

126 Harriet Friedmann

- Interviewer:** I am in the home of Harriet Friedmann, 176 Robert Street, and first thing I want to say is, Harriet, thank you very much for giving me your time.
- Respondent:** My pleasure.
- Interviewer:** My first question is would you tell me when you moved to Robert Street, south of Harbord, and what stage of your life that has been because that'll determine the kinds of questions I'll ask.
- Respondent:** Right. **[0:30:00]** Well, I was in a relationship and renting, and I was just finishing my – no. I had finished my PhD. So I'd been renting – we had been renting an apartment on Madison Avenue and I was commuting to my first job, which was in London, University of Western Ontario. And I finished my thesis **[0:01:00]** while I was doing that, which was kind of crazy, but I did do it. And then I resigned, [laughs] and I got a job at U of T. And while all that was going on, I also got a postdoc to go to England, which was great, and my partner at the time got a sabbatical, so we went off. So we bought this house and even before – at that phase, you know? So it was just the beginning of my career really at U of T. And **[0:01:30]** which has been very convenient, I must say. [Laughs] If nothing else. And so the – we lived here for just a few months while we were doing some early renovations. Just the bathroom and bedroom. It had been a rooming house.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** Upstairs. Now, there was a Greek family that lived on the main floor. I don't even know how many of them they were, but they lived on the main floor **[0:02:00]** and they rented out rooms upstairs, so there was a kitchen on the second floor, and three bedrooms, and a tiny bathroom. And on the third floor, also using that bathroom as family one, were two more rooms and tiny, tiny, and a kitchen. So there were three kitchens.
- Interviewer:** And one bathroom?

- Respondent:** And one – no. Well there was...
- Interviewer:** Oh. There was a bathroom on...
- Respondent:** No. Not on this floor, but there was a bathroom in the basement.
- Interviewer:** So the Greek family [0:02:30] could use the bathroom in the basement.
- Respondent:** In the basement. And, I suppose, and also in the basement were lots and lots of electrical outlets and shelves. It was a garment workshop.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So they had an industry going on. Well, a business going on here.
- Respondent:** I think the women, at least the main – the wife, you know, mother, wife, didn't speak English. And so she just – I know from Laura Johnson's work on [0:03:00] outsourcing in Toronto, home work, that this was a fairly common pattern, that immigrant women would work at home and not learn English, and it probably suited patriarchal families as well as exploited the businesses to do that.
- Interviewer:** So you're saying that there were probably a number of women who came here to work with all those electrical [0:03:30] outlets.
- Respondent:** Well, there were several people. I imagine there were several people working, but I don't know if – they might have been part.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** Yeah. I don't know what relationship.
- Interviewer:** Well we usually kind of talk about a cottage industry.
- Respondent:** Yeah.

- Interviewer:** There was certainly work happening at 176 Robert Street.
- Respondent:** Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah. And they were putting together an income by renting out rooms and squeezing themselves into the first floor, so we reduced the density hugely. [0:04:00] [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** And that was in 1977?
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** So it was you and your partner. Your daughter, was she still here at the time?
- Respondent:** Oh, my daughter hadn't been born yet.
- Interviewer:** Oh, she hadn't been born yet.
- Respondent:** She hadn't been conceived. She hadn't even been thought about. [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** Okay. So first of all...
- Respondent:** She was born in 1985. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Okay. So at that time there were two of you...
- Respondent:** Two of us, and he...
- Interviewer:** ...rather than twelve of you. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Yeah. He was divorced though, so his three children would come and stay.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** You know, like days at a time.

Interviewer: [0:04:30] Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Respondent: A regular thing. A schedule.

Interviewer: Oh. So that's interesting. There was – it was clear to you that work had been going on downstairs with all those outlets.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. When you moved in here, that was...

Respondent: They're Greek by the way. I don't know if I said.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. So you moved in here. Since you – it had been a boarding house, it had been crowded with people, let's just move into the area [0:05:00] of the changes you made and how you made them through the years.

Respondent: Oh my. I just answered the phone of Our Lady of Perpetual Renovations. [Laughter] It's like I've put in walls I've taken out, and taken out walls I've put in, and stuff like that. Okay. The first thing we did was we made a bedroom and an enlarged bathroom on the second floor. And when Jack's sons would come to stay, they stayed on the third floor. And they liked it up there. There was that kitchen. We didn't [0:05:30] take that out for a while. Then, when he and I separated, I needed to buy him out, his share of the house, and I didn't really have the money to do that. So I borrowed it actually from friends. Second mortgage. And I divided the house in two at that point, and I rented – I put a wall in, where the stairs are, so they were [0:06:00] self-contained.

Interviewer: Now what did you use? What space did you use?

Respondent: I used the second and third floor.

Interviewer: Okay.

- Respondent:** So you would enter the front door, these walls had been taken out since, right? You would enter – there was a door here to the living room, and a door to the dining room.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** And I closed off the hallway there. So you would enter this first floor like this and use all of it and the basement. That's where the bathroom was.
- Interviewer:** So they used the first floor and the basement.
- Respondent:** [0:06:30] Yes.
- Interviewer:** And you had the second and the third floor.
- Respondent:** And the third.
- Interviewer:** So you each had good space.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Absolutely. So there were three bedrooms on the second floor, and then the living – we put – we made a nice kitchen. We just renovated the kitchen that was already there on the third floor, and that became the open plan living room, dining room, kitchen area on the third floor with the little deck outside. Yeah. It was quite nice actually. And so I rented that out, and then [0:07:00] oh, there were a whole lot of – it was a feminist theatre company that was headed down here, and...
- Interviewer:** Wait a minute. Wait a minute. They had...
- Respondent:** No. Not the company; just the people. Just the directors.
- Interviewer:** Oh. Those were some of your tenants.

