

**118 John Scalpello**

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

**Interviewer:** I'm in the beautiful home...

**Respondent:** [Laughs] Thank you.

**Interviewer:** ...at 154 Major Street of John Scalpello. John described to me that his parents came from Malta separately...

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** ...both lived at Harbord and Bathurst. I guess that's how they met each other.

**Respondent:** Yeah. That's how they met. Yes. My mom was at the corner house of Harbord and Bathurst, and my dad lived four doors south and that's how they met. And all their friends [0:00:30] – that's where they met them too. They were rooming houses, and that's how the immigrants found their first housing, I guess. You know, they shared kitchens and bathrooms, and they all made, like, sixty cents an hour if they were lucky. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** And then they bought...

**Respondent:** Yes. They bought 153 Harbord with another couple that lived at the same location at Bathurst and Harbord. They were a German couple. He came from Germany, and they met here too. It was the [0:01:00] same story as my parents. They met in the houses here. And they bought the house together. Smitty and Lisa lived upstairs, and my parents lived downstairs until they started fighting. [Laughs] Over the heat it start – it was about the heat. My mom would turn down the heat and they would turn up the heat. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** Well that can be a big enough issue to make enemies.

- Respondent:** That's right. So my mom was able to save a few thousand dollars and buy them out, and then they went to the big house up at St. Clair and Bathurst, I guess. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** So before [0:01:30] we go on, I just want to say to you thank you very much...
- Respondent:** Oh, no problem.
- Interviewer:** ...for giving our history committee your time.
- Respondent:** Okay.
- Interviewer:** Okay. So your parents bought 153 Harbord in 1961.
- Respondent:** It was either '60 or '61, because I know they had it before I was born.
- Interviewer:** And your mother lived there until 2013?
- Respondent:** 2013. Yes.
- Interviewer:** When she died just a short time ago.
- Respondent:** A short while. She passed away June 4th. Yeah. So she's been in the neighbourhood since 1957.
- Interviewer:** So and [0:02:00] then 1961 owning 153 Harbord until 2013.
- Respondent:** Yes, that's right. Yes.
- Interviewer:** Now you, you were born...
- Respondent:** I was born at Mount Sinai and lived at that home, 153 Harbord, until about 1990, I think it was. Yeah. I went to St. Peter's, Central Tech, and then Ryerson after that, but always lived at home. That was the only way we could afford to – my parents could afford to send me to university.

- Interviewer:** [0:02:30] Okay. But you lived – from 1961 when you were born until 1990.
- Respondent:** Around 1990. Might have been '90, '91. In there somewhere around there. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So you lived in this neighbourhood your entire childhood until about thirty years old.
- Respondent:** Yeah. About thirty years old. That's right. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Well you know, one of the reasons I'd like to ask the ages is because you can talk to me about – I know the stages of life that you went through here.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** So you went through your young childhood, your adolescence...
- Respondent:** Yes. And then young [0:03:00] adulthood, I guess. Yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So that's helpful for me to know the ages that you were. It determines some of the questions I'm going to ask you.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And I was also always in the neighbourhood because my mom was here, and when my dad passed away we had to help. So you know, I was always in tune with the neighbourhood.
- Interviewer:** Right. And now you came back.
- Respondent:** And we came back. Yes. Oh, there isn't a better neighbourhood in the city, I don't think. Well, everybody advocates for their neighbourhood, but whenever I talk to people, even when we're in Bloor West, they keep talking about what a great neighbourhood. And you went – you're so lucky to [0:03:30] live there. They never used to say that in the '60s. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** So okay. That's a good place to start. What did they say in the '60s about this neighbourhood? What we now call Harbord Village.

**Respondent:** Well this neighbourhood was considered basically a slum in those days. It was for the immigrants, right? And it's true. It was wave, after wave, after wave of immigrants. I experienced a few. I'm sure the people like my parents, or previous to my parents, the Boys of Major, would have experienced even more waves, right? These homes were all built by the British, English they were. Not British. English. [0:04:00] They were usually the skilled workers who built the bigger homes up in the Annex and Rosedale and that, and they lived in these. That's why some of them – if you notice, some are built to higher degrees or different levels. This one is a custom. It has stone that you won't find on any other ones, so whoever built this probably was maybe a mason or something. The finishes in here were superior to some of the houses too. My parents' house – my parents didn't have the same finish as this one did. So whoever built this one had a bit more [0:04:30] money, I think, and he had a larger lot, so it showed he had a bit more money.

**Interviewer:** But you're saying people have said to you what a great neighbourhood you live in now.

**Respondent:** Now. Yes.

**Interviewer:** Do me a favour. Talk a little bit more about what it was like during those early years that you lived here and...

**Respondent:** Okay. Well, when we grew up, I do remember no one had air conditioning in those days, so we would sit on the verandah to cool off. Everybody sat on the verandah. TV was two or three stations. And directly next door to us, [0:05:00] which is 151, I believe that one is. Yeah, it would be 151 – was a Jewish couple and he was a barber. And we found out years later when he passed away and his wife had Alzheimer's that they were never married.

**Interviewer:** Oh, at that time.

**Respondent:** Yes. And they had lived together...

**Interviewer:** Shame.

**Respondent:** ...sixty, sixty-five years. Yes.

**Interviewer:** Very – really unusual at that time.

**Respondent:** Yes. Now he was probably the worst barber in the world. [Laughter] He was mean, he'd yell at you, he'd pull your hair. [Laughter]  
[0:05:30] I ran out there. My mom took me one time there to have my hair cut, and I ran out screaming. [Laughs] Because he was so rough. He wasn't a very good barber that way. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** And he wasn't – and he was living in sin.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Two terrible things.

**Respondent:** That's right. [Laughter] And now he was, like most of the Jewish people in this area, a Polish Jew. They were all from parts of – even the Harbord Bakery. Yeah. Yeah. But they're mostly Polish actually. If not, they're Ukrainian. And it was all Jewish businesses here. The restaurant [0:06:00] was a fishmonger. Harbord Bakery was always there since the '20s, I believe. Next door was a barber. The garage where the fish and chips was, that was another person had sold fish, I believe. Out of that little garage. Right across the street was the Harbord Laundry it was called. It was four Jewish brothers who owned it.

**Interviewer:** So you're getting closer to Brunswick now.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Now – yeah. Actually Borden, right between Brunswick and Borden. There's the social housing in front of my mom's.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** Well that was a laundry there. [0:06:30] And he – they owned three or four houses behind, and some of the people who worked for them lived – he'd rent out the houses to them, so those houses were right in front of Central Tech on Borden. Those were owned by that laundry also. The social housing now fills up that full property. There's the little synagogue, and right across the street from the synagogue is a little...

**Interviewer:** That's on Brunswick.

**Respondent:** On Brunswick. There's a little yellow house. Now that was a kosher chicken place. It's right in the middle of the block. Right across the street from the...

**Interviewer:** It's got a lot of [0:07:00] windows that place.

**Respondent:** Yes, yes. It looks like – it doesn't look like a house.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** It looks more like – well that was kosher chicken in there.

**Interviewer:** The chickens actually lived there?

**Respondent:** Well in the garage he would slaughter the – it's a two-storey garage in the back there if you notice. He would slaughter the chickens there. As kids we noticed that because there used to be feathers everywhere. And now I don't understand kosher. I believe that they have to be blessed by a rabbi, I think.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And held in a specific way.

**Respondent:** A specific way. Well that's what they did.

**Interviewer:** Did you hear or smell...

**Respondent:** Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...the chicken? [Laughter] You did both. You could smell it.

**Respondent:** Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. The [0:07:30] chickens were there. They'd come in alive and they'd be in the store, the little store window hanging later in the day. And he sold eggs also. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** So that makes sense. Before he'd kill them he'd take...

**Respondent:** Yes. that's right. It was pretty smelly. Well the whole neighbourhood was a little bit smelly in that respect. Now we're smelly from garbage cans from restaurants, but in those days it was fish, and chicken, and laundries, and it was more – I don't know how to put it. It wasn't quite industrial, but it wasn't like it is today after it became [0:08:00] gentrified and everything has to be clean.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** [Laughs] We would live on – sit on the steps at night. I do remember this. And neighbours would either talk to each other or talk right across because they had a fight with that neighbour, but they all sat on the verandahs. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** So for about four months a year there was a tremendous amount of verandah sitting.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Well actually, most of the year except in the extreme winter people would sit because it wasn't much – there was radio and a few channels on TV, and it was all black and white in those days, so you sat on – and that's how [0:08:30] you socialized. Today, people have enough of people so they come in the house and they lock themselves in their house and play on their computers. It was a different time. And I caught the tail end of that. In the '20s and '30s it was probably even more so. That's why many of these houses, the verandahs are not original to a Victorian – those were probably built in the '20s, the little verandahs. These – my mom's house doesn't have a covered verandah. That's probably more in tune to a proper Victorian. They were put in so people could go out there and socialize and sit out on the verandah at night and cool off.

**Interviewer:** [0:09:00] The verandahs, I think on Harbord, are even smaller than these.

**Respondent:** They're tiny. They're just basically a step.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** So when you sit on them, you're almost on the street.

**Interviewer:** Yes. But they still sat out there.

**Respondent:** They sat out there, that's right. Harbord was not a busy street like it was today. It was a – it was always a main road, but it wasn't a thoroughfare like Bloor or College was. It was a very lonely street in many ways. My mom used to tell me how ugly Harbord was when she first moved to the country. She liked College, and they used to go down to College to have fun. There was [0:09:30] bars and things down there like the Horseshoe, the El Mocambo was high-end in those days. You went to listen to jazz. There was always Mars down there, the – my dad used to go there for breakfast, and it was always that. Where there's Sneaky Dee's at the corner of...

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** ...well that was called The Sanka. It was always a bar, but it was called The Sanka before, and that's where my dad would go and talk to the men and come back home, right? One too many in him sometimes. [Laughter] And for fun he used to go to [0:10:00] the Silver Dollar, or the El Mocambo, or there was a place – the Brown Derby at Yonge and Dundas. There was a famous place for jazz down there. Yeah. They're all gone, these places now. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** But your parents did a lot of their socializing...

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** ...I mean front verandahs.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** But if they were going out, to College Street.

**Respondent:** Yeah. They stayed – College Street was the main street. But before the subway went on Bloor, Bloor was not a main. It was College Street that was the more important street. Always [0:10:30] was. Bloor Street became important after the subway.

**Interviewer:** Oh, I didn't know that.



**Respondent:** Yeah. So that – the better restaurants and bars, and even hotels, like even that awful hotel at Spadina and College, but that was – the Waverly was a high-end hotel at one time. It's a dump now, which is going to be torn down. They're putting condos in there.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** But it was there that they went. And then Kensington Market we did the shopping. Like in those days, my parents didn't have cars. Very few people had cars in those days, so you – we're going back to that time where you [0:11:00] shopped in your neighbourhood and you went to the local grocer and all that. That's all coming back if you notice. People are on bicycles and doing the exact same thing. Yeah. The days of, you know, the suburbs are done, and everybody's coming back into the city. We were kind of that way too, right? Although we didn't live truly in the suburb, but that's why we came back too.

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

**Respondent:** In the old days, you did that naturally.

**Interviewer:** So what is making you come back?

**Respondent:** It is the neighbourhood. It is that you can walk everywhere. There's restaurants, there's bakeries, there's everything in your fingertips here. So you really don't need the car. [0:11:30] Until I have to go to work, the car sits most of the time, right? That's why it was important we had parking because I still want a car, it's just that I need to park it somewhere. So – but we walk everywhere. We use the neighbourhood, our designer, the colourist that I was telling you, she said that, "You're the kind of people who use the neighbourhood, so you get to" – when we were in Bloor West, we used the neighbourhood. When we're here, we're using it even more so. My parents had to use it because that's what you did, you know? There were drugstores, [0:12:00] like I'll tell you where the Boulevard Café – that was a drugstore.

**Interviewer:** Okay. I didn't know that.

**Respondent:** Yes. Before Chabi- – I believe it's called...

**Interviewer:** Chabichou.

**Respondent:** ...Chabichou, well that was Manny's. It was a pinball place. But before that, he was a green grocer, or a grocery store kind of variety store, and also a bit of a pharmacy too in there. Yeah. But it...

