T – certainly there's a U of T presence up and down the street. The academics are there, and the students and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Did you have any feelings or emotions about the whole issue of the U of T being a neighbour of ours, being...

Respondent: Well, you know, I didn't used to – Ron graduated, my partner graduated from U of T law, and I love the campus. That's another resource. I use that. I walk – [0:21:30] that was my walk. I'd go – I love Hart House, I love the cafeteria there. But I don't – you know, there's a level where it's just a really corporate hog and I see that, and I think I don't admire that, and I think that at some place, that comes into play. It never has impacted on me, but I can see that that's what's going on.

Interviewer: It's interesting that you see two sides.

Respondent: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: You see it as a place that is pretty and [0:22:00] you could go and walk and enjoy the beauty of it.

Respondent: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: And at the same time, as you say, greedy, corporate hog.

Respondent: It's just a corporate hog. And that's just the nature. And I don't – well, we're getting off-subject here.

Interviewer: No, no, no.

Respondent: Yeah. But it never really impinged on me, and I used it well, and so did Ron. I mean, I would still even use the library there, and I often would use U of T academics for research and stuff like that.

Interviewer: I sometimes like to go on Saturdays and watch all the [0:22:30] people taking pictures. All the wedding...

- Respondent:** Yes, yes. Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...pictures of their wedding.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Oh, I love that.
- Respondent:** Yeah. [Laughter] No, it's a great walk, and I like the little courtyard. I used to go and do Tai Chi there.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** So yeah. And I hate this idea of building on the – what is it? The back circle, the back campus or whatever. I think – please don't build anymore.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Yeah.
- Respondent:** But, you know, I'm not – I'm no longer a player.
- Interviewer:** Sure. But I'm interested in how you saw the university **[0:23:00]** because it's our neighbour.
- Respondent:** I saw it – Queen's Park and U of T were the places I liked to go and walk. And I miss the old greenhouse that was on...
- Interviewer:** Oh yes. You reminded me of that.
- Respondent:** Every tree they cut down.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** I agree. I miss it. But you know, that's life. And I still – when I'm here I'll do that walk. And the other walk was down to – behind Bickford, the dog park, you know? If you walk down Harbord.
- Interviewer:** **[0:23:30]** Okay. Oh, right. To the other side.
- Respondent:** Right. With the river.

- Interviewer:** Just before Christie.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Oh, that's a lovely...
- Respondent:** Yeah. Mm-hm. Great for sledding in the winter and stuff like that.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. Let's come back to the stores.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** So you talked about that corner store.
- Respondent:** So Mario Brothers on the corner was a fixture, and you know, I often didn't go to the Market because Mario Brothers was such a great store.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. So they had fresh produce?
- Respondent:** Yes, they did. They had a butcher, fresh produce. It's a good store, and it was like seconds from my house.
- Interviewer:** **[0:24:00]** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And it's funny. The other corner, it's always been something, but I've never – it's never been – it's like **[indiscernible 0:24:08]** or something I never – I've noticed it or gone there really. So that was – College was Mario Brothers and the school.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** Mars. The bank. I've had that same bank.
- Interviewer:** So you use that bank.
- Respondent:** Well the eating places were not of interest to me because I've never really – we're not an eating out kind of **[0:24:30]** family. I had small children. I wanted to make sure they were properly fed. And so –

and Ulster, the park store, and also the one on the corner of Lippincott and Ulster. Really nice man and his wife. I think she still lives there. I think he's died.

Interviewer: Was that the pharmacy?

Respondent: No. No. It was a...

Interviewer: Oh no, it's Ulster. I was talking about College.

Respondent: Yeah. Ulster and Lippincott.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: And then there was another one on Bathurst. Never went there. This was that corner, and the guy was so sweet. He actually gave me, like a [0:25:00] bottle of wine at Christmas and stuff. Oh, very sweet man.

Interviewer: So that was definitely a community store.

Respondent: He knew everybody. And you know, he'd say if you didn't have, "Oh, get it next time."

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: Very oldschool. He was a lovely oldschool Portuguese guy and his wife. The park store kind of – they were always nice people, but it would change hands a couple of times. But you know, it was like the first store my kids could go to and stuff like that.

Interviewer: By themselves. Yeah.