- Respondent:** Tenants. Yeah. Yeah. And it was – yeah. They were kind of middle-class. They were gentrifying people too. I mean they were not, like, groups who lived here before.
- Interviewer:** [0:07:30] Right. Yeah. And you weren't just renting rooms for people.
- Respondent:** No, no, no, no, no.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** It was an apartment.
- Interviewer:** Right.
- Respondent:** It was an apartment, and at one point somebody had a baby while they were here, so they moved out eventually, but yeah. Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Anything in particular in terms of heating? Did you modify that? Or was that already the way it is now?
- Respondent:** No. It was the way it is now. Yeah. I mean I put in new furnaces.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** I don't know how many. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And when I [0:08:00] get to the next one, I'll connect it to my solar hot water, which I eventually put in quite recently. So yeah.
- Interviewer:** So this house has had a number of incarnations.
- Respondent:** Oh. Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** Since 1977...
- Respondent:** Oh yeah.

Interviewer: What year was this house built, do you have any idea?

Respondent: Oh yes. They told me because somebody did this survey and they gave me a little booklet, but I don't know where it is. I think they said 1920-ish. **[0:08:30]** Something like that. I would have thought it was older because – I thought so because – not because I did any research. This is all practical experience because the – I've taken out some walls. Like things to do with the centre wall, and there's just wood slats in there, and the code after the great fire of the 1890s, sometime they built – burnt Robarts Library and a lot of the houses around here – **[0:09:00]** meant that that wasn't legal anymore. But they could have done it illegally later, or it survived the fire. And there's that kind of slat between the two chimneys too of the attached house, which got me quite distressed at one point when I found that out because bricks were falling down on my side, so I figured they were falling down on the other side too. But the German couple next door lost their English whenever I wanted to talk **[0:09:30]** about anything [laughs] to do with our two houses. So. So that was...

Interviewer: So you did not have an easy relationship with your neighbours...

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: ...when there was anything important to discuss.

Respondent: No. Even not – even other times, no. I would say not.

Interviewer: Well let's move on to that since we're talking about...

Respondent: Oh okay.

Interviewer: ...neighbours and the neighbourhood.

Respondent: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: Since 1977, can you describe who made up the neighbourhood **[0:10:00]** in '77, and now we're 2013?

Respondent: Oh right. Well this end – this little area right here...

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: ...is surprisingly stable. That...

Interviewer: This area being Harbord and what?

Respondent: No, no. Just the five or six houses that are on either side or across the street. So I forget the numbers because they're so different on the...

Interviewer: Yeah. They're not coordinated north, east and west.

Respondent: No. They're not. So yeah. [0:10:30] I see it now. It's 125, Italian family. Same ones. I've watched the little girl grow up, I've watched the old lady die, you know, and Sylvia Porretta across the street. Lina, her daughter and my daughter, were in utero at the same time. You know? So yeah, I can't remember exactly some of these, but I think all of them were here. Josephine next door [0:11:00] to Sylvia, I think, was also here.

Interviewer: So they're Italian, all these people?

Respondent: No. Josephine is not. And Sylvia actually, Sylvia's not, but Nick, her husband, was. And yes, and of course, Porretta Pizza was the origin of Nick. And Mario still lives up above Porretta Pizza.

Interviewer: I remember Mario because of course I lived on Robert Street, and I knew Mario and his restaurant, and...

Respondent: He's...

Interviewer: I interviewed him.

Respondent: Oh, that's old Mario. This is young Mario.

Interviewer: Young Mario.

Respondent: Oh young.

Interviewer: He's still here.

Respondent: Oh, young Mario. Yeah. [0:11:30] So he's living upstairs.

Interviewer: But generally speaking, what – how – what are the changes that you've seen? How was it around '77 and '80 and now in 2013? Is that something you can discuss?

Respondent: Well I can. I mean I guess I have this idea it's been gentrifying because that's supposedly what's happening, but what I'm saying is my experience just in this little area it is not. And the people next door are [0:12:00] Portuguese, and they've been here, well they were here when I moved in and they're now on their great-grandchildren. Right. Their grandchildren are the age of my daughter because they started earlier. The people next door are the only ones who sold. The German couple, they moved out and they were renting. The son had married a Philippino wife, and I think it was some of her relatives. Anyway, some of her connections who mainly were living there. They were lovely neighbours. And then they sold it, like three years ago, so [0:12:30] now it's become a rooming house, which is a real...

Interviewer: Oh really?

Respondent: Sorry. It's not a rooming house. It's not technically a rooming house, which is part of the problem. It's two apartments that are rented at such a high rate that they pack in lots of people who move through very quickly. So it's a real, real, real problem for me, and I think actually for the neighbourhood because in addition to gentrification, that's the other – the economics of that are incredible. He's charging three thousand, four hundred, and fifty dollars [0:13:00] for the downstairs apartment.

Interviewer: And he's getting it.