**Interviewer:** So that corner was a busy corner. That's my street. [Laughs]

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. It was the neighbourhood, you know, neighbourhood little businesses in there.

**Interviewer:** And the pinball place, was that a popular place for Central Tech?

**Respondent:** Yes. Yes. [0:12:30] Manny's turned into pinball, burgers, that kind of place. But after the pharmacy closed at – where the Boulevard Café is, another guy – what was his name? Louis bought it. It was a Spanish man. Anyways, he turned it into a pinball place too, so that...

**Interviewer:** So there were two pinball places.

**Respondent:** Yeah. There were quite a few where the Pizza Pizza – I mean where Gigi's Pizza was, that was a pinball place. And where Nova Pizza is, that was a pinball place.

**Interviewer:** Oh my. Four of them.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah. With the [0:13:00] Gitoni, the soccer games...

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** ...and pinball, and pizza, and Coke, and things like that. Yeah. It was for Central Tech because Central Tech is the biggest technical – biggest high school in the British Commonwealth, and when we went there, they had portables even and it was up to, I think, thirty-six, thirty-seven...

**Interviewer:** Wow.

**Respondent:** ...hundred kids in there.

**Interviewer:** Oh huge.

**Respondent:** It was huge. It was huge. I think there's only about fifteen hundred or so in there right now.

**Interviewer:** And they've gotten rid of a lot of the technical stuff.

**Respondent:** **[0:13:30]** Yes. Because tech is considered a dirty word now. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** Well but I was also told it's because it's very expensive. All the equipment so...

**Respondent:** Yes, yes.

**Interviewer:** ...they're making people go to the junior colleges for that.

**Respondent:** Yeah. But everybody – you know, the idea of coming to this country is so your kids do better, and you want them to go to university and have a white-collar job.

**Interviewer:** Sure. But...

**Respondent:** Those times – that's changing in many ways because some of these – these guys are making more money than a lot of white collar people. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** And not everybody wants university.

**Respondent:** Exactly. It's not for everybody.

**Interviewer:** **[0:14:00]** It isn't. Yeah.

**Respondent:** My parents when they came here, they always knew I liked technology, and that's why I went to Central Tech. I could have

went to Harbord Collegiate. I had the grades. It's what interested me. But they said, "Make sure you go to university too," and that was a lot of the immigrant thought, and it still is today.

**Interviewer:** So you went to Central Tech and then you did go to university.

**Respondent:** Yes. Because there were two courses there. There was the four-year course where you go and acquire a trade, or the five-year, which you still take to the – the technical courses, but they're pushing you, they're streaming you towards university with streaming. That was...

**Interviewer:** [0:14:30] So you did the five-year...

**Respondent:** I did the five-year.

**Interviewer:** ...so that you got all that technical training.

**Respondent:** Yes. But I also...

**Interviewer:** But you also...

**Respondent:** ...had grade thirteen, so I could go to university.

**Interviewer:** So they kept your options open for you.

**Respondent:** Yes. That's right. My parents made sure – they never had much money, but they always said, "You're going to university. Then do what you want in life, but you're going to university."

**Interviewer:** But in the meantime, what you got at Central Tech is how you've spent your life.

**Respondent:** That's right. Yeah. Because I'm back teaching technology. Although I did advertising for, oh, sixteen to nineteen years. I forget now what it was. So I worked in – have you ever watched Mad Men?

**Interviewer:** No.

**Respondent:** Oh. [0:15:00] It's about the old-school advertising from the '50s. Well the company I worked for was TDF, and they were the tail end of that. It was the big production houses and that, and it was heavy drinking. Not us. I was in production. It was the salesmen and all that. It was the tail end of that. It was a very exciting business job, but no money in it.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** [Laughs] Because when I went to Ryerson, well kind of in the neighbourhood too, I used to walk. I took fine arts there. That's what I was interested in at the time, and [0:15:30] as you can see, I'm still quite creative.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Your home is beautiful.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Seriously beautiful.

**Respondent:** And even as a child, I always loved architecture and that's why I do like this neighbourhood for that, because I like Victorian homes, and I – you know, and that's what brought us back to one of these type of houses. Sophie always hated these, my wife, because she thought they were creepy and scary. But now – then she started liking them when she started in because she only used to see them from the outside, because they were tall and narrow. They can be a little intimidating and scary-looking, especially if they're [0:16:00] not maintained properly. When she came in, she realized they look small from the outside, but they're big houses.

**Interviewer:** Well, and they have the potential.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** I mean your house looks so much wider because you took that wall down.

**Respondent:** Because we took all the walls down. Yeah. But my dad was one of the first to start to do this kind of stuff. It was – I do remember as a

child helping my dad renovate because the house was – like, they paid nine thousand for it and it was a piece of junk really. [Laughter] It had no basement. It's the one next door to us at 155, so closer to Boulevard Café, [0:16:30] still sitting on cedar beams. There's no basement below that. Many of these houses in this area were built with no basements because in the old days, you didn't live in the basement. It was basically a hole to pour your coal in.

**Interviewer:** Oh, of course.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** And in fact, this house – my dad was – that was the first thing he removed. There was a – in the middle of the living room, let's say right here, was basically a stove, and that's what heated the house. So the chimney would travel throughout the rooms...

**Interviewer:** And that heated the house?

**Respondent:** That heated the [0:17:00] house. And when we bought that house, my parents still had that. It was coal-burning too. So there was a little basement, I'd say about ten by ten in the middle of – with a chute. So it would be in the middle right here. And he would deliver it with bags, and he'd throw it down the chute, and that's how you heated the house. And we're talking 1961 it was still – they were still doing that.

**Interviewer:** And the coal was efficient but dirty.

**Respondent:** It was very dirty. Yes. And messy because you had to bring it up from that little basement up a ladder basically, because [0:17:30] it wasn't staircase, and bring it in through your dining room.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And it was a – the dust.

**Respondent:** It was dusty and it wasn't very warm either because they had no insulation in these houses, right? And the only thing that warmed it was this chimney that went – and then finally went out the back.

**Interviewer:** But you're saying your father removed it?

**Respondent:** My dad removed it, and he put in a gas furnace in 1960, '61.

**Interviewer:** Was that pretty early for those?

**Respondent:** Yeah, I think so. Yeah. I would **[0:18:00]** say so. Yeah. And then he only liked to work – that's why I got the love of building. And he started taking down walls, open concept. He – we dug the basement ourselves and we put it on a foundation because the house didn't have a foundation. And he started finishing basements, and it was – we had one of the first finished basements that wasn't five feet tall. It was, like, we could stand up in it. Seven-and-a-half feet tall.

**Interviewer:** So your father did it, and you helped him.

**Respondent:** Yeah. I helped him. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** But that was **[0:18:30]** hard work.

**Respondent:** It was really hard work. We kept adding additions to the back of the house because there were three of us, three boys in the house, so I built my own room. I would have been sixteen years old. There was an addition off the back of 153 Harbord that I helped build, and I was sixteen years old. Didn't really know what I was doing, but it was still there. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** And your father was there to help you.

**Respondent:** Oh yeah. My dad was the one really. I'm saying I built it, but he...

**Interviewer:** So you learned all this from your dad...

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** ...and you went to Central Tech.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** You had a good [0:19:00] education then.

**Respondent:** Yes. It was very...

**Interviewer:** Because as a young child, you started learning it.

**Respondent:** Mm-hm. Yeah. Now a lot of the – when we were very young, like the Snidermans and the – I don't know. What's his name now? Mirvishes and that. The older – because they all grew up in this neighbourhood too. All of them.

**Interviewer:** Really? Sniderman and...

**Respondent:** Yeah. Sniderman is Sam the Record Man.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Respondent:** Ed Mirvish, of course, Honest Ed's. Our mayor. The other mayor. What was his name? His name is gone right now. Lastman grew up here. [0:19:30] He grew up on Manning, I believe it was. Who else grew up here? Quite a few prominent – old – the Jewish, because it was a Jewish neighbourhood. All our neighbours were Jewish when we came here. We were almost the first of that wave, and then later it started becoming Italian and Portuguese, and finally the Chinese came in. But all our neighbours were Jewish. I can remember that. Now those all went to Harbord Collegiate.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** Very few Jewish people actually went to Central Tech.

**Interviewer:** What was it like for you living in a neighbourhood that was predominately Jewish?



**Respondent:** [0:20:00] As a child you didn't know any different. And I actually – my parents said they were very good neighbours. She actually hated when the neighbourhood became gentrified because she said those were better people.

**Interviewer:** So your mother was happy with the Jewish neighbours.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. They were fine. There was nothing wrong with them.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** But it was kind of funny. We did have the barber on one side, he was Jewish, Polish Jewish. On the other side, the husband was Jewish but his wife was German, and they hated the barber. [Laughs] They used to fight a lot. [0:20:30] That was a funny marriage. And the grandma, we used to call her Nana Spitzer, she babysat us and she lived two doors over. We loved her, because we don't have any family here. All our family's in Malta. We're the only – yeah. So they became our family.

**Interviewer:** So you adopted each other.

**Respondent:** Yes. That's right. So she would babysit us, so we spent a lot of time with her, Nana Spitzer. I don't – we might even have pictures of her. Upstairs, we – when we bought – Smitty and Lisa, [0:21:00] they couldn't afford it, so we started renting upstairs to an older couple, Uncle Buck and Auntie May. They weren't, but that's what we called them.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. At that time, children would not call adults by their first names.

**Respondent:** No, no, no. You did not.

**Interviewer:** A title of grandmother, grandfather, or else auntie and uncle.

**Respondent:** That's right. That's right. Yeah. But they weren't officially.

**Interviewer:** I understand that.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So on your floor, there were your parents and three sons?

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** After the three of you had all been born. And then the second floor had this auntie and uncle...

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** ...who rented from your parents.

**Respondent:** [0:21:30] That's right. Yes.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** And now they worked at the laundry right across the street. I don't know what their job was there, but they worked at that laundry. And it was a funny story with them too. It was a – they were an older couple. Now to me they were older. I have no idea what age. Yeah, they were probably my age. [Laughter] Actually, I think they were older than us. And in those days you would get beer delivered, and they would order seven cases as Red Cap. As a child, I still remember it because they would deliver it.

**Interviewer:** Seven cases?

**Respondent:** [0:22:00] Cases of twenty-fours of Red Cap.

**Interviewer:** Thirsty people.

**Respondent:** And they would drink twenty-four a night as a couple, so twelve each, let's say, and you would never know they were drunk. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** They were quiet drunks.

**Respondent:** Yeah, they were very quiet. Very nice people actually. But they would drink a case of twenty-four beer every night. I still remember that...

**Interviewer:** That bathroom got a lot of use.

**Respondent:** [Laughs] Yes. That's the other thing. It was only one bathroom, so we had to go upstairs to use the bathroom because they were called flats in those days. They weren't proper apartments, right? Kind of still live together.

**Interviewer:** [0:22:30] So they had their own kitchen...

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** ...but your family, all five of you, used that bathroom.

**Respondent:** Used the one bathroom on the second floor, which is five by five. It was tiny, with the claw tub. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** And I just wonder how much hot water there was for showers and baths.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Was there a shower?

**Respondent:** No. A claw tub with the ring, you know, the old-fashioned ring.

**Interviewer:** I do.

**Respondent:** So there would have been – probably have been a shower. I don't recall the curtain, but they must have been. Yeah. And then my dad, I remember enclosed it so – because in those days you didn't want claw tubs [0:23:00] anymore, and today we're putting them back in.