Respondent: And you know, in terms of stores, my orientation was more up to Bloor where there'd be Book City, [0:25:30] and you know, all this stuff up there. I didn't often – I went to the Market. I didn't really go up and down College too much.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

- Respondent:** Spadina.
- Interviewer:** Okay. I want to touch on the Market and on Bloor Street since you've talked about both.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Let's start with the Market. How did you use that, or did you use it?
- Respondent:** Well then going back, when I lived in the country we had a room on St. Andrew that's – which is right in the Market, and we [0:26:00] stayed there to work. We were working with the film board, and we'd be in town for a long time.
- Interviewer:** So you rented that space.
- Respondent:** We rented a room in Gary Berg's house on St. Andrew, which is now something else, but it was a beautiful house at the time. One of the few left right in the Market because it was west of Spadina. So the Market was my home then.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** And yeah.
- Interviewer:** And for walking, for shopping?
- Respondent:** Everything.
- Interviewer:** What kinds of shopping did you do in the Market?
- Respondent:** Everything. [0:26:30] I bought everything in the Market.
- Interviewer:** So you didn't go to supermarkets.
- Respondent:** I shopped every day. I'd come back and shop every day. Well, it was like right on my street.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.

Respondent: No, I never went to supermarkets, and I'd go in – sooner or later I'd go in every store because it was there. [Laughter] And I loved it. I loved living there.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And it was a nice antidote because in the country, you know, we'd go back and we'd be in isolation and nice and peaceful, and then come and live in the Market and it would be hurly burly. It was **[0:27:00]** great. So I forgot that connection. So then when I moved back, I still had – still knew some of the businesses, and yeah. Like everything. Although, you know, we'd go through periods of not having coffee and being really – so we'd end up going out for coffee. We used to always go to Mars for that. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Was there muffins too or just the coffee?

Respondent: Yes, **[0:27:30]** we would probably get a muffin too. [Laughter] That was our little, you know, walk on the wild side. [Laughter] Because we worked at home. We worked at home.

Interviewer: Yeah. So that was an outing for you.

Respondent: That was – yeah, to get out and do that walk.

Interviewer: So the Market was a really significant...

Respondent: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: ...part of your life.

Respondent: It was.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And we'd do the – it was nice when it was so tiny that you knew everybody that was there. You'd recognize everybody that was there, and it was kind of a bigger – a lot of the daycare. St. Stephen's was **[0:28:00]** there, and Kensington people would be – I'd recognize them because we went to school there. And I do not

like shopping any other way. I mean this would – I bought everybody clothes there. I bought everything there. And it's changed, but you know, it kind of – the other thing I like about it, it sort of resists change.

Interviewer: Well...

Respondent: Like me. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Well, you know, I know what – I moved to Toronto in **[0:28:30]** 1964.

Respondent: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: And I came from near San Francisco.

Respondent: Oh wow.

Interviewer: And Yorkville was a little bit like that.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: And then it seemed to me one day I blinked, and Yorkville was – yeah, it was gone and it was different. And I agree with you that the Market is changing a bit, but it seems to be resisting. But if they're going to build that Loblaw's there, it could really take a...

Respondent: Well it's like Yorkville. The real estate was too expensive to float that, and that hasn't really happened yet, **[0:29:00]** but we all know.

Interviewer: Yeah. But I agree with you, the Market's a wonderful place. I love it too.

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Although I have stopped doing the events because they're corporate. But for the Festival of Lights, it's...

- Interviewer:** So it has changed.
- Respondent:** They get – you know, like a lot of grassroots events they kind of grow and flourish, and then someone thinks this is good and takes it over, and it dies.
- Interviewer:** Do you ever get there for Pedestrian Sunday?
- Respondent:** [0:29:30] Not so much.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** I have a friend who lives there. She lives on Bellevue, and she says that she can't even go out in the Market on Pedestrian Sundays.
- Interviewer:** On Pedestrian Sunday.
- Respondent:** She lives there. It's her backyard. It's her front yard and she loves it, and she's there all the time. She says she stays home. She can't get in the stores. She says the merchants aren't wild about it because it's all up and down and up and down and up and down.
- Interviewer:** So it's...
- Respondent:** Nobody's going in.
- Interviewer:** [0:30:00] Those who live there don't...
- Respondent:** Don't really like it. It's a thing. And now, you know, Festival of Lights is a thing. It's kind of people coming in. Which is good, but it's no longer whatever it was. It's not community-based anymore.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. Okay. We're going to move north. We talked about the Market.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** College. But you said you sometimes used Bloor Street. What was on Bloor Street?