Respondent: He's getting it. I watched him interview people right now because he's finding new tenants for downstairs, and upstairs they're paying three thousand, but...

Interviewer: So he's getting six thousand, four hundred for those two floors?

- Respondent:** Yeah. And he doesn't have any money to fix it up, so you can see how it looks. So we're in constant...
- Interviewer:** That's who you share a wall with right here.
- Respondent:** Mm. Mm.
- Interviewer:** He's getting so much money.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm. The [0:13:30] economics favour this now, and so he uses that money to buy more places because he's not using it to invest in the house, you know? So this is, this is something people should know about, and I've been – you know, I've been on it with Adam Vaughan's office, Tim's on it. There's several of these in the neighbourhood, so that's...
- Interviewer:** Well, and we've discussed this kind of problem on the board.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm. I go to the board every – too. Yeah. Look what's happening now? And you know, there have been some pretty [0:14:00] challenging people and incidents, you know, from the people downstairs.
- Interviewer:** Are some of them students, or mostly they're not students?
- Respondent:** They're both. You know, so the ones downstairs are not. They're self-described construction workers, but it's casual day labour, and really their hearts are in the heavy metal band [laughs] that they have, though they never play their music here. The most you get is this kind of deadening kind of strum [0:14:30] practicing thing. That comes through the wall, but they don't play their music here because they've been evicted from other places, so they knew. But you know, these houses are not well-built so...
- Interviewer:** Oh, I know.
- Respondent:** I had a – my first crisis when they moved in was smoke was filling up my house. Tobacco smoke mainly. And yeah, so that was – but they stopped. And I expanded my acquaintanceship at work, you

know? Like developing a kind of way of talking with the [0:15:00] main guy, and he just said, "Don't talk to anybody else. Talk to me. Ask for me." Which is what I do. They hop to and go get him, but they're moving out. But the next people who've interviewed, I was just there when he was interviewing one on the street, and they're students, but not everyone. It depends. It just depends.

Interviewer: And what's your experience when the students are there?

Respondent: The students have been great who've moved in here.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: [0:15:30] Yeah. I know there are problems with noise and late hours and things in general, but I've just, I've just been incredibly lucky. Incredibly lucky. And I've had good relationships with them, and worked with them on how to deal with the landlord. They have more rights than I do, so it's definitely been a project for me. If you want to control mice, if we want to deal with whatever it is, you know, that has [0:16:00] to be dealt with, so – I hope you're not actually going to write all this. Well, you can write it all up if you want. It's nothing I haven't told the landlord himself many times in writing and in – out loud.

Interviewer: But he's really a slum landlord.

Respondent: That's what I – absolutely.

Interviewer: Rake in the money.

Respondent: Absolutely. And this is blockbuster, right? Because if enough of it happens, it will – the economics will lead to this kind of conversion because it's hard to stay next to [0:16:30] that. And the people who want to buy are both kinds now. I mean you can still – gentrifiers, I see it. They're happening all over. But this is the new trend too.

Interviewer: You mean people buying to rent it out to as many people as possible? Is that...

- Respondent:** Both things. Both things are happening. Both, both gentrification, like people want to live in it like this, right? And this other one. And who knows? I haven't the slightest idea how that will play out, but...
- Interviewer:** It's a concern.
- Respondent:** Oh.
- Interviewer:** A serious concern.
- Respondent:** [0:17:00] Absolutely.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** So it's a new trend. But the old one – oh, I mean I guess a big, big, big deal around here in the old days was the Morgentaler clinic. So yeah, I mean we heard my daughter and her sleepover friend heard the explosion. They were little. Yeah. And they put up a film crew that was doing a film, a documentary on the Morgentaler clinic here. That was kind of fun. They could actually run their cable from [0:17:30] the back door to here [laughs] somehow. And that was a big polarizing – that was the first of a number of polarizing issues in this neighbourhood. Is that the sort of thing you're interested in?
- Interviewer:** Oh absolutely.
- Respondent:** Yeah. So the person – I don't know if you remember, but I left out the house – it's between 123 or 125, whatever – I can't see because of the leaf – and Sylvia Porretta. There's a house in [0:18:00] between. There's a restraining order still on the people in that house from the Porrettas, not from me. The guy there was pretty violent, and he's dead now, but he – he's the one who attacked Morgentaler with the garden shears, and then you know, and there was a lot – that was the most dramatic, but there was a lot of tension in the neighbourhood because there were demonstrations on [0:18:30] both sides at the Morgentaler clinic, and there were people who were very passionate on both sides, but especially the anti-abortionists given the number of Catholics in the neighbourhood, and it was extremely interesting for me because I

could actually hear from neighbours, like, how they fought. Like what it was exactly.

Interviewer: So people were sticking up because they felt that they were right.

Respondent: Like they were so upset. Oh yeah. They'd be on the street, and yeah, you know? And then that was the first, and then [0:19:00] a later one was the car thing. You've probably heard about that. The one-way system? The maze?

Interviewer: Talk about it please.