**Interviewer:** Right. Yeah.

- Respondent:** So he couldn't afford to put the proper modern tub in, so he enclosed the claw tub in a box and tiled it, and all that. It never looked right. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** You did what you could, right?
- Interviewer:** What you could afford.
- Respondent:** That's right.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** That's right.
- Interviewer:** Did a lot of other families live that way?
- Respondent:** All the families I knew lived that way. All of them.
- Interviewer:** Other – so other people rented the second floor or the third.
- Respondent:** Yeah, that's right. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Because that's how people paid their mortgage.
- Respondent:** Yeah. That's right. That's how you paid the mortgage. They were all working class. It was extremely working class neighbourhood.  
[0:23:30] It was not a neighbourhood where you could leave, as children, leave your bicycle on the sidewalk because it disappeared.
- Interviewer:** Oh. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** No, it did. It was crime. Jumping in people's backyards, stealing, and you know. My dad – because we're Maltese, in Malta, collecting pigeons is a big thing, so my dad built a – we have a tiny backyard that's about fifteen by fifteen. Anyways, he built a pigeon coop and we had some racing pigeons...

**Interviewer:** Oh my gosh.

**Respondent:** ...and some fantails. They were beautiful.

**Interviewer:** Fantails?

**Respondent:** Yeah. The tail opens up. [0:24:00] They're show pigeons. Well, one day they disappeared. Someone stole them. It was a very high crime. You couldn't leave anything anywhere. It was poor. People stole, you know? If you had a – this was a great story. My first bicycle, my dad couldn't afford us a bicycle so in the laneway on – what's the name of the laneway now?

**Interviewer:** Albert Jackson.

**Respondent:** Albert Jackson. A few of the very old Jewish men who first came here were junkmen, and in fact one of them, [0:24:30] I still remember him with the horse.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** But later on he bought a truck, and so I caught the tail end of him with a horse and a wagon. And he would travel the neighbourhood and laneways picking up steel. He mostly collected steel, but the other ones collected other things. There were two or three down that laneway. The garages were just full to the brim with junk, and then they would sell it for the scrap metal. There were three of them that I remember. Anyways, he found a bike someplace and he restored it for me, and he welded – I remember one thing that was wrong with it was the pedal [0:25:00] was broken, so he welded it or had somebody weld it for me. And the first day I rode it, the pedal broke off so he took me in his truck back to whatever garage – it might have been at this garage over here – and he rewelded it, and I had it for many years, this bicycle. But it was used. [Laughs] And this is what we had. Through him, because he was a really nice man, he was actually disabled but he still was able to go up in the laneways and collect steel and all that. He put two kids through university. His son, one was a doctor and I think the other one might have been a lawyer. [0:25:30] And this is how they all did it. And he owned three houses.

**Interviewer:** So they did menial, dirty, hard work.

**Respondent:** Well when they first came to – there was a lot of racism. When the Jewish people came from Poland, many came from Poland – now these are older than me. These came probably in the '30s. Boys of Major, these kind of people. Many people wouldn't hire them because they were Jewish, right? Toronto was very snobby in many ways. It was very English, right? And if you didn't fit the bill, like people who cooked [0:26:00] garlic – they used to say the people who cooked garlic.

**Interviewer:** And they were talking about the Jewish people?

**Respondent:** Yeah. The Jewish or any immigrant.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. My mom was called a DP many times by them. Displaced person, right? It was a lot of racism here. So it was hard to get out of here, but they did whatever it took – just like people come from India and drive a cab, and many of those people are doctors and lawyers in their country, but they can't do it here, right? And after the war, that's when many of the Jews came here too at that point.

**Interviewer:** So they were willing to hard to...

**Respondent:** Whatever it took.

**Interviewer:** ...give their children, the next generation...

**Respondent:** Exactly.

**Interviewer:** [0:26:30] ...a better life.

**Respondent:** Exactly. Exactly. Right? So we were influenced by that too, right? Because you could see that, you know, if you work hard you make sixty cents an hour. You know, junkmen weren't by the hour; it's whatever they sold, right?

- Interviewer:** But their hands weren't clean.
- Respondent:** No, they weren't. No, they weren't. There were people in Kensington Market that would collect clothes and sell used clothes at Kensington Market. I still remember this as a kid. All the green grocers, they're yelling and screaming at each other. They were mean, those people. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** But they were clawing their way out of poverty.
- Respondent:** Well they didn't, but **[0:27:00]** their kids sure did.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** And what's very funny, as soon as their kids acquired any wealth, they moved up Bathurst Street. That's where you went. You went up Bathurst Street. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** I know that.
- Respondent:** They went up Eglinton, they kept going further up.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** And my father wanted that too. He wanted to move out of here because this was a neighbourhood where you start. You don't live here.
- Interviewer:** And his association was when he was poor and when he had nothing.
- Respondent:** Yes, yes.
- Interviewer:** But he never did move out.
- Respondent:** No, because we couldn't give away the house, right?
- Interviewer:** Oh.

- Respondent:** We were asking at the time about eighteen [0:27:30] thousand.
- Interviewer:** And what year was that?
- Respondent:** 1967, something like that, and we couldn't even give it away. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So they didn't want it around that time.
- Respondent:** No, because at that time the suburbs are flourishing, so you went to Scarborough, you went to Mississauga.
- Interviewer:** And that was the good life.
- Respondent:** Yes. Or you went up Bathurst Street, and you worked your way up, you know, Eglinton and Lawrence and up there, and that was the good life. You got out of here. This was the neighbourhood for immigrants.
- Interviewer:** So your parents couldn't sell it.
- Respondent:** And they stayed.
- Interviewer:** So they stayed.
- Respondent:** They stayed. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Was that frustrating for your dad?
- Respondent:** A little bit. Yeah. Because my dad would [0:28:00] travel and he always wanted big houses and you know, he wanted the American dream, the Canadian dream, right? And we couldn't give it away, so we stayed.
- Interviewer:** And did your mother feel the same way?
- Respondent:** My mom always loved this neighbourhood.
- Interviewer:** Oh she did.
- Respondent:** Yeah.



- Interviewer:** So they had different opinions.
- Respondent:** They had different opinions. My mom loved this neighbourhood.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. I want to come back to this – the kind of work people did. A kind of dual-pronged question. One is were some of the women working, or all, or none? And also [0:28:30] was there any kind of home industry, people working from their homes?
- Respondent:** Yes. A lot of the women would work either – Spadina was all seamstresses and, you know, when they made – all clothing was made there. A lot of them did piecework, and they would take the work from the factories and make it at home. That's called piecework, and a good friend of mine, Doug Mutamera, his mother did work on Spadina. She never lived in this neighbourhood. Anyways, she made, in those, like, two thousand-dollar wedding dresses, [0:29:00] and they would pay her a hundred dollars to make a dress, right? He knows how to sew because of that. He used to help his mom.
- Interviewer:** Oh. Is that a Japanese name?
- Respondent:** His name's Doug Mutamera. No. He's Japanese.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. I thought that.
- Respondent:** His parents came after the war too. You know...
- Interviewer:** Okay. But he lived in this neighbourhood.
- Respondent:** No, no. He actually lived in another neighbourhood, but his mother worked down there too.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** But a lot of the old Jewish people, that's – the wives...
- Interviewer:** So the women sometimes worked on Spadina in this...

- Respondent:** Yeah. And they were sweatshops basically. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. They were.
- Interviewer:** So if the [0:29:30] women were working, that was often where they were working...
- Respondent:** Yes. It's...
- Interviewer:** ...in these sweatshops.
- Respondent:** ...it's sweatshops. It was labour basically, you know? You know? You didn't – unskilled I guess would be – although they were skilled.
- Interviewer:** But skilled.
- Respondent:** But they were skilled, but that was considered unskilled. When you think of unskilled labour, it's still skilled. You still have to know what – you know?
- Interviewer:** So if the women were working that's what a lot of them did.
- Respondent:** Yeah. A lot did that. Or they owned shops. Every corner was a shop of some sort. A variety store. Many of the corner [0:30:00] buildings were Jewish-owned. It was all Jewish, right? And they were – and they ran little variety stores. Or, you know, or food shops because a lot of...
- Interviewer:** Let me come back just to one thing. So in terms of the women working, you're saying a number of them did and they were sewing on Spadina.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** But the other part is some worked at home.
- Respondent:** Yeah.

- Interviewer:** I guess that covers both because...
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...if they were working piecemeal, sometimes they brought that home?
- Respondent:** They brought it home. Yes. Yeah. You didn't have to actually work. Some actually never worked on Spadina. It would be [0:30:30] piecemeal, so they worked from their homes. They – you know, they sewed, and then you brought it and you sold a unit, and you were paid very little for that, you know?
- Interviewer:** Right. Did your mother work outside of the home, or was she...
- Respondent:** No. My mom actually always did work, so her first job when she came to the country was working at Simpsons as an elevator girl. She worked at Christie packing cookies. Box place where they made boxes. Finally ended up at – for a few years she did stay at home with us until we grew up, so – but she did work a little [0:31:00] bit at that point too because we had Nana Spitzer looking after us. She also did babysitting from home. That was a big industry too. So my mom – I do remember having two or three other kids in the house.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** Yeah. So my mom did that too. Whatever it took.
- Interviewer:** So when she was at home she took other children in.
- Respondent:** That's right. Yes.
- Interviewer:** And when she went to work...
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Nana Spitzer.

**Respondent:** Spitzer. Yeah. Yeah. Or at that point, later on she finally ended up working at Sir John restaurant at Eaton's. She retired there.

**Interviewer:** Your mother.

**Respondent:** Yeah. But at that point when she was at Eaton's, we were already old enough **[0:31:30]** to look after ourselves, I think, right? So, many kids – this was the other thing. Parents didn't work, and the kids actually had – there were no nannies at home, you know, Philippino nannies in those days, so the kids were in the street. We all played in the streets.

**Interviewer:** And the doors were unlocked? The front door was unlocked?

**Respondent:** Yeah. In the old days they would have been unlocked. Later on, we started locking, right? The back door was always locked because that's where people came in through.

**Interviewer:** Came in through the lane.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Through the laneways, yeah. And hopping fences and that. **[0:32:00]** And they weren't nice clean laneways straight – the fences were all twisted, you know?

**Interviewer:** Neglected.

**Respondent:** It was neglected. Yeah. And the back of the houses were all neglected in those days, but we all played in the backyards, and the front was usually open. Later, like in the mid-'70s we started locking, and you know, we became more aware...

**Interviewer:** But you were all street kids. You were playing outside.

**Respondent:** All street kids. Yes, yes. The story of the Boys of Major – the story until about the mid-'70s I'd say. I do remember playing at the Central Tech parking lot. **[0:32:30]** They – that was our playground there too. We used to ride our bikes in there. And a friend of mine lived in the house right behind it. They're renovating it right now. And we would grab his hose and fill it up in the winter and create a skating rink there.

**Interviewer:** Oh good.

**Respondent:** Yeah. So we used to play streets against streets, so we were the Harbord Street gang going – just like the Boys of – we were the Harbord Street gang, there was the Euclid gang, and the Sussex gang. Now we weren't gangs; we were a group of kids and we'd play sports together.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** Street hockey, or baseball, and we used to play – **[0:33:00]** Central Tech parking lot was a good one for that because it was a big open space to play, you know? And you'd bring your own nets, you built your own hockey nets, and...

**Interviewer:** At what ages do you think children began to play outside?

**Respondent:** I always remember being outside, so let's say I was eight to ten we started going out. And you always played out, outside. Well there was no TV, there was no radio in those days, so you made friends, right? We hopped on bikes and our playground was the city. I do remember riding through Central Tech.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** I mean through U of T, and you **[0:33:30]** just travelled. I read in the Toronto Star where we are so protective of our kids now, in the 1930s, like those people, it would have been this. A safety factor, right? And when we grew up, you stayed here. Now, your neighbourhood's this, and your parents take you to hockey, and they organize everything for you. We had to organize it.

**Interviewer:** Play dates.

**Respondent:** Yes. Play dates. And that's all about the parents making sure that they're the right – you know, we didn't do that. We did our own organizing. Like...

**Interviewer:** And the parents were working.

**Respondent:** And they were working. They didn't have time for that, you know?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** [0:34:00] And they had hard jobs. They would work, you know – you took the – as an immigrant, you took the worst job nobody else wanted, right? And if you worked hard, maybe you would move up a little. My dad worked at the Park Plaza Hotel. His job was cleaning the rooms, and there's a man there who's – he's the bartender there. He's been there since 1957.