- Respondent:** Yeah. Well it was for me the main hub. [0:30:30] And well there was the – we'd occasionally – Dooney's, and Book City, and there was a – you know, I think – well I actually too remember it – the very early days on Harbord.
- Interviewer:** What was there?
- Respondent:** They had – was it called the Flying Monkey? The first – again, 3HO on Palmerston started a health food store. I think it might have been the Flying Monkey or the Golden Temple or something. But it was [0:31:00] the first ever food store where you could go in and buy beans and rice, and you know, all the health food stuff because we were always trying to do that. And Bloor was also – had some – let me try and remember what – the hardware store. It had some small clothing stores. I think I bought kids clothes there and maybe shoes. Shoes. I can't remember. But I never went downtown. I went [0:31:30] downtown when I had to for a business meeting or that. I never – very rarely went downtown to shop. Maybe to buy sheets I might go down, you know? Something like that. Or an appliance, I might. Although, yeah.
- Interviewer:** But you really used this neighbourhood.
- Respondent:** I did. I did.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** This was my baileywick.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** And it served me well and I liked it. I liked it a lot. Central Tech I should also mention.
- Interviewer:** Please do.
- Respondent:** Oh my god, that's another resource. [0:32:00] The track was my track. I would run up and Central Tech.
- Interviewer:** And run the track.

Respondent: And around the track and then run back, and it probably kept me alive for certain periods of my life. And I'd go up there and the kids would be sitting in the bleachers and I'd be running and they'd say, "Go, fogey, go. Go, fogey, go." [Laughter] I didn't like. Or they'd say, "Can you run any slower?" [Laughter] That kind of thing. [0:32:30] So.

Interviewer: Did you find it funny at the time?

Respondent: I did. I totally would have done the same thing. Yeah. I have great empathy for high school – I have filmed at Central Tech. I filmed at every school. I filmed in Kensington, Lord Lansdowne.

Interviewer: Documentary things?

Respondent: Yes. Because of myself and my partner, we did a lot with the Toronto School Board on bullying. The first one was "Dropping back." [0:33:00] That's when I shot at Central Tech because kids at that time – and don't ask me the year – were leaving school. Dropping out.

Interviewer: In general? Or Central Tech in particular?

Respondent: In general.

Interviewer: In general.

Respondent: It was a trend. Kids were leaving, and the school board was concerned why and what to do, what programs bring them back. So they were establishing programs, and we did a documentary on kids who had left and come back. And I did one at Central Tech. And I just love that school. People go, "Oh, Central Tech." It's a great school.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: [0:33:30] And I've been in, like – "Oh, Oakwood's supposed to be," and "Oh my god, what a shitty school." You know, it's funny. And of course I know from shooting in schools that they turn on a dime. It

could be a fabulous school and then whatever happens in the next year it's bereft.

Interviewer: I've interviewed some people who were – one was a vice-principal and taught there for many years. Another taught there for many years. These are people in their eighties, and they loved that school. They loved it with their hearts and souls. They loved teaching there.

Respondent: You can feel it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And it [0:34:00] has such an interesting student population, I think, and making that film just – and teachers, the guy that was the subject, he was down and out and older, and he came back, which takes guts. But they just – and you know, he turned everything – it was a great story. It was a gift to be working for the board at that time, and everything we made, it's like gone.

Interviewer: What do you mean gone?

Respondent: [0:34:30] People call me asking where the films are. I don't know what they do with them. They have no interest – maybe the interest just isn't there. This was on bullying.

Interviewer: Certainly...

Respondent: Conflict negotiations in schools, which there was a big program that they had where they were trying to teach the skills of mediation and, you know, seven and eight, and high school. They had peer mediation. They were really trying to work on it. I don't [0:35:00] know what's happened there.

Interviewer: Do you not have copies?

Respondent: I have everything. But it's in fact theirs, but I have everything. I make sure people get it because that's the point of making them.

Interviewer: But all these issues are totally relevant. Current.

Respondent: I know. But it's a mess. I don't know. It's a mess. It has been mortally wounded by Mike Harris government, and I don't know if it – it's just so sad and it's so bad.

Interviewer: Who was funding these films? [0:35:30] Were you hired to make them? Or did you have independent funders?

Respondent: We got some funding from the Toronto board...

Interviewer: You did.

Respondent: ...and managed sometimes, in some cases we managed to find additional funding from federal or provincial government.

Interviewer: It sounds as if they should be all over right now.

Respondent: They should be. I know.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: I know. I find the hardest thing – well, we're off-subject – it's not making films. It's just getting them distributed. Getting them properly used. It's like there's some [0:36:00] gaps. And there's new stuff coming out all the – people look to that, to the big mob, you know, more and more stuff. But I will make an effort not to get off the subject here because I could, but. So Central Tech. It was a huge resource, that track, and I hear they want to put a bubble and Astroturf it, and all this bullshit.

Interviewer: Oh, they're talking about doing that at U of T. At Central Tech too? I didn't know that.

Respondent: Mm-hm. Well, [0:36:30] at present day, I am now involved with a man I knew who for years lived with his wife and children on Lippincott. So I'm back. [Laughter] So I might be living there for a while. I don't know what we're going to do, but...

Interviewer: So he's on Lippincott as we speak.