Respondent: And Nick, well Nick Porretta was one of the ones really upset, so that was actually quite a funny story, which I think – I don't think there's any problem telling. That we were – the neighbourhood wants some people, the Resident's Association – Sarah Hasty was the president at that time – wanted [0:19:30] to introduce a maze, and Olivia Chow was our city councillor, and she was open to it, and so there was this thing about did the neighbourhood want it? And so we were going to do a petition. So I thought what a great opportunity – my daughter was about eight or nine – what a great opportunity to introduce her to civic life. I thought it was like a motherhood issue. I should have thought motherhood was very contentious in this neighbourhood, and maybe [0:20:00] the cars would be too, so – but I didn't think that. I just thought, well, it'd be like a fantasy of a motherhood issue. And well, I'll take her with me, and we'll go down the street and do the petition. So we started, and people just went ballistic. Some of them. Some were fine, signed, or not signed, but you know, but some people were just going absolutely ballistic, and I thought, "The first one, okay, well we've got a strange neighbourhood. I'll just – we'll just go on." You know? [0:20:30] But then we got a few, and I started realizing this was not the civic education I wanted to have for my daughter, and I really didn't know if the petition was going to work anyway, so...

Interviewer: But she was certainly seeing both sides...

Respondent: Oh.

Interviewer: ...of it.

- Respondent:** Well, she was not – I mean it was so emotional that I'm not sure – she's seeing there was opposition, but I'm not sure she was, or I was getting arguments. I mean eventually I could listen better, **[0:21:00]** and I could actually see in retrospect that some of the things they said, it could be confusing and so on, were true. And especially on this block. Taxis will actually back up really fast because they can't figure out how to get in, you know?
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah. Coming in along Willcocks and going north or south. I know that's been the biggest...
- Respondent:** Yeah. I mean they did have a point, but they were – there was such emotion behind it that it was actually hard to listen to the point, and maybe I was too polarized too.
- Interviewer:** Of course.
- Respondent:** I'm too committed **[0:21:30]** to calming traffic, you know, to people – the middle-class people with the kids basically.
- Interviewer:** It's not a one-size-fits-all.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** And it's diverse, and even in this neighbourhood where most of us are so happy to be, we still have two opposing opinions.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. Absolutely. Not just opposing opinions, but as I was saying, like, real conflicts between, you know – including some violence even, you know?
- Interviewer:** Related to some of these issues. Oh, well certainly the Morgentaler...
- Respondent:** Well, especially the abortion thing. So you know, **[0:22:00]** it's – you never know, right? No. The cars as far as I know produce no violence [laughs] except in rhetoric [laughs]. But yeah, it's been very, very interesting living here and learning a lot about how different classes and cultural groups see things. And I'm not a

hundred percent sure we've really [0:22:30] learned. Like those instances, if we've collectively learned how to listen better. You know what I mean? Like to have these kind of dialogues better.

Interviewer: Well, and if people feel passionate, they don't necessarily want to listen.

Respondent: That's the problem.

Interviewer: If you feel one way about abortion or another, or even the streets...

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: ...zooming up and down, or...

Respondent: Cars are very emotional to some people. This is what I learned. They are really [0:23:00] emotional, and that that is a marker, often, of class and culture, and gender. [Laughs] Of course.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well I remember when there was an issue about parking on Sundays here.

Respondent: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: I was living here at that time.

Respondent: Yeah?

Interviewer: And we park on Sundays, all of us, I mean just those of us who live here and have permits.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: And there were some people who were very upset when we said no, we want to keep it just for the people who lived in the neighbourhood.

Respondent: Mm-hm. Because they have families coming to visit and that sort of thing.

- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. But those of us who [0:23:30] don't have families coming, or just wanted to find parking...
- Respondent:** Still want our car. [Laughs] Yeah. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Okay. So you're talking about all these differences of opinion and people being hot-headed, and passionate...
- Respondent:** Yes. Uh-huh.
- Interviewer:** ...generally speaking, what would you say about the safety of this neighbourhood?
- Respondent:** Oh.
- Interviewer:** How it was and...
- Respondent:** Completely safe. Completely safe. And it was such – and so well located for transport. So my daughter had so much more freedom than many other [0:24:00] kids because she could go to the corner store. When that little book, children's bookstore, the Constant Reader was there, she could as a little – you know, I'd call them and say, "She's coming," and then she'd go and they'd call me and say she was there. She could read as long as she wanted.
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent:** She didn't have to cross any streets, right? And then they'd call me and she'd come back, you know? And she could go to the corner store, which upset some of her visiting friends' parents, you know?
- Interviewer:** Because they didn't [0:24:30] allow their children to go to the stores.
- Respondent:** Right. Right. Because she'd be arriving home with something from the corner store, right? And – but it was completely safe. I mean it was the Fudas in the corner store...
- Interviewer:** Yes.

- Respondent:** ...and then it was the various Korean families.
- Interviewer:** Johnny Fuda was my landlord all these years. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** You told me. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So oh yeah, yeah. So oh yeah, Johnny Fuda. I once asked him to help me break in because I'd locked myself out, and I had to go to work. He's like...
- Interviewer:** Oh, do that.
- Respondent:** I said, **[0:25:00]** "Oh, please? I can show you how." [Laughter] I got to go to work. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** That's part of the neighbourhood.
- Respondent:** Absolutely.
- Interviewer:** Somebody helped you break into your own home.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. Absolutely. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** What about the other stores in the neighbourhood? What – now that...
- Respondent:** Well, I watched some of the old Jewish stores leave, of course. You did too. The Major Fish Market. Calman's Kosher Chicken. Major Fish Market is where Olive and Lemon is now.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** Was.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** They **[0:25:30]** never sold any fish, and as far as I could tell, they would have two pieces in there and they were very grumpy when you went in. That's where it was. Calman's Kosher Chicken.
- Interviewer:** Where was that?