**Interviewer:** Whoa.

**Respondent:** He was eighteen years old. He's still the bartender. He's Joe the Bartender. He's famous. Yeah. Everybody knows him. He's up on the rooftop of the restaurant up there. It's pretty high. [0:34:30] It was always a high-end hotel, the Park Plaza. But anyways, that's where my dad worked.

**Interviewer:** But your dad was – he could also do a lot with wood.

**Respondent:** Yes. Yeah. My dad was always quite skilled, and my mom's family is a construction family too. Her grandfather built our home in Malta. We still have a house there, so he came with some skills. And my mom was always critical of what my dad was doing because my dad – he could build, but he was never careful, so doors would be crooked. [Laughter] It's typical of European [0:35:00] men, you know? They don't have time. Just build it, you know? My mom was very critical of what my dad would do, so later in life when we could afford it more, my mom would start hiring people because she didn't want my dad doing it anymore. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** And at least he would get it done.

**Respondent:** In the beginning you had to. You just didn't have the money.

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

**Respondent:** Yeah. And he would always hire people from the neighbourhood. Where the garage is now, where the fish and chips – there was a guy in there who was a cabinetmaker later too. But first it was a fishmonger, I believe, or sausages, or something. **[0:35:30]** Jewish guy. Then after that, it stayed empty for a while. No, a man lived there. There used to be a bachelor that lived in there. It was home. I don't know if there was even a bathroom in there. Anyways, a man lived there. [Laughter] Later on it was a small cabinetmaker, and he built our first, one of our first kitchens at my mom's place and my dad's parents' place. I'm trying to think what else happened there.

**Interviewer:** But your dad started working at a hotel cleaning rooms.

**Respondent:** Yes. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And then what did he do?

**Respondent:** **[0:36:00]** After that he got a job at Via Rail. CN and then Via Rail, and that's where he retired. He worked there. That was a good job for an immigrant. That's a good job now.

**Interviewer:** And what was he doing?

**Respondent:** He first started cleaning the trains, you know the passenger cars. Later on, he became a car-man, which is basically a mechanic, but he didn't like that because a lot of the work was outside. So he actually went back to a cleaner, a train cleaner. The pay was the same. It didn't matter because you're unionized at that point.

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

**Respondent:** **[0:36:30]** So he had – that's what he retired. We actually did pack up the – my mom packed up the family in 1968, I believe it was, and we lived in California for one year.

**Interviewer:** Whoa. Where?

**Respondent:** San Francisco. So we were in San Francisco in 1969. Haight-Ashbury days.

- Interviewer:** I lived in Palo Alto, which is close by, from 1964 to '68.
- Respondent:** Oh okay.
- Interviewer:** I was there at the same time pretty much.
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** Oh, what a wonderful time.
- Respondent:** It was. As a kid, I didn't think it was that wonderful because we lived in my uncle's basement [0:37:00] because we, you know, we just moved in there. We stayed there for a year, and my dad loved it. Didn't want to come back. And my mom – we rented this house to some Native Indians who destroyed it. Destroyed it. But anyways.
- Interviewer:** But it was just an adventure? What was that?
- Respondent:** No, we went there to live, and we were going to – and the house was up for sale. We had our lawyer. He was supposed to be selling it on us. Well, he wasn't even taking care of anything, but we never got rent or anything.
- Interviewer:** Oh. God.
- Respondent:** After a year, my [0:37:30] mom got tired of San Francisco and said – told my dad, you know, "I'm taking the kids. I'm coming back to Toronto. If you want to come, great." Because my dad loved it. He didn't want to – my dad didn't come back.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And we had – we came back. So we were only...
- Interviewer:** To that house?
- Respondent:** To that house. Yeah. It was destroyed.
- Interviewer:** Oh.



- Respondent:** I do remember the first day we came back, we had no beds and we slept on – we had rugs in those days. It was hardwood underneath, but rugs were all burnt with cigarettes, so it was a disaster. And then the next day when we came back, we went to Eaton's and bought new beds, and...
- Interviewer:** [0:38:00] But they never paid rent that whole year?
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** So your parents were out a lot of money.
- Respondent:** A lot of money. Yes.
- Interviewer:** Well that was a hard time.
- Respondent:** It really was.
- Interviewer:** So coming back from a year that your mother was not happy to this disaster of their property that they worked so hard to pay for.
- Respondent:** That's right. Yeah. Yeah. It was a different time, but nobody wanted to live in this neighbourhood either at that point, right? So when you rented, you rented to whoever you could find. It was a bad mistake. And we left it to a lawyer to [0:38:30] look after it, and he wasn't...
- Interviewer:** So then your parents had to fix it up at their own expense, of course.
- Respondent:** Yes. Yeah. It was destroyed. They broke the kitchen, they broke everything.
- Interviewer:** That's a sad story.
- Respondent:** But, you know, it's a buyer – or a renter beware, I guess. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Yeah. You began to talk about the stores in the neighbourhood.
- Respondent:** Right.

- Interviewer:** Now you lived on Harbord.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** So I assume that you knew the stores there best.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** On the other hand, you said that your parents – the social life was more on College.
- Respondent:** Yes. **[0:39:00]** Because Bloor Street – well Bloor Street was all Hungarian because in 1957, all the Hungarians settled on Bloor. So there's one Hungarian restaurant there still.
- Interviewer:** Country Style.
- Respondent:** Yes. But it was all Hungarian in those days. In 1957, that's where they settled. They were smart and bought all the big houses up in the Annex, converted them all to rooming houses. When I say rooming houses, I mean rooming houses. Like the worst for the **[indiscernible 0:39:23]**, you know?
- Interviewer:** So the Hungarian people ran away. There was a Hungarian revolution thing and they left. Yeah.
- Respondent:** **[0:39:30]** And they settled there. That was the neighbourhood they settled in. College Street was still, I think, a lot of Jewish, although there was a little block of Germans too. There was one lady, old lady there, she still sells clothes.
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** I met her.
- Respondent:** She's German.
- Interviewer:** I interviewed her.

**Respondent:** Yeah. She's probably still...

**Interviewer:** There's the German church there too.

**Respondent:** That's right. So there was a small German community down in that area...

**Interviewer:** Near Bathurst.

**Respondent:** That's right.

**Interviewer:** Just east of Bathurst.

**Respondent:** Yeah. But College was always mixed. It was all kind of people down there. And it was the grander street. **[0:40:00]** It always was the grander street. The subway made Bloor Street what it is.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** And then later on, the students started and, you know, the restaurants and all that. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So the nature of the stores changed a lot.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** You described – oh, and you started to talk about corner stores.

**Respondent:** Yes. You know where the DQ, the restaurant with the French doors there? The white one at Harbord and Brunswick that has the big French door? It's a DQ Bistro or whatever it's called?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** Anyways, that was Budapest Bakery. That was **[0:40:30]** a bakery. He was Hungarian and, yeah. And he owned properties on Bloor Street. He owned half a block up there, and so that was a bakery before. They used to cook bread. It was called Budapest Bakery. And he – interesting story with him was he was older, in his fifties,

and he went back to Hungary and married a beautiful Hungarian woman. She was like seventeen when he married her, and my mother used to say how beautiful she was.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** But he passed away. He was much older, and she acquired all this [0:41:00] property. She died a millionaire. And many people actually got quite wealthy in this neighbourhood because they worked hard. It was not through acquisitions or through – it was through hard work.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. Very, very hard work.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Come back to your childhood please, and you talked about the kids were on their own.

**Respondent:** Yes, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Before we – when we were just – when you were showing me your beautiful home, you talked about playing in the lanes.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** So please talk about that.

**Respondent:** Well there weren't any playgrounds. [0:41:30] Very little green space in this area, and even today there is very little. So our parks, our playgrounds were in the laneways, and we all played in the laneways. And like I was telling you, there were different streets that we were – gangs, but we weren't gangs. We were boys, you know?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Mostly boys. I don't know what the girls used to do. It was mostly boys. I guess girls stayed at home. I'm not sure. I do remember the boys.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** And there was the Sussex Street gang, we were the Harbord Street gang, there was the Ulster Street gang, and we all [0:42:00] played in the parks. One thing we used to like to do was in the fall, collect chestnuts. This is a real boy thing.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** Yes, and you would throw strings, sticks up into the chestnut trees and you'd knock down the chestnuts, and all of the streets would collect these – all of the boys would collect these, and we would collect thousands of them. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** What would you do with them?

**Respondent:** I don't know. You didn't eat them. You just collected them. You can't. They're poisonous, so.

**Interviewer:** And you didn't necessarily throw them either.

**Respondent:** No.

**Interviewer:** But you collected them.

**Respondent:** We collected them. Yes. All the kids would – all the boys would collect them. [0:42:30] [Laughs] And we...

**Interviewer:** Did you kind of collect them competitively? We have a bigger pile than you?

**Respondent:** Yes. Actually that was it. And I was pretty good at organizing this, so we would have crews that send out two or three, and we'd go on that street and collect the chestnuts, and you weren't supposed to go on somebody else's tree and take their chestnuts, but they had better trees, right?

**Interviewer:** [Laughs] So you did.

**Respondent:** But we also had one boy, he lived right behind the laundry. Jack was his name. He was Portuguese. And he was like a little monkey, and he could climb the trees. [Laughter] The rest of us would throw sticks, and I think we [0:43:00] started getting – we destroyed the trees as kids. With strings, and you'd pull the branches, and...

**Interviewer:** And shake them off.

**Respondent:** ...shake them off. But then Jack, he had no fear of heights, so he could climb up the trees and shake the branches, right? So we actually were probably better than the other kids at collecting them.

**Interviewer:** So he was part of the Harbord Street gang.

**Respondent:** Yeah. He was part of the Harbord Street gang.

**Interviewer:** He was the valued member.

**Respondent:** Yes. Oh, yes he was. Yes. And I was always a bit of a carpenter, so I built a box and we'd collect these chestnuts. And I do remember one of the other street kids, gangs, came and stole our chestnuts. I do [0:43:30] remember that. [Laughs] Now a friend of mine, I mean my brother-in-law actually from Oakville tells similar stories, and he's exactly my age. Collecting chestnuts in Oakville, so it's something I think all kids of that era did. [Laughs] I don't know why we used to collect these. You can't eat them; squirrels eat them.

**Interviewer:** Well there was an older man that I spoke to, and they got chestnuts and...

**Respondent:** And you'd drill them.

**Interviewer:** ...collected them too – that's right.

**Respondent:** You'd drill a hole. Yes. And you would make necklaces out of them.

**Interviewer:** Or else just use it to swing and hit at other people.

- Respondent:** Yes. That's right. It was a little bit violent. It [0:44:00] wasn't like, you know, knives and stuff, but there were fights in laneways and that, and you had your territories, you know?
- Interviewer:** What were some of the games you played in the lanes?
- Respondent:** Okay. I do remember that we would play – jacks is one of them where you would – and you'd collect the thing. But the other one was a thing called battling tops. All the kids knew how to do this, and it was a wooden top, you tied a string around it, and you'd throw it, but the idea of this game was to crack the other kids' top. It was a competition, right? I don't see kids playing this anymore, and [0:44:30] we used to play it in the playgrounds, and in the schoolyard too. Schoolyards weren't grass in those days. They were pavement.
- Interviewer:** Pavement. And were the back lanes all paved?
- Respondent:** No, they were dirt. They got paved mid-'70s I'd say. No, they were dirt and gravel.
- Interviewer:** So when you were playing there as a child, it was muddy if it was raining, or dirty, or...
- Respondent:** It was like limestone screening. I don't remember mud, but they weren't paved. Not all of them were paved. That came in later that they were paved. I do remember, like, gravel and, you know?
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** So they could be a bit muddy, I guess. [0:45:00] I don't remember mud, but I do remember gravel. Yeah. Because I'm trying to remember my child – you know, when you're younger, you'd hop on your bike and they were all interconnected these – you could travel. We rarely travelled up and down the streets. It was through the laneways.
- Interviewer:** The laneways.
- Respondent:** Yeah. They were our playgrounds.