- Respondent:** Yes. Well he's living with me, but he's still dealing with the house on Lippincott and what to do.
- Interviewer:** So both of you might come back to Lippincott.
- Respondent:** We might. Yeah. Because I – you know, I'm here a lot.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** But...
- Interviewer:** Well we would welcome you back.
- Respondent:** Yeah. [Laughter] No.
- Interviewer:** **[0:37:00]** You would welcome you back too.
- Respondent:** Oh, I would. And you know, I never walk through this neighbourhood that I don't run into somebody.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** And I walk through my new neighbourhood.
- Interviewer:** What's your current neighbourhood?
- Respondent:** I live on Davenport on the cliff...
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent:** ...at Dufferin. You know Regal Road is at one side, and then I'm on the other side, just like three houses west of Dufferin.
- Interviewer:** Okay. So you're not far.
- Respondent:** Oh. It's a million miles away.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

Respondent: And partly because there's no street life, I'm on a cliff, which I really like. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to [0:37:30] live on Davenport. But there's no connectivity like there was on Borden. But that's a different time in my life, and I'm okay with it.

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Respondent: But I love that. And you know, we also had a dog, so that was another – we would all know who our dog was.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And they had their dogs, and there were a lot of common interests with me and my neighbours. And I wouldn't say it went much above Ulster or [0:38:00] down a lot past Vankoughnet.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: It was kind of just in that little chunk. Certainly Vankoughnet. You know Irene on the corner of Croft and Vankoughnet? She's been there forever. That's an interesting story.

Interviewer: Is she somebody I should meet?

Respondent: The woman with the thalidomide daughter?

Interviewer: I don't know her.

Respondent: She's in that little cottage on the corner of Croft and Vankoughnet.

Interviewer: Hm. Has she been here a long time?

Respondent: Forever. Forever. Since I moved here.

Interviewer: Well when we turn the tape off, maybe we'll [0:38:30] talk about that because I'm happy to meet her if she's been here for a long time.

Respondent: And quite a story too.

- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** What about – I don't know if you had any connection or interest in synagogues and churches in the neighbourhood. Aware of those?
- Respondent:** Well yeah. When I lived on St. Andrew next to one of the oldest synagogues in Toronto, and it was so – it's beautiful. But so falling down. **[0:39:00]** But there was something so soulful about that place. And I loved the comings and goings. And once I went in because the cat had had kittens, and somebody wanted a kitten, and we went in and it was like back in time.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** It's so scruffy. I don't understand. It can be so historically huge and it's scruffy and nothing ever...
- Interviewer:** Neglected, you're saying.
- Respondent:** Neglected.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** But in a way I kind of liked it because **[0:39:30]** it made it a little bit more, you know, like I could sit on the steps there and not feel I was, you know, causing any harm. And I loved being neighbours there. And you know, I still think of Cecil. Cecil was a synagogue at one point.
- Interviewer:** But that's not this neighbourhood.
- Respondent:** Yeah, I know.
- Interviewer:** So I'm thinking of...
- Respondent:** Yeah. Okay. This one. Well...
- Interviewer:** There is one on Brunswick north of Harbord. But...

- Respondent:** Yes. That's been...
- Interviewer:** ...when you were in the neighbourhood, were you aware of people using the churches, the synagogues, or was that not...
- Respondent:** [0:40:00] I was...
- Interviewer:** ...that much...
- Respondent:** ...aware of the one being used on Brunswick.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** And certainly I was aware that, you know, the JCC is a huge part of this community too. It was for me.
- Interviewer:** Did your family use it?
- Respondent:** I did a lot. I don't know Ron. He still went to – he had the U of T thing, so I think maybe – they had pilates. They had a great...
- Interviewer:** At the JCC?
- Respondent:** Yeah. And Nia. [0:40:30] Do you remember the Nia?
- Interviewer:** Yes, I do. I do.
- Respondent:** I loved the Nia.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. So you did pilates?
- Respondent:** But synagogues – not so much.
- Interviewer:** Okay. Let's come back to the JCC. You're saying you used it, but your family didn't. Are you saying that?
- Respondent:** I'm trying to remember if they did. Andrew later in life started using it as an adult, but I remember just myself going. I can't say for sure

[0:41:00] because they were physically active, sporty guys, but not...

Interviewer: But not at the JCC.

Respondent: I can't remember ever talking about them being in a program or the swimming. I don't know. But I didn't.

Interviewer: But you did Nia and pilates there.

Respondent: And swimming and – I joined.

Interviewer: So you were a member.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And it was a great resource. But I must say when the Nia left, I got other stuff going, is part of it.

Interviewer: Yeah. That's a [0:41:30] place that I use a lot.

Respondent: Yeah, I bet. You're so close. I loved it when they had classes there.

Interviewer: I'm just coming back to – sorry.