Respondent: That was where the pottery place is now.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. And well of course, the Harbord Bakery expanded and gentrified basically. Adapted to the neighbourhood, and it's much bigger, you know. More than a bakery.

Interviewer: So [0:26:00] there was more variety of stores in 1977 and 1980.

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: The Fish Market, the chicken place.

Respondent: Yeah. There were. Although, I have to say I never shopped there. I tried the fish market, but I could never find anything to buy. [Laughs] And the chicken, I don't know, I would go to Kensington Market – has been such a boon. And I was just there this afternoon, right? Kensington Market keeps changing. It's amazing to me that it's been kept from the [0:26:30] developers. Right there in the city. It's got such a strong community, and yet the community keeps evolving, the stores keep evolving, the last of the Jewish stores that I know of is gone. It was Max's, I think, on Baldwin – is it – yeah, Baldwin. A cross street. You know it's – then it became the kind of really nice, more middle-class butcher shop, which then moved in where European Meats used to be, and now that's kind of a sustainable fish store.

Interviewer: So all the Jewish [0:27:00] stores have been replaced by others as far as you can tell.

Respondent: Except for Harbord Bakery.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And that's become multicultural too because the Philippino family that's part of it, you know, they married into and so yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

- Respondent:** So it's really...
- Interviewer:** Those are Rafi's sons. He adopted them.
- Respondent:** Oh, he adopted them.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Oh, I didn't know that.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. They're both his sons, and he brought them up.
- Respondent:** Oh okay.
- Interviewer:** He adopted each one when each one was about ten years old. He went to the Philippines and brought Cully back and then Danny. They're his sons.
- Respondent:** Oh okay. Oh, [0:27:30] nice.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Nice. Okay. So thank you for telling me that because – you've just filled in the empty spaces with assumptions, you know.
- Interviewer:** So you've used Kensington Market a lot and you continue to use it.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So you've been here a lot of years.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Have you always used it in the same way? And if it's changed, in what ways has that changed for you?
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. Well I joined Karma Co-Op when [0:28:00] my daughter went to Palmerston School. It was really convenient. Across the street. And I'm still a member, so I go there when I can, and of course, the whole food scene has changed so much, and I've been

part of that. I'm on the Toronto Food Policy Council, I was Chair of it in the '90s during amalgamation when it looked like it might go under and it became, instead, a much bigger and better, really, organization at the scale of the new [0:28:30] city, or metro. So, you know, the Farmer's Market coming in now, and they're all over the city, and community shared agriculture boxes, and always been connected to Foodshare, but I've never got any of their boxes because there were so many other food options there.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. So you do a lot of your shopping at the Karma Co-op then.

Respondent: I do. Yeah.

Interviewer: We're familiar about it. Palmerston, they have it.

Respondent: No, there used to be a lot more [0:29:00] little stores. Like there was a wonderful little Italian grocery called Formusa.

Interviewer: Where was that?

Respondent: On Bloor. Bloor around – you know, one of the sad things for me is when I lose track of what was there before, like the history of these shops when they change too much, and I have lost track of a lot on Bloor Street, but it was somewhere around Albany or something like that. It was on the north side of the street. [0:29:30] And it was really nice Italian food store, you know, and not nearly...

Interviewer: So it was a grocery store?

Respondent: It was a grocery store. Yeah. And there was a green grocer up there. I don't know if you ever went up there.

Interviewer: I don't think so.

Respondent: Yeah. There was a green grocer that had, you know, green out on the street. So yeah, I did a fair bit of shopping at the little shops on Bloor Street as well, and when there was, of course, the Hungarian meat place.

Interviewer: Oh yeah. There were several Hungarian stores.

Respondent: And they [0:30:00] had groceries as well. And my mother, when she would come up from the States to visit, we'd always go there to get the right kind of paprika because then she could bring it home with her.

Interviewer: It was another Hungarian?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh okay.

Respondent: Of course.

Interviewer: Oh. So she was happy to find those Hungarian stores.

Respondent: Oh yeah. And there were all these little Hungarian restaurants. Now there's just one, Country Style, which is left, but I can't remember the names of them now. There was the Blue Danu or something like that.

Interviewer: I remember I used to go buy [0:30:30] dobos torte, even if I wasn't shopping I would just find myself getting some dobos torte.
[Laughter]

Respondent: That's really good. Yeah. Or sachertorte. Oh my. [Laughs]

Interviewer: So there were more Hungarian establishments, stores, and...

Respondent: Oh, on Bloor Street.

Interviewer: ...restaurants.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: What was the name of the butcher and little grocery store?

Interviewer: The one on Bloor.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: After I turn off the machine we'll both remember it. [Laughs]

Respondent: Okay. Right, right, right. But anyway, yeah. It's not that long ago it closed actually. **[0:31:00]** Maybe ten years. [Laughs] I'm getting old. [Laughs] I was really sad when it closed. I used to go there a lot. Yeah.

Interviewer: And as you say, especially when your mother was visiting.

Respondent: Yeah. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Because they had the right kind of paprika.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. The real deal. [Laughs]

Interviewer: What do you think our, globally speaking, the bigger changes, the biggest changes in the close to forty years that you've **[0:31:30]** been here?