- Interviewer:** They were a good place for you as a child.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And I've got to be totally honest, I wasn't totally honest – I mean honest. Yeah, like we did some thefts too. We would go into people's yards and take things too, right? [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Objects.
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. You did **[0:45:30]** what other people did, you know? And what parents couldn't buy you – you used to get one Christmas gift a year. Dad would take us to Eaton's, and we got whatever we wanted, but it was one. It's not like today.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** So if you left a bike out or, you know, that metal car, boy that was – that car was a prize, so that went in the house in our room. Because I would have disappeared. Yeah. But I used to jump fences and take things too. I wasn't, you know, a saint. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. But you're saying that was kind of the culture of the time.
- Respondent:** It was the culture of the time.
- Interviewer:** People didn't have much, and if you – if something was valuable you **[0:46:00]** brought it into your house.
- Respondent:** You took it. You took it, yes.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. Everybody did it.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** You know what I mean?
- Interviewer:** So it was petty crime.



**Respondent:** Yeah, it was. You know, no, no, not breaking into houses or cars. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. But if it was left outside...

**Respondent:** If you left something...

**Interviewer:** ...it was like a public property. [Laughs]

**Respondent:** That's right. Like the park here at the corner. Now what is the name? Margaret?

**Interviewer:** Margaret Fairley.

**Respondent:** Okay. If you notice people leave little toys out there, we never did that in those days.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. I think they leave those and they don't want them. I think when...

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** [0:46:30] ...the kids have grown up and they don't want to use them anymore.

**Respondent:** Yeah. But...

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** ...it stays in the park...

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Respondent:** ...and it gets used by everybody. Not when we were growing up. That would have disappeared. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** So you're saying it was a different socioeconomic situation.

**Respondent:** Yes. It was all...

- Interviewer:** And people were deprived and poor.
- Respondent:** Yep. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And you did what you could, right? So you didn't leave anything out.  
[Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Not if you wanted it the next day.
- Respondent:** Yeah. That's right. Trying to think of some of the other games we would have played. Well there was a lot of sword fighting. I do remember that, with sticks and [laughs]...
- Interviewer:** Yeah. **[0:47:00]** But with sticks.
- Respondent:** Yeah. With sticks. With wood sticks.
- Interviewer:** When you reached fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, what was the situation in terms of dating, socializing with girls, what?
- Respondent:** Well I do remember that we had – I had some friends at that age and here, but I went to Central Tech, which was primarily a boys' school, so I don't remember much dating because with the immigrant parents you did not – there was no dating, you know what I mean? And the **[0:47:30]** parents – even Portuguese – at that point it was starting to become Portuguese. The Jewish people had moved on. It was Portuguese and Italian here. No, and you did not date their daughters.
- Interviewer:** Oh okay. They put a lock on their daughters.
- Respondent:** There you go. Yeah. [Laughter] You hardly ever saw – that's what I was telling you. I didn't see any girls in the street because you just didn't go out much as a girl, right? And they did – because they would arrange marriages. See we were Maltese. We were brought up different, right? But Italian and Portuguese, they were arranged marriages at seventeen. I do remember **[0:48:00]** Portuguese

pulling their kids out of high school to go to work with dad, and arranged marriages. By eighteen, the girl was married, right? And so there was no dating, no. I don't remember too many girls in the streets.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** Yeah. And like I said, the Jewish had moved on by then.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** So this was now starting to become Portuguese and Italian in this neighbourhood.

**Interviewer:** Sure. And they were new immigrants, so they were much more protective and more Old World.

**Respondent:** Exactly. Exactly. And they did not come from the best parts of Europe. So the Italians would have [0:48:30] come from Sicily, and the Portuguese would have come from the Azores. They did not come from Lisbon where they were more cultured. These were the peasants of their countries, right? And they – very protective. It's very Old World. I do remember my friend Rui and Jack, the monkey guy, well he's a doctor. [Laughter] And he's an engineer. They were brought up different because he came from Lisbon, and I do – I really liked his sister, but his sister was the genius in the school, and it was all about education for [0:49:00] them, so there was nothing...

**Interviewer:** So if you were going to Central Tech, you weren't going to get close to them?

**Respondent:** No, no. [Laughter] Although Rui and Jack did go to Central Tech, and he finished top of his class. Like I said, he's a doctor in the neighbourhood now. They finished up. So I was inspired by education through them in many ways too, but Saturday for them was Portuguese school, and Sunday was Sunday school, so there was no playing much with them. Yeah. There were other kids that I started, you know, hanging out with. I didn't go to Saturday school

and all that. [0:49:30] But I was inspired by them, and I never finished top of my class, but I actually was always honour roll too.

**Interviewer:** So you were a good student.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Well I tried to be, I guess.

**Interviewer:** Well and your parents said you were going to go to university.

**Respondent:** I'm going to university. Now his parents, you're going to be top of your class. It was a lot of pressure on him. Yeah, yeah. And they did. And they did. They were great. When they moved – well, so when they – they didn't play much. So they were Italians. I do remember a Newfie kid with a broken arm. He used to hit everybody in the head with it.

**Interviewer:** With his cast?

**Respondent:** Yes. Yes. I do remember [0:50:00] him. He wasn't in the neighbourhood too. Wow. He lived in the awful apartment building right in front of the track at Bathurst at Harbord on the south side. There's that awful long building. There's a studio in there.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** That was an awful building. I do remember another Newfie family always fighting and drinking, and that was at the end of Sussex. It was on Sussed. There was some really rough people in the neighbourhood too.

**Interviewer:** So these were poor people.

**Respondent:** It was very poor. [0:50:30] Yeah. You know, they weren't – I don't remember welfare people, but I do remember very poor people, you know? My parents always tried to do a little bit better than that. They tried, right? But they were poor too.

**Interviewer:** For sure.

**Respondent:** And they never owned a car.

**Interviewer:** And they worked at menial jobs.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. It was, you know, but you did whatever you could for your kids. But some families never did. And Portuguese were famous for pulling their kids out of school, right? And you go work with dad, you know? Dad worked in construction. And the guy that's working here, he lives in Oakville. But he pulled his kid out of school too. **[0:51:00]** They still do that. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So they pulled their kids out of school and they married their daughters off.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** It was very Old World because they don't come – they come from the poorer parts of their countries. That's why you leave, right? Now my mother did not leave Malta because it was poor. My mother hated the heat.

**Interviewer:** Ah.

**Respondent:** Yes. She was – for a Maltese was weird, but she was a redhead.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** Yeah. And very fair-skinned. She hated the heat. She came here because...

**Interviewer:** So she would have really been...

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** ...she would have suffered **[0:51:30]** from the heat.

**Respondent:** Yes. So that's why she came here. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** But she came with no family at all.

**Respondent:** No, no, no.

**Interviewer:** So that must have cost some hardship, homesick, isolation.

**Respondent:** I think so. I think so because she didn't have – but she did keep in touch with the letters. In those days, I remember the airmail letters. I do remember her writing them. And they were – she always wrote in English because everybody speaks English, so I do remember reading them for her. My dad came – didn't want to come here. My dad – it's a funny story [0:52:00] about him, but he followed his friend to Australia. Well, any British colony, Maltese can go because we're a British colony. So he went to Australia and lived there for three years. And I don't know what happened, but he came back from Malta, but he couldn't afford to come back, so he was a stowaway on the boat and they caught him.

**Interviewer:** Oh, oh.

**Respondent:** So they said to him that he had to pay his fare one way or another, and one way was that he had – they were looking for workers in those days in Canada, and he agreed to come here, and he [0:52:30] worked in tobacco fields for a while, and then he finally worked his way to Toronto, and that's how he ended up on Bathurst Street. But he never really wanted to be here. He always wanted to go back. And once he married...

**Interviewer:** To Australia.

**Respondent:** No, to Malta.

**Interviewer:** To Malta.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. So my dad never really liked the cold. He loved the heat, so it was a funny...

**Interviewer:** Boy, your parents were quite different from each other.

**Respondent:** Yes. Oh yeah. They were [laughter] very different. Yeah. Where my mom always said that it must have been God who grabbed her by her hair and brought it here. She always loved Canada.

**Interviewer:** Well and then of course, that acted itself out at home when she lowered [0:53:00] the heat. [Laughter]

**Respondent:** Yes, yes. That's it. Yeah. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** What about Kensington Market?

**Respondent:** Okay. I do remember as – one of the first childhood memories was we had a rabbit as a pet, so my mom would take us down there with a shopping cart, and we'd go to the green grocer's there, the corner ones, the one that sells burritos now, and the other side's a restaurant. Well, they were – at the corner of – is it Cecil on Augusta? There were all green grocers there, and they were really mean [0:53:30] Jewish men. I do remember this. Yelling and screaming. But my mom would force us to go get the lettuce leaves because they would rip the outside lettuce, you know, to make the...

**Interviewer:** And then throw it away.

**Respondent:** ...and throw it away. So we would fill this shopping cart full of lettuce leaves for our rabbit. I do remember. That was a first childhood memory. I do remember seeing all the pigeons and cages, the live pigeons because they – you buy the chickens and pigeons live for cooking, I guess, and they were big cages. I mean it was a dirty place.

**Interviewer:** So people – they sold pigeons too. I didn't...

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** [0:54:00] I knew about the chickens. I didn't know...

**Respondent:** Yeah. They sold pigeons too. Yeah. And quails. I do remember quails.

- Interviewer:** So people brought them home live and killed them.
- Respondent:** Yeah. That's right. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Or the Jewish ones would have the guy on runs would kill them.
- Respondent:** And would kill them kosher, I guess.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** Although there were a few people on Kensington that would do the kosher...
- Interviewer:** Kosher killing too.
- Respondent:** ...killing also. Yeah. I do remember the guy selling eggs. There were two or three who sold eggs, and I guess they would have been the chicken – I don't remember chickens in front of that. There was always eggs. And I guess they're [0:54:30] kosher eggs too. I guess there's a certain – I don't know. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** No. I don't know if there are kosher eggs. Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. But I do remember everybody down there was Jewish. It was all...
- Interviewer:** It was really a Jewish market at that time.
- Respondent:** Yeah. It really was. And they were mean. I remember yelling. Always yelling at people.
- Interviewer:** Yelling at each other and at customers?
- Respondent:** And at the people, yeah, because you bartered, right? You know, if a lettuce was, you know, it was, I don't know, ten cents in those days, my mom would say, "Five cents," and a lot of them bartered. But it – as a child they were yelling. They were bartering is what – but he did used to yell at the kids, right? But he would let us [0:55:00] take the carrots, bad carrots, or the...



**Interviewer:** And that was for your rabbit.

**Respondent:** For our rabbit. Yeah. We had a huge white rabbit. [Laughs] We kept it in that little shed too. [Laughs] That's right.

**Interviewer:** So it didn't come into the house.

**Respondent:** No, no. [Laughs] And he was huge. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** Did it have a name?

**Respondent:** Yes. I think Peanut. [Laughter] Because he kind of looked like a peanut, I think.

**Interviewer:** You're saying that your family used Kensington Market.

**Respondent:** All the time. That's – my mom shopped there a lot. And if we didn't go there, we used to go to the Dominion, which is Metro now, and [0:55:30] I do remember going there too with my mom, with the shopping cart. Yeah. And later in life we called them granny carts, but we always used that. I do remember that. Yeah. A lot of the shopping was at Kensington. Yeah. And we'd go with mom there. Although as children we hated it because it...

**Interviewer:** The Market.

**Respondent:** Yeah. We hated it. I didn't like going down there.

**Interviewer:** Because it was noisy and it felt violent?

**Respondent:** It was noisy, and then the men were mean. They were yelling, but you know, it's a hard life.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So did you feel a little scared?

**Respondent:** Yeah. A little bit [0:56:00] scared when you're a younger kid. And I – we did not like going there. I do remember that. We used to like going to Metro and Dominion. [Laughs] But it was clean. Where the record store, where Honest Ed's is at the corner, that used to be a Loblaws there even years ago.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** Yeah. They sell records now in that location?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** That was a Loblaws there. He left there in the '60s, I believe.

**Interviewer:** It was a long time ago.

**Respondent:** And I do remember the Loblaws was dirty where Dominion was a nice, clean store.

**Interviewer:** I don't know. On Harbord, did you have [0:56:30] anything behind the house, a piece of property? Or was it a back lane?