Respondent: I was just going to say they're still – I still see Martha and Roberta occasionally, the two teachers. Remember? Do you remember them?

Interviewer: No.

Respondent: They're still teaching.

Interviewer: I was going to come back to the homes just for a minute to talk about two things. One is the back gardens or back lawns, did you have some space behind your house? And if you did, [0:42:00] how did you use it? What was back there?

Respondent: Well I had a big backyard, and I told you that it had been rented, I guess, by a group home called **[indiscernible 0:42:10]**. And they had gardened the whole – there was a little sort of very shady area near the house because we were facing west. Some big trees, and they had planted the whole garden, which I get some of it because I did grow food. I grew some vegetables, **[0:42:30]** and I had – I planted stuff. I'm not – I come from a family of horticulturalists and I'm the non, right? So. But – and we always used to put the tent up in the backyard, and the kids would always have the tent there, and we'd put a little pool up. We always used it a lot.

Interviewer: Yeah. Your family used it.

Respondent: And it was – a lot of kids would be there. It was fenced by then. Mrs. Duranis was next door, Mr. and Mrs. Duranis who – both **[0:43:00]** Portuguese-speaking and spoke no English, and hated my backyard in those years.

Interviewer: Because there was too much activity?

Respondent: They wanted everything shut down all the time. The two of them lived in that house in the basement and the first floor, and the rest was empty waiting for their children to come back or something. [Laughs] They were a bit odd.

Interviewer: But they did not like the fact that there was all this life and joy...

Respondent: They didn't like that it was so loud and noisy, but you know what? I just – I would say I'm sorry, but that's life.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And then Dinny would **[0:43:30]** – but it's funny because Abraham built a fort for Josh in the backyard in that sandbox with all this. I had the tent. I got the rag thing, the seedy tent that they liked to go in and just – oh, and boards, and hammers, and stuff. So it was a kind of – it's like that place down that used to have down on the Lakeshore, you know? Where they could go and build stuff. What's it called? You know, that really crazy park that's **[0:44:00]** since been shut down. [Laughs]

- Interviewer:** But anyway, yours got used a lot.
- Respondent:** And also the other thing about our house and our backyard, Ron and I worked at home and we were always there. There were always, always parents there, so you know, people knew that. Kids knew that.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** So that also – because a lot of people were working after school and stuff, so it was – and I was happy to do that. And I still know those kids.
- Interviewer:** [0:44:30] Yeah.
- Respondent:** I still know them.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. You and Ron were working at home.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** At that time, were there other people that you knew who worked at home?
- Respondent:** Abraham.
- Interviewer:** And what's his work? What was his work?
- Respondent:** He's in real estate.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. So he worked from home.
- Respondent:** It's funny because you did kind of know who was around during the day. There were a couple of others, I can't remember right off-hand.
- Interviewer:** And what about women? Were a lot of the women working or not? Were they – [0:45:00] what was the situation with women and work?

- Respondent:** Well, the women I knew would be like Dinny and – they would be working or doing some kind of postgraduate work at U of T. And so yeah, I would say that – I think there were obviously women that were in their house all day, but I didn't meet them.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm. Yeah.
- Respondent:** I'd meet them sometimes in **[0:45:30]** the Market, but we weren't really on a drop-by basis or anything like that. So I have friends from outside the neighbourhood that would sometimes come by during the – who worked at home that would sometimes come by during the day, but no, mainly not.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** No. Not a lot of women out in their gardens or that kind of thing. No.
- Interviewer:** And the last question about homes, did you make any changes in terms of heating and cooling your home? **[0:46:00]** Or it stayed – whatever you bought...
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** ...it stayed that way.
- Respondent:** No. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So that was already...
- Respondent:** Yeah. We didn't – we weren't fixing up. We were renters.
- Interviewer:** Oh. You rented all those years.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Ah.
- Respondent:** When I rented that house...
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

Respondent: ...the rent was something like three hundred and fifty dollars a month, and it was rent controlled.

Interviewer: Oh, you were lucky.

Respondent: And there was a lineup. There was a huge lineup of people to rent that house for obvious reasons. [0:46:30] And I believe – and I got to know the owner over all those years.

Interviewer: Same owner the whole time?

Respondent: He owned it.

Interviewer: But the whole time?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: He didn't sell it and...

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: And you know, we were paying less for rent than it would have cost us to carry in interest the money to buy a house. And we were freelance filmmakers. It – you know, [0:47:00] in retrospect, was it a good choice or bad? I don't know, but that's what we did. And so as I say, it was a lot of people who wanted to rent it. And I think because Ron was at that point a lawyer and working as a lawyer, he only worked as a lawyer for a short time.

Interviewer: But the landlord liked that.

Respondent: He liked the idea.

Interviewer: Of stability.