Respondent: Well I've been describing a lot of it in the fine grain, right? I mean there's the overall shift of class and lower density, you know, that I represent.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: And toward professionals and whatever. But now there's this newer thing, which is maybe a return to the old rooming houses. Well...

Interviewer: I hope not.

Respondent: I hope not too, but there you go. **[0:32:00]** But it's interesting, you know? I mean I've had, like, you know Sylvia said to me when I was really upset about some of the antics going on next door, she said – I said, "There are so many of them in there, right? It's just too many people." And she said, "Well you know, Nick's family," because they lived in that house, "Nick's family had more people than that in there. They didn't have all their own bedrooms." Right. I can't

remember how many sons there were. [0:32:30] At least three. Sal, Mario, and Nick. There might have been more kids.

Interviewer: But it's different when you get all these individuals coming in versus a family where there are parents and values. It's not the same thing because I know, I've spoken to so many people where this house would have had really twelve, thirteen people.

Respondent: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: But it was different from these. It's just not the same. Nick's family, people piled in.

Respondent: Yeah. It's true. And there would – but this was an intermediate case [0:33:00] where the family lived on the main floor, but they had roomers in separate rooms, and there must have been at least four or five.

Interviewer: Sure.

Respondent: Four or five.

Interviewer: But they still lived on that floor...

Respondent: That's right.

Interviewer: ...and those rooms were not having noisy parties.

Respondent: That's right. And actually when the house next door was rented out and divided into two apartments, the people downstairs who were the Philippino family that were related to the wife of the owner, or I [0:33:30] guess she was the owner too, they kept it fine. You know? If there was a problem, I could talk to them or probably I didn't even have to talk to them because they were on it already. They weren't going to tolerate smoke or noise, which were the two main issues. So yeah, absolutely. You're right.

Interviewer: But I agree that there were – I mean Sylvia's right. There were many people living – and these two rooms that you have here

easily could have had the mother, and the father, and their four children, and then lots of other people.

Respondent: Plus one in the back.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: There's one behind the kitchen. [Laughs]

Interviewer: [0:34:00] But that's certainly...

Respondent: Yes. Absolutely.

Interviewer: It's a different nature.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. It was just – I was just at a family reunion for my father's family in...

Interviewer: And where was that?

Respondent: In Switzerland, in Zurich.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: And we were taken on a tour of where his older sister, my aunt was born, and where he was born, and the – this would be Jewish immigrants from Poland to Switzerland, [0:34:30] and before, and during, and after – well no, after World War One – well actually before, because my father was born in 1917. And then the families that received them and the houses they were in, and the people moved a lot, but only within a certain neighbourhood. And these were the Polish Jews. They were different from the German Jews who had another part of town that was a little fancier. But there were – then the buildings looked fine, but there were a lot of people in them. A lot. And there were people [0:35:00] who were always receiving new people, and I think it would be interesting to know if that's how the immigrants came here. If there were places where Portuguese families could come, you know, and then find their own place, but...

- Interviewer:** Oh, I certainly listened to some wonderful stories of exactly what you described.
- Respondent:** Uh-huh.
- Interviewer:** You are coming, you're a member of a large family, and you'll stay here until you're established.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** You and your two children, and [0:35:30] then your sisters and brothers.
- Respondent:** Right. Yeah. So yeah, I've been very much getting in touch, and also with my students in different ways with things I forget about being an immigrant, you know? [Laughs] About my family's own immigration, and my immigration to Canada was completely different, and so yeah.
- Interviewer:** At what stage in your life did you come to Canada?
- Respondent:** I came while I was still a graduate student, enrolled still in the US.
- Interviewer:** So you would have been in your early [0:36:00] twenties maybe?
- Respondent:** Yeah. Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. And you spoke English?
- Respondent:** Yes. [Laughter] Yes. That's right. That's right.
- Interviewer:** Let's come back to your daughter. Because you lived right here on Robert, you could go to the Fuda's corner store.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** She could go to the Constant Reader.
- Respondent:** Yeah.

- Interviewer:** Who were her friends, and what kinds of games did they play, and where did they play?
- Respondent:** Oh. Well Lina was, sometimes, it was kind of a complicated relationship, as relationships with girls can be sometimes. [0:36:30] They went to ICS together.
- Interviewer:** What's that?
- Respondent:** Oh, Institute of Child Study up on Walmer Road, and we actually – Sylvia and I – I think Lina only went for maybe one year. Laura went for longer. When they were going together, they would actually walk together and there was no light there, but we insisted that they go to the light either – I guess at Brunswick and cross, and come back. There was a crosswalk, but that didn't feel good enough since Newton's laws trump, you know? [Laughs] [0:37:00] Trump traffic laws. And I'm not sure they always did, but that was the promise. [Laughs] And they survived very well. So they would, yeah, they would actually go up to Walmer and wherever that circle is, you know where the...
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. North of Bloor.
- Respondent:** The Institute of Child – north of Bloor. Yeah. And...
- Interviewer:** So they didn't go to any of the local schools.
- Respondent:** Well...
- Interviewer:** Or...
- Respondent:** Lina then did. She went to Lord Lansdowne after. [0:37:30] No. And Laura, before that, was in Palmerston school and she was bussed there for French immersion. I was very disappointed. I would have loved to send her to Lord Lansdowne just because it's a neighbourhood school, and I would have sacrificed other things like French immersion, but I found out that most of the kids at Lord Lansdowne were coming from somewhere else, and so they would all disappear in the afternoon. At that point, it was very intensely Chinese, [0:38:00] and...