**Respondent:** No. It's a right of way.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So you didn't have a back...

**Respondent:** No. Our garden was fifteen by fifteen if we're lucky, and that was our backyard, so that's why a lot of the – very few of the kids played in the backyards because they were small, and they were always full of junk too. I do remember junk in the backyard. Everybody had junk in the backyard, because the houses were small.

**Interviewer:** You didn't have storage so that was your...

**Respondent:** That's right. That's right. Yeah. Or they rented their garages, [0:57:00] a lot of people too, right? Like many – some of the

junkmen actually didn't live in those houses; they would have rented a series of garages and fill them full of stuff.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** Right? So they didn't actually own all their garages either. So you played in the street. That's where you played, you know?

**Interviewer:** Happily.

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

**Interviewer:** You didn't feel like deprived kids.

**Respondent:** No. It's what you did.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** It's what you did. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** You did talk about a kind of class structure.

**Respondent:** Mm-hm.

**Interviewer:** How do you see things [0:57:30] have – having changed in – since 1961 when you began to live here? What is it like today?

**Respondent:** Well a funny story is that when my parents first moved in, everybody was an immigrant, okay? They were all of the same class. They all had lousy jobs, or self-employed, and little lousy businesses, right? But that's what it was. In the mid-'70s, this neighbourhood started getting gentrified, right? People started buying up these houses and they paid very little for them, like [0:58:00] thirty-five thousand, twenty-five thousand, and they started doing a little bit of renovations. But they started making it – they started taking over in many ways, creating new rules for themselves, you know? And they were more educated. They were – all of them, they're university educated. They're moving back into the core. And my mom always felt that these people were taking away her neighbourhood. Yeah. Now when we renovated this

house, we had a big problem with our neighbour, and she said, "You're a very bad neighbourhood. You're changing the feeling of the neighbourhood." [0:58:30] And I said, "You know what? That's what my mother felt like when you people moved in." So you know? That's the evolution of a neighbourhood.

**Interviewer:** Change is part of life.

**Respondent:** Exactly. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** But you kept – your façade is not – it doesn't...

**Respondent:** No. We will never change the façade for two reasons. I love the old – these are sun-baked brick. The orange brick is sun-baked. Second is you devalue your property. If we had to change the façade, we would devalue this property completely. You can do whatever you want to the interior, [0:59:00] but if you touch the façade, I think it's a huge mistake, so we – there was never a plan to even do that.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** My mom was one of the first to take the paint – all the houses were painted in this area, and the reason for that was the brick became dirty, and in those days they didn't know how to clean brick, or if they did, it was very expensive, so they used to paint the houses. If you notice, many of them are red. Well they're all red at one time. My mom in the mid-'70s was one of the first to find a person who could chemically clean the brick, and hers was one of the first ones to be brought back to...

**Interviewer:** Oh yeah.

**Respondent:** [0:59:30] Yes.

**Interviewer:** That brick was very great. Yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah. It was in the mid-'70s. Yeah. We were kind of trendsetters in that respect, in many ways. But before that, she was one of the first

to paint it a different colour than red. Hers was grey or silver.  
[Laughter]

**Interviewer:** So she removed the old paint and put grey paint on?

**Respondent:** Well the old paint you couldn't remove because it – red paint is one of the hardest colours and it seeped into the brick, so that's why...

**Interviewer:** So it destroyed the brick.

**Respondent:** Yeah. And in fact, Dr. Bingham destroyed the brick on this house because he sandblasted it. That was a trend in those days. He took [1:00:00] all the outer glaze off and we have to do something about it now. Seal it now or something. He's destroyed the brick. My mother was a – she found an Englishman who, in England, that's all-brick homes, so he was able to chemically do it, but now they use a pressure system. But in those days, it was a costly...

**Interviewer:** She was a clever woman, your mother.

**Respondent:** Yeah. My mom was actually very clever. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** No education because of the war, just like many Europeans. She only had up to grade six. My dad I think had grade six also.

**Interviewer:** So they – your parents can both read.

**Respondent:** Yes. Oh read and write. Yeah, yeah. My mom is [1:00:30] very eloquent. I found some notes. She keeps journals when she went on vacation. I was surprised, with no education, how well she wrote. You know?

**Interviewer:** So she wasn't educated, but she was intelligent.

**Respondent:** Yeah. But you know what? Most of the people in this neighbourhood were that, you know? They were extremely intelligent, it's just no education. And because they had no education, they couldn't do better in society.

**Interviewer:** They didn't have the opportunity.

**Respondent:** That's right. Yeah. They couldn't go to university. Yeah. Yeah. Like I said, Lastman and Sniderman, and Ed Mirvish all grew up in this neighbourhood. Right? **[1:01:00]** And they were very – they were entrepreneurs, and there was that entrepreneurial spirit.

**Interviewer:** Well I guess they didn't want to live the way their parents had lived.

**Respondent:** Exactly. Exactly. And they did very well, and the kids did even better.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** But they all went to Harbord Collegiate. That I do remember, and I didn't go. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** What did that feel like at that time for you?

**Respondent:** Well my friends all went to Central Tech, except for a few who did go to Harbord Collegiate, but I thought it was fine. It's where I wanted to go. My parents did ask me if I wanted to **[1:01:30]** go to St. Mike's, because we went to a Catholic school, so St. Peter's was up to grade six, and then we had to go to a middle school, which was St. Lucy's, which was Clinton and College. We used to walk, and I do remember how rough that was because there was – at that side of Bathurst was a bully gang, and this kid used to beat us up and all that. I do remember that. Yeah. Oh, and there was another thing that we used to do. You know where the theatre is at Sussex and Bloor, the church that's a theatre? They did the Fringe Festival there? It's the big white church?

**Interviewer:** Yes. Yes.

**Respondent:** Well in the basement of that **[1:02:00]** was the Kiwanis Club, and it was a club that was free for all the kids, and it got the kids off the street. And they'd go down there, and it was a rough environment, but we all went there, and they had a gym. They used to have a gym down there; I don't know what's down there. A craft room,

which I loved. I used to be in the craft room all the time because that's what I liked. And there was another room in there, and I think there was ping-pong in that. And there would be hundreds of kids down there after school. So this was another way there was babysitting. So from [1:02:30] three o'clock or two-thirty or so until about five o'clock, all the kids went to that church and it was free of charge to use it. It was called the Kiwanis Club. Yeah. I think they're still around, the Kiwanis, but it was a rough environment. I do remember they had a monkey-bar thing in the gym, in the corner of the gym. It was a huge gym down there, and one of my friends, Portuguese guy who lived on Ulster, Joe, went up in the monkey-bars, and there was one kid up there – we all knew of him as the neighbourhood bully, and I said, "Don't go up there."

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent:** And he wouldn't listen to me, so he went up there [1:03:00] and he came back down with a broken tooth.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** And I said to him, "Joe, I told you not to go up there," because you knew. You know, you knew which kids were the kids you didn't go near.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** But that was a way of getting the kids off the street.

**Interviewer:** Fabulous.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** And the Kiwanis Club supported all of that.

**Respondent:** Yeah. It did support it.

**Interviewer:** Excellent. Excellent.

**Respondent:** I do remember reading week, you know? They would have a week activity where it went from nine o'clock until about five, so the kids weren't in the street. We were at the Kiwanis for that whole week and they had prizes, and lunch, and they had all that kind of stuff.

**Interviewer:** That's fantastic.

**Respondent:** [1:03:30] Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Because they knew this was a working-class neighbourhood.

**Respondent:** That's right.

**Interviewer:** And it would give these kids some structure.

**Respondent:** That's right. Yeah. And they did, yeah, because they would have counsellors there that taught you different games, basketball, and all this kind of stuff.

**Interviewer:** Whoa.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah. So I do remember spending a lot of my time at the Kiwanis there. So.

**Interviewer:** What about the JCC at Bloor and Spadina?

**Respondent:** That I don't remember much about that.

**Interviewer:** So you didn't use that.

**Respondent:** No. I didn't – never did use that. At St. Peter's church in the basement was also the Cubs, and my mom got us involved in the Cubs, so that – we didn't like that because [1:04:00] that was a money-maker for them. They would send you in the neighbourhood trying to sell apples, and in those days they were a quarter each, and if you didn't sell enough apples...

**Interviewer:** Expensive.



- Respondent:** Yeah. I know. And you had to polish them and go door to door, knocking on – and selling apples. So the – I remember the camp leader, or the Cub leader, complained to my mom that we weren't selling enough apples, and my mom said, "Enough of that," and she pulled us out of there, and then we went to Kiwanis full-time. Now the JCC...
- Interviewer:** It wasn't part of your life.
- Respondent:** I don't remember that part of my life. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Means you didn't use it.
- Respondent:** Yeah. [1:04:30] Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. I think we've covered pretty much everything. In terms of safety and security, you said you guys as kids – everybody was poor, everybody took what wasn't chained down.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** How do you feel about the safety of our neighbourhood now?
- Respondent:** I think it's as safe as it ever was. I think it might be safer. You know, there's this idea that, you know, now you have to watch your [1:05:00] children. See, the whole idea of building the family room in the kitchen is to watch your children, because if they don't, they might explode. There's this sense that you have to protect your kids from everything now, where I don't think there's any more strange people now than there ever was. I do remember there was the Moran murder. I was – they found the girl in the freezer. I don't know if you remember that case. Well, I would have been a child at that time, so things did happen in those days also. I don't hear about that stuff happening now either, so I don't think it's any more dangerous than it was then.
- Interviewer:** I agree [1:05:30] with you.
- Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. I think...

**Respondent:** But there's this protection...

**Interviewer:** ...the media...

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...we all – anything bad that happens, we learn about it.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** I walk day and night here, my wife walks day and night, and we never feel unsafe. Ever. I don't feel unsafe in any part of Toronto unless I'm going into Regent Park or something. And even there, now they've gentrified that. I don't even feel unsafe there.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Respondent:** We're not New York City, we're not Buffalo, you know? Oh, this is an interesting thing, and I should tell you this...

**Interviewer:** Please.

**Respondent:** ...but when my parents first came [1:06:00] to the country, there was nothing to do in Toronto at night. Everything closed down by ten o'clock. Saturday and Sunday – especially Sunday there was really nothing to do, so they would hop in cars and go to Buffalo. Buffalo is where you went to have fun.

**Interviewer:** Oh okay.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Because Buffalo you could stay out at night, and drink, and go to restaurants. Toronto was very conservative. I do remember going with my dad to the liquor store and – I'm trying to think where it was. It was on Bloor Street, I believe, someplace. Unless it was on College. I was a young child. And when he ordered, he ordered liquor through a catalogue like this, [1:06:30] and my dad would

write down the name of the alcohol he wanted. You'd put it through a little window, and the bottle would come out in a paper bag like you were doing something illegal. [Laughter] And it was the LCBO. It was the way it was done. And these – the ideas of these modern stores and you can pick and – it wasn't. It was very conservative, and if you bought alcohol, it was like you were doing something illegal. I do remember that. My dad would go and he'd buy the Five-Star because it was a little bit cheaper than the Crown Royal or whatever, but he'd write it on a note...

**Interviewer:** It looks very clandestine.

**Respondent:** Yes, yes.

**Interviewer:** Well I grew up in [1:07:00] Montreal. I wasn't in Toronto until I moved here as an adult, and I remember we used to say about Toronto they pull in the sidewalks...

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** ...at ten o'clock at night.

**Respondent:** Yes. And it was like that.

**Interviewer:** And this was – but I had never been here, so it's just a Montreal expression.

**Respondent:** Yes. So they would go to Buffalo. Buffalo was...

**Interviewer:** For fun.

**Respondent:** It was the big – because Toronto was – Montreal was a big city in those days. Toronto was, you know.

**Interviewer:** So there was a little bit of action on College near Bathurst and...

**Respondent:** Yeah. Or you would go to [1:07:30] Yonge and Dundas and there was the Brown Derby. I have a pamphlet from it somewhere in there. There were some very nice blues nightclubs where you went to dinner-show kind of places.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** There was the Palace Pier in those days. It's long gone. It burned down. There was the other one there, what's the – they renovated it. It's just south there. And there was another place you would go dancing. It actually has a sprung floor, and it's right on the water. I forget the name of the place now. It's right in front of the St. Joseph's Hospital.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Anyways, you would go [1:08:00] to these places for fun too, but College and Spadina was – but Yonge and Dundas was the other place you would go for these places, for entertainment, you know? Nightclubs and that. There was very little of that, but it's not like today, a restaurant in every corner. Like...