Respondent: And I never told him that he quit. [Laughter] So yeah. No, he liked the stability, and we were. You know, we were a very stable

[0:47:30] family, but we just ran it like an old farmhouse. We didn't fix it up or care really.

Interviewer: And you used it lovingly.

Respondent: And we used it well, and when there were big repairs, I hounded him into fixing them. I property managed it for sure.

Interviewer: You hounded the landlord...

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: ...into repairing it if something...

Respondent: And then I had to hound him into fixing them the right way. We had ended up, I have to say, over those years having a really interesting [0:48:00] relationship.

Interviewer: Landlord-tenant relationship.

Respondent: Yeah. Very respectful.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well it sounds as if you forced him to keep the house in at least good working order.

Respondent: Yeah. And you know, he's welcome there any time, and I was totally transparent. I never tried to fool him or to jerk him around, and he neither, so it was good.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: It was good. And then he died. Before I left he died. I mean I went through this end of days where everyone just died, and I [0:48:30] left. So it was a very sad...

Interviewer: Oh, so somebody else bought the house and you were forced to move?

Respondent: No, no. Well, he died and it was up for sale. I left before it was, you know.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: I got out.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And it was really hard getting out. Oh my god, you can imagine all those years.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Well that was your home.

Respondent: And my partner had died. I was a mess. It was the dark. It was the dark time.

Interviewer: So Ron had died.

Respondent: Ron.

Interviewer: He must have been young.

Respondent: He did. He died at fifty-eight out of the blue.

Interviewer: [0:49:00] Oh, oh.

Respondent: Shocking. And that brought – and that was the end. I mean not only the end that – by now, the house is getting, you know, and we're thinking of getting out anyway. But I couldn't stay. It had too much – which is why I was happy to see it. You know, that house doesn't exist anymore...

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: ...because it got gutted completely and completely rebuilt from the inside-out. But [0:49:30] getting out was – all those years, it was like an archaeological dig. And as I was going through it, the basement stairs went out into the back, and I was just taking out boxes and boxes of stuff that I had put there thirty, forty almost years ago. And on one load, the whole back stairs just gave in, and I went – so that was kind of a metaphor.

- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** I stayed until then. Last woman standing. [Laughter] **[0:50:00]** And by then, you know, my kids were more or less out, but Olli was only fifteen, sixteen.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. So he moved with you?
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. And to where you are now.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** And now he has his own place with his girlfriend, and I don't know...
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** Yeah. [Laughter] It's all these changes.
- Interviewer:** They do grow up on us, don't they?
- Respondent:** Oh wow. [Laughter] With a vengeance.
- Interviewer:** And we have to let go.
- Respondent:** Yeah. Well. Some do, some don't. [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** You talked about **[0:50:30]** Rochdale.
- Respondent:** Uh-huh.
- Interviewer:** Do you have any feelings now about Rochdale and its contribution or what it meant to our...
- Respondent:** Oh, huge.

Interviewer: ...neighbourhood?

Respondent: Huge feelings at Rochdale. I think for me it contributed to my growth in this neighbourhood, and the people there – to my connection to the city, you know, Judy Merrill and all the First Nations thing that [0:51:00] they had there. The whole floor of First Nations. I don't see that too much in Toronto. They had – Theatre Pass Muraille started there. It was all this theatre. I have a PhD in the feelings of democracy. [Laughs] Oh man. Who else? Friends that I have for life. And it certainly made me interested in [0:51:30] living in a community. Right from then. I mean I guess leaving Rochdale, which was all about community and living in the city, and then just pulling out entirely and living in the country, we had to – we did keep coming in. We had that place in the market. So between Rochdale and that, and all – it's just – it's embedded me here. It's – you know, and it took me a long time to realize that. In Toronto, it's [0:52:00] east-ender or west-ender.

Interviewer: And have you always been west-ender?

Respondent: And you talk to east-enders, and they're always in the east end. [Laughter] I'm a west-ender. And even still when I was looking, Abraham was my agent and I was looking, and I thought I'm just not – I'm not of these people. [Laughs] I'm of those people. Whatever that means.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: So I really do identify from this part of town. And I just say I'm not that far, but really I'm down here all the time. Now that I'm seeing [0:52:30] John, I feel like I have roots here, and David's still here, and yeah.

Interviewer: Well I understand that because for me, Harbord Village area is the only place I want to be.

Respondent: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: I love it here.