Interviewer: So they were coming from south and east.

Respondent: Wherever they were coming from, it got defined as a good school to bring your kids to, and you know, I mean all of this was after whenever some decision was made to not require kids to go to their neighbourhood school. Right? So yeah, that's how it was going. And so I thought, well, if it's not a neighbourhood school anyway, the only advantage is for her to be able to walk there. It's not going to be a friendship [0:38:30] circle, particularly. And in fact, I think she got more of that at Palmerston, which isn't that far. And at that point, they were still dependent on parents. Well, they wouldn't have been. Like Lina and Laura could go across the street, and they made a little – it wasn't a tree house exactly, but they put a little plank up between some things there and they would sit up there sometimes, and I would – and we made a little pulley, and so I would give them some lemonade. They could get on it by – I used to have a box out there. It's not there [0:39:00] – it's now for the recycling bin and stuff like that, so they could stand on the box and get themselves up in the tree, even without a ladder. And then we had a little rope and I'd give them some lemonade and some snacks in a basket. [Laughs] Yeah. So that was very sweet. And she had another friend that used to sell lemonade out in the front.

Interviewer: Were there quite a few children at that time?

Respondent: Not so many.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: Not so many. Yeah.

Interviewer: And what's the situation now in terms of children on the street?

Respondent: Well, and you see, and then the differences [0:39:30] in the backgrounds of people made a huge difference too. So for instance, the Portuguese neighbours next door had grandchildren at the same time as I had Laura, but they couldn't play together because I needed Laura to be in daycare, either before she was going to school full-time, or after she was going to school for

afterschool care, and that was the time that they [0:40:00] would have played, right?

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: So you know, it was taken...

Interviewer: So the grandparents took care of the grandchildren. These grandparents?

Respondent: Yes. I think actually their daughter may have lived with them. Now I mean this is a sort of interesting thing because I did have some babysitters. There were three sisters, and another Portuguese family further north on Robert Street, closer to – almost at the corner, just south of Sussex. [0:40:30] And one of those young women got pregnant before getting married and kept the baby and stayed at home, and her younger sisters – they all became – and then the little boy was growing up there at least until he was six or seven. And then she and the two younger sisters would come and babysit with Laura at different times, and even go pick her up sometimes from daycare if I needed that, which was rare, but did happen. [0:41:00] And yeah, it was just always an interesting...

Interviewer: A lot of juggling on your part.

Respondent: Oh yeah. [Laughs] Yeah. But yeah, it was wonderful to have neighbourhood people who, you know, it worked out, you know, where it was – I don't want to say resources because that's kind of partly true, but it was much more relational than that, you know? That it's a nice exchange. And actually Gus does my – most of my renovations here too, so...

Interviewer: [0:41:30] For so many of us.

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: What about using front porch or verandah, whatever you call it, and back garden, and the lane?

Respondent: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: Have you used it? Has Laura used it? How have those things been used?

Respondent: I used to use it a lot, the front porch.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: Now I can't remember why I stopped, but I don't have a bench out there. I used to have a bench and it was really easy to sit on the bench and put my feet up on the rail. After I – I guess it must have been after I did this front [0:42:00] porch and decided to put planters in there, and then this ugly old bench got moved, and I never replaced it. [Laughs]

Interviewer: It didn't fit in with the new...

Respondent: No, I just didn't even think about it. I somehow – it's funny. I think I must have stopped using it already.

Interviewer: So in the '70s and '80s you did use it.

Respondent: Yeah. I used to sit out there, and as far as I know, Josephine's the main one who sits out now. She'll sit on her steps and drink her coffee in the morning, and honestly, she knows everything. If I want to know [0:42:30] anything about anybody, she's the one to ask. The back, I had that – it was just awful when I moved in. It was just asphalt parking with – was there a fence? I don't even think there – maybe there was a fence. No, there was no fence. It was just asphalt parking and concrete steps, and it was after someone – and there was a back door [0:43:00] that was just wooden that led into what was then a laundry room. In the back. That was the entrance in the back.

Interviewer: Oh. So you had a laundry room at the back of your house here.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: And that led out to the concrete.

Respondent: Yes. And these concrete steps led out to the asphalt, which was open to the back lane. And you know, it was – and so yeah, we used it to park, and then we'd come in that way, but then I stopped having a car. But no, before I stopped having a car, [0:43:30] I redid that. It was when I stopped moving upstairs. I moved into the whole house, and I redid that back area into a little garden. I can show you. It's so sweet.

Interviewer: Yes, I would love to see it.

Respondent: A little garden with a parking space, and I think partly – I don't know if I was already having water – I was having water problems in the basement. That was it. And the thing was angled wrong, right? So what had to happen was to reconstruct it so that the water would flow the other way, and so [0:44:00] while I was at that, because that was fairly major, and there were – I could put it on top of the asphalt, but I didn't. They dug it up, and they used gabion baskets so they didn't have to move it away, and they built up an elevated parking space with a fence around it, and then sunken down is a nice little garden, you know?

Interviewer: When we turn this off, I'd love to see it.

Respondent: Sure. With little wooden steps that go down. And then at some point after that, I think, I can't remember if [0:44:30] it was before or after there was a break-in through that door, and so I replaced it with a steel door.