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Respondent:** ...you also went to hotels if you wanted a nice meal. The Royal York, the King Eddie, the Park Plaza because that's where the fine dining was. It wasn't at your neighbourhood restaurant. There weren't any, you know? Even Porretta wasn't there in those days.

**Interviewer:** Well [1:08:30] and we're so close to Harbord here.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And you grew up on Harbord.

**Respondent:** Harbord was bad for business in those days.

**Interviewer:** So I want you to just for a minute or two talk about Harbord Street as it was and what – has it...

**Respondent:** It was basically residential in those days, with storefronts in the corner. Like – and they were like fishmongers.

**Interviewer:** The corner stores.

**Respondent:** The corner stores, variety stores, fishmongers. Yeah. This was a fishmonger here. The garage was always there. Where the sushi restaurant is at Robert, that was Jack's Variety. [1:09:00] He was in the army. He was the meanest man in the world.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** I was talking to somebody else at the lane party here when we had the unveiling and he told me, "Oh yeah, Jack. If you got a good day, he was great. If you didn't, he yelled at you." But he was – that kind of thing. There weren't any restaurants, that's for sure. The bakery was always there though. We used to go there because – yeah.

**Interviewer:** So bakery, fish...

**Respondent:** Yeah. Budapest Bakery, more bread, rye bread. What else would have been? Green grocers, would have been vegetables and all that.

**Interviewer:** Corner stores.

**Respondent:** But if you really wanted good vegetables, you went [1:09:30] to Kensington, you know, because that's where they had a larger supply.

**Interviewer:** And how would you describe Harbord Street now?

**Respondent:** Oh, it's great. I think it's a great street. A lot busier. When I got my first car, I used to park it in front of the house day and night. You could. Then they put in the meters, and now you can't even find a parking spot; there was no bicycle lanes. There was a streetcar down the centre. Yes. I do remember that. Shaking up the whole house when they drove by.

**Interviewer:** Oh my. So that wasn't very – so that means there were tracks there too.

**Respondent:** There were tracks. Yeah. And in fact, I think the tracks might be still under because I remember as a kid sitting [1:10:00] on the

verandah and they just paved over it. They never removed them. I think they're still under the pavement there, so I do remember the streetcar. And then the bus came in '70 or something like that. Harbord Street was residential for the most part. I do remember people sitting and talking, and people lived in the houses. Now for the most part on this strip anyways, it's retail or restaurants. Yeah. People didn't go to restaurants either. You didn't have the money. You entertained at home, right? [1:10:30] This is the way you did it. My wife's family are Polish, working class, exact same thing. In fact, her mother worked at the Park Plaza too as a cleaning lady.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** Yeah. So she thinks – my dad passed away so I can't ask him, but she thinks she might know Joe the Bartender, who's still there. He's been there fifty years. Yeah. He's an interesting man.

**Interviewer:** But each of you had a parent working there.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Isn't that amazing?

**Respondent:** Yeah. She was the cleaning lady at the Park Plaza too. The Hyatt, of course.

**Interviewer:** So these parents worked hard, and they – yeah. [1:11:00] They did offer their children a better life.

**Respondent:** Yes, they did.

**Interviewer:** Which would have given them satisfaction.

**Respondent:** Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** But the other thing you did when you came as an immigrant in those – even today, I guess, your first purchase was a house. You had – that's why you came here. Right? So it doesn't matter how

junky the house was. You bought a house and you moved up, right? So my parents bought a house within three years. That's what you did. And then you put in tenants to help pay it, and that's how you did it.

**Interviewer:** It was a [1:11:30] very common story.

**Respondent:** Yes. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** That's what they – uh-huh.

**Respondent:** If you were – some people with family, you would fill the house full of family. And then once they paid that one off, they'd buy another one, and the family would spread. So there were many Portuguese and Italians in this area that lived next door to each other or near each other for that reason. They went by and helped each other, and they would pay it that way. The Costa family, which lived on Brunswick, they owned three or – they passed away now because I used to rent a garage from one, but they own four or five houses that way.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. I have – the two families on my street [1:12:00] on Borden, Portuguese, and one owns two homes and one owns three homes.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And they bought them for twelve, fifteen, twenty, and now they're worth seven hundred thousand.

**Respondent:** Yeah. But you know, but that's not why they bought them. It's just that – that's why you came to this country. You bought a house.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. You bought a house and created some security.

**Respondent:** That's right. That's right. Because a house is security, right? Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And nobody's going to kick you out of the house that you own, as long as you pay up and you filled your house with lots of bodies.

- Respondent:** Yes. [Laughs] That's right. Yeah. And you know, and renovations, no one did renovations [1:12:30] like this in those days.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And you fixed a crack in the wall. And my dad was the first – I remember him taking off the wall between the dining room and the living room. My mother was yelling at him, and my dad did it, and now everybody does it, so he was kind of a trendsetter. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** He sounds like a man who enjoyed some adventure. I mean...
- Respondent:** Well he did.
- Interviewer:** ...San Francisco. "I want to stay here."
- Respondent:** Yeah. Because there weren't any parks, I remember dad putting us on the bus or the – because the subway, I don't even remember as a kid taking the subway, and we'd go to [1:13:00] Riverdale Zoo. There was a little zoo. It's an animal petting farm.
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent:** Or we'd go to High Park in the petting zoo over there. Or we'd go to Sunnyside, or Centre Island was a big one for us because there wasn't any green space. And you did not go to – no one had cottages. Later on they started buying cottages, these people, but no one owned cottages. And very few had cars that I do remember, so you went to these kind of day trips. And in fact, that hasn't changed. The new immigrants – if you go down to Centre Island, it's full of immigrants.
- Interviewer:** I know.
- Respondent:** It's the same thing.
- Interviewer:** I know that. [1:13:30] When my husband now occasionally walk on the boardwalk...
- Respondent:** Yes.



- Interviewer:** ...a lot of the people I know are at their cottages.
- Respondent:** Yes. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** And it's the immigrants.
- Respondent:** It's the immigrants, because they don't have cottages.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And in fact, a lot of the young people, people like us, are abandoning their cottages because traffic is getting so bad to get up there now. Who needs that hassle? And once you're up there it's beautiful, but coming up the 400? That's a...
- Interviewer:** Unless they just take a four-day weekend every week. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** That's the other thing. Or you stay until Monday and then you come in Monday. But if you talk to the people coming back [1:14:00] into this neighbourhood, they're all coming. A lot of them are Jewish people whose grandparents lived on this street or lived on that. If you talked to them, you'll get these stories. They're all coming back, and it's walk ability. It's very important.
- Interviewer:** It's divine. I love that about it.
- Respondent:** Yeah. But that's what it was before. It was always walk ability because no one had cars, so you worked in the neighbourhood, you shopped in the neighbourhood. We're going back to that.
- Interviewer:** Well I see this downtown living, but now all the concrete that you would have at Bay and Dundas.
- Respondent:** Yes. Exactly. It's a neighbourhood.
- Interviewer:** It's a neighbourhood, and I – we open our windows at night, [1:14:30] and it's quiet. And we enjoy city living, and as you say, walking, biking.

- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. And nothing has changed, except people have – do have more money. That's for sure. Yeah, yeah. You know?
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So this neighbourhood has changed. It has...
- Respondent:** Oh yes.
- Interviewer:** ...been gentrified.
- Respondent:** It started in the mid-'70s when it started becoming gentrified. That's when we saw money starting to come in, and education too. They were all – the people who were coming back were university – now they're doctors, and lawyers, and engineers. It's even more high-end than that. It was [1:15:00] the professors, and the U of T people were buying these up. Or people turning into student housing. If you notice, there's less and less of that, thank god. [Laughs] It was just partying and, you know...
- Interviewer:** Yeah. And pouring out onto the street.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** At one-thirty in the morning.
- Respondent:** Yes. That's right. But before that, it was rooming immigrants and the students. That came in the '70s, but it used to be all immigrants here. It was different. You know, the university people weren't living here either. I don't remember students in those days.
- Interviewer:** Sure. But there were – what you described were the [1:15:30] waves of...
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** ...because as people did better than – thanks a lot.
- Respondent:** They got out.
- Interviewer:** I'm going north.

**Respondent:** It was not a destination that you wanted to stay. It was a destination where you started out. Now it's a destination where you come back. Things have really changed, right?

**Interviewer:** Well your home is a perfect example.

**Respondent:** Well, I remember going to Yorkville as a kid and it was a dump. [Laughs] Look at it now. Some of the most valuable property.

**Interviewer:** Oh yes. Oh yeah.

**Respondent:** We spent a lot of time in Christie Pits too. Yeah, we would go – because that was [1:16:00] one of the bigger parks in the neighbourhood. It's the closest big park, except for U of T, which is not really a park. So we went to Christie Pits a lot. And tobogganing on the hill.

**Interviewer:** So that was a nice natural place to get your toboggan...

**Respondent:** Yeah. And it's a short walk. It wasn't far.

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

**Respondent:** So Christie Pits was a – you didn't want to go to Bickford Park, but...

**Interviewer:** That was different.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Bickford Park – no, no. I mean the school there. The park even wasn't that good on the south. We never went there, but that school was – if you went to Central Tech, that was the school for [1:16:30] dummies. That was the two-year program there. Yeah. You left with just certificate, so if you ended up at Bickford as kids, we knew you didn't want to go there.

**Interviewer:** Oh, so this was...

**Respondent:** You did well enough, you did well enough that you at least went to Central Tech.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** If you did very well, then you'd go to Harbord Collegiate, or Jarvis, yeah. But I was interested in technology, so that was the perfect destination for me.

**Interviewer:** So each school had its own reputation.

**Respondent:** Yes, that's right.

**Interviewer:** And status.

**Respondent:** Yes. Yeah. And I do remember getting a car that, as a boy in those days – see, things have changed now? But [1:17:00] when you were sixteen you got a part-time job, and the first thing you did was you buy a car because car was freedom. And then we would travel to...

**Interviewer:** And status too.

**Respondent:** And status. That's right. Yeah. And it's not like today, mom and dad would buy you a brand new car. Any piece of junk. I had a five-hundred-dollar car, you know?

**Interviewer:** So you did buy yourself a car.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** At sixteen years old?

**Respondent:** I was sixteen. I had a – I always worked. My first job was – I was a canvasser for the Globe and Mail in the neighbourhood here, but my mom didn't want me doing that anymore because [1:17:30] the canvassing wasn't bad, but it was door-to-door and she was a little bit worried about that, although nothing ever happened. I started delivering the paper. The trouble with the Globe and Mail, it's got to be on the doorstep by nine o'clock or you got complaints. The worst second part was you had to collect the money. The kids collected the money. If they didn't pay, that came out of your pocket.

**Interviewer:** Oh wow.

**Respondent:** So my mom said, "You need a job. You don't want a job that costs me money," because she would pay them.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** So she made me quit that. I – what was the other job? I did a lot of shovelling snow, I worked at a little grocery [1:18:00] store for a little while, and then when I was old enough I got a job at McDonald's and I worked there for nine years.

**Interviewer:** You did have a lot of jobs.

**Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. I also – I remember one time I found a box of records, and they weren't real records; they were – they had one song in them and they would be test records basically. Had only one thing. So I thought I'd go door-to-door and sell these, and I actually sold quite a few of them. [Laughter] I do remember a man on Albany and he said, "Let me see if this even plays." [1:18:30] Because it was a flexible record, right? And he put it on his record player to play it, and he actually gave me fifty cents for it.

**Interviewer:** Whoa.

**Respondent:** [Laughs] Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So you were a young entrepreneur.

**Respondent:** A little bit. A little bit.

**Interviewer:** And why not?

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Nobody was going to give it to you. You had to earn it.