- Respondent:** No, you know, and also – oh my god, the Harbord Bakery support group. [Laughter] I love those people.
- Interviewer:** Harbord Bakery support group?
- Respondent:** Oh, I love Susan.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And Rafi. I sort of do, but I love Susan. She's such a sweet person.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, she is very modest.
- Respondent:** And I go in there and [0:53:00] really – you know. I did call them my Harbord Bakery support group because they – and they still, when I go in, "Oh, how's Olli." And it's a little – their birthday cakes there. And I find now get grand birthday cakes for my granddaughter, and they made one for Song's birthday that...
- Interviewer:** For whose birthday?
- Respondent:** Song. Her third birthday, and it was her first Harbord Bakery cake, and it had like a little Dora the Explorer. It was stunning. And her face, when [0:53:30] she looked at it was like – [laughs] was just like amazing. I have a picture of the cake and her little face going, "Oh, this is so amazing."
- Interviewer:** Wow. Imagine.
- Respondent:** So they're very embedded.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And the woman who ran the bookstore for a long time, what was it called? The Constant Reader?
- Interviewer:** The Constant Reader. Mm-hm.

Respondent: She was great. I miss her. And Olli, she was very good friends with Olli. He could go up there by himself and she would let him in.

Interviewer: It was a wonderful bookstore. I was [0:54:00] sorry when they shut it.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And even the travel place. I used to always get tickets through there. You know Drum Travel?

Interviewer: Yes. It's been there a long time.

Respondent: So I lived at Harbord – and my haircutter, Hutoshi, who's a friend for life.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. And she's still there.

Respondent: She's still there. Cyrus died.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: You know, she's still there. I don't know for how much longer, you know? Still.

Interviewer: Yeah. And she's had some trouble with that tenant in front [0:54:30] because they're kind of noisy.

Respondent: She's had a lot of trouble. [Laughs] You know? She's tough.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: But yeah, I don't...

Interviewer: So this part of Harbord had – you had a lot of connections with Harbord.

Respondent: Oh yeah. That section of Harbord. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: That would be, you know, like I kind of radiate outwards. You know, if I can get it around me – and I love doing business with people that are my neighbours. I still do business with people I know. I will go out of my way to do business, **[0:55:00]** to give the money directly to somebody who's running that business. That's a thrill.

Interviewer: You have a very strong sense of community.

Respondent: Maybe that's what you'd call it, but yeah.

Interviewer: Well that's just one way.

Respondent: Yeah, I think it...

Interviewer: That's my – that's how I'm describing it.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. And a loyalty.

Respondent: I like dealing at the street level kind of thing. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: I do. It's funny. I don't know why, but maybe growing up in the suburbs where there's – and I hate that **[0:55:30]** idea of people shutting themselves off and, you know...

Interviewer: I agree. People sometimes talk about privacy, and you can live right here, which is so lively, and have all the privacy that you want. You go into your house and shut the door.

Respondent: Totally.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Yeah. No, I mean I – people say to me, "Oh, you're such a hermit." And I am. I am. When I'm not there, then I'm a hermit. Like that's the meditating thing. That's my other [0:56:00] side and finding the balance.

Interviewer: Well I can describe myself that way too. I mean I'm loving the sitting and having this dialogue with you, and I have a lot of that in my life, and then I want the silence and solitude.

Respondent: Mm-hm. Well you kind of need it. You kind of need that balance.

Interviewer: It's true.

Respondent: If you're a people-person and you're – then you do need that replenishing. Which is also how I see, you know – being in the world, that's your education. [0:56:30] The people you meet and talk to, and how you go about your day, that is how you – where you learn and what you learn, and how you learn. And not that I've ever been a very big going downtown person, but when I get downtown and I have to do stuff downtown, I just find it an alien and an annoying place. And I have friends too who live and they go, "I love the city. I just love walking down Yonge Street," and all this stuff, and I – [0:57:00] I'm so not that. Although every now and then I'm really glad that I have the venues here for, you know, the dance, and the music, and the things that come here. I will go to that, but you know, in terms of being a citizen in the city, in large I'm not. I don't really like it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: I like to be, you know, in this maybe bubble you could call it, but where I know people and it's more meaningful. I don't like the anonymity of [0:57:30] – you can get that anywhere.

Interviewer: Yeah. What are the big – I think this will be my last question unless we go off on some tangent. What are the biggest changes that you've seen since you moved here in 1976? And this is 2013. What are the changes that you've seen in this neighbourhood?

- Respondent:** Well, you can start at what it looks like. There's fewer people [0:58:00] on the street. When I walk up – I drive up Borden twice a week. I usually drive just to see if I see anyone. There's one or two of the same guys that sit, lean on their fences that I know are all like, "Hey." But houses. It's so – the houses, houses. All about the houses. They're all so tweaked and post-pride. Everyone is thinking what they're sitting on. I don't think young families can afford to be here. I [0:58:30] don't think – it's still – it feels more and more like suburbs, except with a lot of cars. And the cars.
- Interviewer:** Many more cars you're saying.
- Respondent:** Many more cars. And you know, there's still people I know. And as I say, I always see someone. But...
- Interviewer:** And you're happy to see them, and they're happy to see you...
- Respondent:** And I am. And they're happy to see me because...
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** ...because they go like, "Who are these people?" So it's like, "Remember me from back in the day?" [0:59:00] And anyone who's been around for a while on that part of the street, or in the area that's serviced by the Harbord Bakery daily, because that would be my walk, you know? I'll know them. I'll recognize them. So. But that's oldschool now. And I notice, you know, all kinds of service vehicles. A lot of reno – you know, you go up Borden, reno, plumbers, [0:59:30] electricians, painters. It's all about the real estate.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** And I see it. I haven't seen it hitting Kensington yet because I haven't looked at that Loblaw's thing. And I wouldn't be surprised if nobody goes to it.
- Interviewer:** To the Loblaw's?

- Respondent:** Because the one on Queen Street everyone said that, you know, no one will go to and they all go. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Loblaw's.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah.
- Respondent:** I won't go. I have no – feel any need to go. But anyway, I think what's happening is the people who are owning that real estate what to – start wanting to cash in because no, you know, [1:00:00] no one – whatever, whatever. But certainly it's hit Borden. I mean the example would be my house. I told you the rent.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** So I went through my life paying rent. I didn't even want to tell people because they would just be bitter. [Laughter] The year I moved out, I think I had a whole house, and this was a big house. A big third floor. And I was still paying even when, you know, all those years I was paying like something like twelve, thirteen hundred a month.
- Interviewer:** Oh. [1:00:30] Very low.
- Respondent:** Okay? So they sold it for almost a million and it was a mess. It was a mess. Guttled it, and sold it for some – enough more than a million that – to make that possible. And it's just the same house really. It's got an academic from U of T. So that's the kind of thing that's going on. So nobody really can live there now.
- Interviewer:** You have to have a lot of money.
- Respondent:** Unless they inherited well, they've got [1:01:00] some job. And why anyone would put themselves through for a house on Borden Street at this point? I don't know. I have that – I guess that's life in the city.
- Interviewer:** So those are some changes that you feel are unfortunate changes.

- Respondent:** Well you know, it's part of – it's part of a very big – and it's funny. Going back when we were young and moving in here, the vision that I had that we shared, the vision of [1:01:30] what community or what life going forward might be like has not materialized. And in fact, it's a pretty dismal vision now, I see.
- Interviewer:** The neighbourhood.
- Respondent:** The city. No. I wouldn't...
- Interviewer:** The city.
- Respondent:** The neighbourhood is just a symptom. It's the city. It's the city, it's the culture, it's the country, it's the way of – it's the way politics have gone, it's the way money has – it's just not – it's gone in a different way [1:02:00] than what I had hoped. So I see it on Borden. I see it everywhere. So I think maybe the writing's on the wall, unless there are some big cultural and social changes, which I would like to see, but I don't know how it's going to happen.
- Interviewer:** I guess it depends on who's – who our political leaders are.
- Respondent:** Well, you know, there's another whole discussion, but we have corporate politics, and we're locked in, and I don't know what we do.
- Interviewer:** Let's...
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** I think we're moving [1:02:30] off, and you and I can sit and talk. That would be fine.
- Respondent:** But I just see this as a symptom of what's going on and, you know, like I still like to be in the city in that way, but I'm finding more and more – part I don't want – things I don't want to be part of.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. But you might be coming back to Lippincott. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** I want things to be on a human scale.

- Interviewer:** Yeah. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Street level. You know?
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Jane Jacobs.
- Respondent:** Yes. Well [laughs] – **[1:03:00]** what would she – she'd be turning in her [laughter] – but I might be on Lippincott and that'd be fun, but I have a feeling that what might happen is down the road, we'll both sell our houses and start fresh with a place that's ours together because that's the next step, I guess, on the adventure. So.
- Interviewer:** Well you and I might sit and talk for a few more minutes, but in terms of recording...
- Respondent:** I think that's all I've said. I think I was such a lucky person to be here when I was here, **[1:03:30]** and I thank Ted Steiner **[indiscernible 1:03:33]** for the short-term rental on Palmerston, and also that got me going into yoga because they have a great yoga thing. And then finding this.
- Interviewer:** This being?
- Respondent:** The place on Borden.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** It was like a charm.
- Interviewer:** Right. Right.
- Respondent:** And it was a good house, and I have many incredible memories.
- Interviewer:** Well, Roberta King...
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** ...thank you very much. It's been a pleasure.

Respondent: You're welcome.

Interviewer: Thank you very, very much.

Respondent: It has been. [1:04:00] Thanks for interviewing me.

[1:04:01]

[End of recording]