**Respondent:** Nobody was going to give it to you. You had to earn the money. That's right. I did a lot of shovelling snow. I do remember that from the neighbours.

- Interviewer:** Yeah. Well and listen, you did a lot of different jobs...
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...at those young ages.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And I wanted a car too later in life.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And I do remember it – when I retired – retired. [Laughter] When I graduated from Ryerson, I [1:19:00] had sixteen thousand dollars in the bank. But the reason for that was I was able to live at home, and many people, kids, grew up in the neighbourhood didn't live at home while they went to university.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** So you had to go to U of T, Ryerson, or maybe York. You'd have to travel. But you didn't – we weren't lucky enough to – if you were going to McGill and you know, you just didn't. You couldn't. The parents couldn't afford that.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** You know? So you stayed at home and they'd help you along, and...
- Interviewer:** They didn't charge you.
- Respondent:** No. They didn't charge. No, no, no. They're happy enough you're going to university.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And that was typical for [1:19:30] here too. A lot of parents did that for their kids, although I don't remember too many Portuguese and Italians going to university because they went to work, those.

- Interviewer:** And that's what the parents...
- Respondent:** That's what the parents...
- Interviewer:** ...those were the parents' values.
- Respondent:** Because that was a – yeah. That was important to them. If dad owned a construction company, that was their value. That's right. And they owned a construction – and then you were going to take over this business, right?
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So if they wanted to go to university, probably – they really had a battle on their hands.
- Respondent:** Yes. They – would have been because the parents would have pulled them out of school. At fourteen, I remember the school board – [1:20:00] you know, teacher's saying, "Where's so and so?" And you know, they knew. He was pulled out of school to go work with dad.
- Interviewer:** And it was hard to fight the parents.
- Respondent:** Yes. Where the Jewish didn't do that. The Jewish – you went to university, and you're going to be a doctor or a lawyer, and that's what they all became.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Like I told you, the junkman, his kids – one was a lawyer, and I don't know – I think the other one was a doctor. Yeah. And he worked the laneways. We used to get bread delivered with a horse. I remember a horse on Harbord Street with a bent back. He was a very...
- Interviewer:** [1:20:30] [Laughs] Old horse.

- Respondent:** And a very, very old horse. This would have been in the late '60s, or he must have been the last guy in the neighbourhood delivering with...
- Interviewer:** And that was bread that he...
- Respondent:** Exactly. I'm sorry. Milk, milk.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** But we used to get bread delivered too. In fact, the services were better in those days. We used to get...
- Interviewer:** So bread was one person, and milk was another...
- Respondent:** Yeah. And milk was another person. That's right.
- Interviewer:** Did he have a small refrigerator on...
- Respondent:** He must have had it on ice or something. I don't...
- Interviewer:** Something for sure.
- Respondent:** Yeah. They were in bottles too.
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent:** And you would leave the bottles out on the street, and he would take them. And he had a wire basket, and we used to [1:21:00] feed carrots to his horse.
- Interviewer:** [Laughs] Nice memories.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** Did the horse have a name?
- Respondent:** I can't remember. He had a bent back, that's for sure.
- Interviewer:** But you remember that.



**Respondent:** Yes. Yes. And I remember there was a black woman. She must have been in the neighbourhood because she was way before my mom. She lived on Borden right near the Boulevard Café. And she had a dog who you would see all over the city. As a kid – you have funny memories as a kid. And we used to call the dog Stinky Dog because he had a smell. But you'd find this dog everywhere, right?

**Interviewer:** And always found his way home back to...

**Respondent:** Always found his way home. **[1:21:30]** And there were lots of stray dogs and cats in the neighbourhood. It's not like today, you have to keep them – and they were everywhere. They weren't mean or anything. They came – [laughs] and you knew whose dog it was.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** You know? As kids you knew, and that was Stinky Dog, belonged to that lady over there.

**Interviewer:** But it was a neighbourhood.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** But it still is a neighbourhood.

**Respondent:** Still is. Yeah. After the Jewish had moved out, we did notice that it was multicultural. There was a Japanese family, there were blacks, there were Polish. It was a bit of everything. Then it started becoming mostly **[1:22:00]** Portuguese and Italian. Then that big wave came in, and it kind of – the other people left. I do remember a lot of Portuguese and Italian.

**Interviewer:** Approximately?

**Respondent:** They came around the late-'60s, especially the Portuguese. They started coming here in the late '60s and early '70s. That's when they came in. And a lot of them are left, they're old now if you notice.

- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent:** They're the ones who destroyed the homes by putting that awful brick, you know? They took down the old brick and put that – it's all Portuguese that did that.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. [Laughter] You can see the different gardens too.
- Respondent:** [1:22:30] Yes.
- Interviewer:** People who have the more manicured...
- Respondent:** Yes. They're usually Europeans.
- Interviewer:** The gardens with symmetry.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** The Italians didn't stay too long, and my mother used to say the Italians followed the Jews. They went up Bathurst Street. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Well they can have it. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. Well, it was not a neighbourhood you wanted to stay.
- Interviewer:** Because it signified...
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...that you were poor.
- Respondent:** Yes, that's right. You didn't acquire enough to move.
- Interviewer:** Oh, and as you said, that – you know, there was some disagreement amongst your – I mean your father wanted...
- Respondent:** [1:23:00] Yeah.

- Interviewer:** ...the bigger, more expansive house too.
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. He always dreamed of High Park, you know?
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** Palmerston was another, if you could. But then Palmerston became all really big houses too. Yeah. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Well before I say goodbye, just wonder when you knew that we were going to have this conversation, was there anything that you knew you wanted to talk about that I have not touched upon?
- Respondent:** I was thinking about that, and you know, it's going to be funny, when you leave, some significant thing – it always happens that way, [1:23:30] right?
- Interviewer:** Well you know, if there's something that you feel we really missed...
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...I could come back and add it.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** But I think that for now...
- Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah, but you know, it probably was similar stories. If you had talked to the Boys of Major, it would have been nothing really that much different. Things have changed now because kids have money. You don't see kids in the street anymore because they're all on the computers now. Or the parents organize everything for them. Yeah. You know, they'll take them to hockey, baseball, where we did all that ourselves. We would...
- Interviewer:** Just walk out the front door.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And your [1:24:00] little group who lived close to you would play baseball in the summer against another group of kids down the

street. Then we'd play street hockey. Very little ice hockey because our parents didn't have the money for that. You know? You need equipment for that.

**Interviewer:** Have to buy – yeah.

**Respondent:** So we were – we used to go down to Alexander Park. Now that was a rough neighbourhood, and I do remember coming home in my skates because someone stole my shoes.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Then later on, they built that arena at U of T and we started going there, and it was much safer, so my mom was very [1:24:30] happy when they built that one.

**Interviewer:** So it was very clear which areas were safe and which were...

**Respondent:** Yeah. This was always a safe neighbourhood.

**Interviewer:** Except for this petty crime that...

**Respondent:** Yeah. Well see, that's what kids did, you know?

**Interviewer:** You're right.

**Respondent:** We didn't steal cars or anything. And if you left a bicycle there, it was going to disappear, right? [Laughter] When they opened up the pool at Central Tech, then we started going there in the summer, swimming there too. It was a good way to cool off, and that's where we learned to swim, and I got my...

**Interviewer:** Instructor's?

**Respondent:** Yeah. [1:25:00] I had the instructors. I never did do that, but I did have the instructor's certificate, I guess it was. Yeah. And all our friends started doing that kind of stuff too, but that's more of when it started getting more gentrified too. The old – before that, there was none of that for us. Ulster Park wasn't – Margaret – wasn't even there. They tore down six or eight houses to build that.

- Interviewer:** So that they tore down some houses, and also across from the Narayever synagogue on Brunswick north of Harbord.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** They also tore something down [1:25:30] there. There's a nice little park there.
- Respondent:** Yes. No, that – that little tiny park between the houses?
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent:** That was Louso's Auto Body. And the neighbourhood, especially when it started getting gentrified, wanted him out of there because he was repairing cars between there. And one day, it had burned down, so we're not sure exactly what happened, but...
- Interviewer:** It burned down.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And that's why that little park – the city – then they petitioned the city, and I guess they acquired the property, and that's when that went in. But as kids, that wasn't even there. So there [1:26:00] was very little green space for us.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. So we have that there.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** But I didn't know that that had burned down.
- Respondent:** Yeah. That was Louso's Garage. Auto Body.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** [Laughs] And I think it was a kind of – I don't know. Cars would go in, and it was some funny stuff going on there. [Laughter] But the neighbourhood, yeah, didn't want them there either. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So okay. Anyway it's gone. One way or another it burned down. Yeah.

**Respondent:** So there was no – there was no green space for us. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So those are now...

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Now there is a bit of green...

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** [1:26:30] ...where it wasn't before.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Well even the Central Tech track. That wasn't there. Yeah. That came in in the late '60s, early '70s. That was a whole neighbourhood.

**Interviewer:** So that too was homes.

**Respondent:** That was homes and businesses there. Yeah. My mother would tell – if she was a live, she would tell you exactly what was in there. So that wasn't even there.

**Interviewer:** So a lot of buildings came down in order to create some space.

**Respondent:** Some space. Yeah. And that's in the – when these – when it started becoming gentrified, then they started realizing to create a neighbourhood, you actually have to have green space, you know?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Even if you have to burn something [1:27:00] down to make it.

**Respondent:** Exactly. Well European people also hated trees, so they would cut down trees because to them, a tree is dirty. Unless it produces fruit, they don't want it. So they started cutting down all their trees, and then they had to come and protect the trees because if you notice – in front of a Portuguese person's house, or Italian, you won't find a tree. [Laughter] They hate trees. I still remember we were – behind

us was an Italian family and he had this gorgeous – I don't know what kind of tree it was. It must have went up two hundred feet, and he cut it down. And my mother actually had a big fight with him. [1:27:30] And she said, "You're killing this beautiful tree." He didn't care. They don't like trees.

**Interviewer:** Your mother was a modern person.

**Respondent:** Sort of. Yeah. Sort of. Not completely.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Respondent:** Yeah. I do remember going with her to meetings at Central Tech when they were putting in bicycle lanes, and it was Jane Jacobs speaking, so yeah, we did go to some of this stuff. I actually ran politically myself too. I ran for School Trustee. I think it was 1990, I believe it was. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So that's just shortly before you left here.

**Respondent:** Yes. That's right. I almost won too. I [1:28:00] ran as an independent, and this area was completely – still is completely NDP at that time.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent:** And you are not supposed to run with any party affiliation, but they do. And I had a nine-hundred-dollar budget; they had eighteen thousand, I believe.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Respondent:** And I only lost by four hundred votes.

**Interviewer:** Good for you.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Good for you.

- Respondent:** And the reason I ran politically, because a friend of mine was a counsellor up in North York, and I used to help them out, and I said, "I could do that." You know? And I was always quite political, and I enjoy history and all this, so...
- Interviewer:** I know you enjoy [1:28:30] history. It's a pleasure to listen.
- Respondent:** So I ran, right? I said, "I could do it." I didn't win, but it was a great experience.
- Interviewer:** Very close.
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. And you knock on all the doors, and you met a lot of people, and you got all different opinions, and...
- Interviewer:** Would you consider that again?
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** No.
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** No.
- Respondent:** No, I'm quite happy in what I do. And no, I don't think so. No.
- Interviewer:** Well John Scalpello, I want to say thank you. You told me such interesting stories. It's really been a pleasure to speak to you...
- Respondent:** Well it's more of a modern – if you talk to older people, you'll get a – you know, a [1:29:00] different perspective. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. I am speaking to some older people.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** I'm speaking to whoever I will...



**Respondent:** Yeah. Because my mother would have told you stories that are totally – I'm telling you stuff that happened from my memory, which would have been mid-'60s and up. She would have told you – and you know, like the bakery. I can imagine the stories they could tell you there. They would – they're there since 1929, a few generations.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. [Laughter] I interviewed Rafi, but of course, I can't interview his parents. It's too late for that.

**Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Well John, thank you so much.

**Respondent:** Oh, thank you. Thank you.

**Interviewer:** What a [1:29:30] pleasure. [Laughter]

[1:29:31]

[End of recording]