Interviewer: Whoa, yeah.

Respondent: But it – the frame around it was really falling down, and I knew – it alerted me to the necessity at some point of rebuilding that little extension where the laundry room was. And then Gus did that. So now it's a bathroom and the laundry's upstairs. It's a bathroom and a pantry, and there's no door there. [0:45:00] But before that, in an earlier renovation, I had a sliding door put out when I made the garden and stuff. So it feels pretty safe. I'm not overly concerned. I used to use the back laneway a lot to walk my dog, but he's gone too. Another plane now. And...

- Interviewer:** [0:45:30] Is it paved, the back lane?
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** And was it always paved as long as you've been here?
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** And was it used by the children at all that you recall? Or was it just cars?
- Respondent:** Oh well, I helped it be used by the children because – it's a good question – because in one of all of those things, some workmen here – out of some conversation, put up a basketball thing. Yeah. With a hoop, you know? [0:46:00] I think it was when he was building the fence, so we kind of attached it somehow to that. So then a lot of people started using – of different ages, at different times of day – started using it.
- Interviewer:** So not only your family, but...
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...the kids in the – it drew the kids from the neighbourhood.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. But then I can't remember. It started to get really noisy when I didn't want it to be. Basketball can be. And Laura was long gone, so I just – and I needed to rebuild the fence, so [0:46:30] it was time for it to go. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** So there was a period when that was an active spot.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: It's a narrow lane back there, I think. Is that quite a narrow lane?

Respondent: It's fairly narrow, so yeah. Getting into that parking space, because there is a light pole there too, it can be pretty tricky.

Interviewer: I want to come back to this – you mentioned several times when you used to have a car and you no longer have a car.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: I'd like you to talk about what – how you made that decision, when.

Respondent: [0:47:00] Oh, it was growing on me that I really didn't want to have a car, and there were certain – my daughter was grown up. When you have a kid, it's usually convenient to have a car. Now, what I didn't say when you were talking about – I was talking about her independence was that when she got old enough to use the subway, she had a lot more freedom of the city, you know? And this was before cell phones. And I remember insisting that she use some of her friends' cell phones to call me so I knew where [0:47:30] she was and stuff. But yeah, it was great. And she didn't get her driver's license until she was in her twenties. My father wanted to give her a car. I said, "Well, if you give her a car, you can give her a car parking space to go with it." [Laughs] You know?

Interviewer: So you don't have a parking space?

Respondent: I do. I do actually.

Interviewer: Oh, you still do.

Respondent: Yeah. And I let – you know, when I have visitors, or if I sometimes – I belong to AutoShare, so you know, occasionally it's used for something.

Interviewer: But you're [0:48:00] not driving. How'd you come to that?

Respondent: Well, there were – oh, there were different stages. I had a really crazy freak accident where I wasn't hurt, but the car was just about demolished, and I thought – and that was when I realized I don't really want this car, or any car. But I figured, well, even to sell it I have to get it fixed, but then I [0:48:30] thought, well maybe if I used it, I could just get it kind of fixed up a little bit, you know, like they do in the third world. [Laughs] And I don't know. But everyone treated me like I was really crazy to do that. And then there was this other – but then I did. I got it fixed properly, and I guess insurance covered it or whatever. And then I – and then it was stolen. It was stolen from right in front here. Oh no, before it was stolen, someone – it was a red Neon. [0:49:00] And there's a long history to why it was a red Neon. I wouldn't have chosen either the colour or the brand, but a series of things. Anyway, that's what it was, and that apparently – the police told me attracted people. Including accidents. Apparently statistically, red cars. And anyway, so before that, someone broke the window and I called the police because I needed to do it for the insurance, right? And I said, "Well now why would they break the window of this car?" [0:49:30] And they said, "They figure you have Ray-Ban glasses in there." And I went, "Oh." [Laughs] Just god, you know, that's not me, but that's apparently...

Interviewer: So you had all these little pieces of glass on your front seat.

Respondent: Oh I can't remember. I can't remember. But you know, you can't – you need a window in your car, so I had to get that fixed. Then I had this accident and – oh no. Then I had the accident, I got it fixed. Then it was stolen. All of this went on over a number of years, right? It wasn't one thing after another. [0:50:00] Then it was stolen, and it was stolen from the front, from the street here. And you know, sometimes I forget where I park it, you know, and so my first thought isn't always, "It's stolen." But I was standing on the front step and I saw it wasn't there, and I – I mean I just knew. It was stolen. And my first thought was so revealing. It was, "I guess I have to tell the police." I was like happy it was gone. I was like good riddance [0:50:30] to this car. Of course the police found it, and it – they'd taken it for a joy ride, and so it kind of smelled of alcohol and

stuff, but it was not in bad shape, except they'd broken – they had to start it, so they'd broken the ignition. So I thought, someone showed me you could just stick your finger – I could stick my finger in the same way they did and start the car. The problem was theft, so I thought well maybe I could just get one of those bars that lock it, you know, and I wouldn't have to fix that. And everyone just treated me like I was totally crazy because I just [0:51:00] felt like it was such a burden. Like I don't want to take care of this the way I take care of my house, you know? And this – it was so revealing how relieved I was that it was...

Interviewer: So there was readiness to get rid of it.

Respondent: But the moment of realization was I was walking along Bloor Street, in fact up this little alleyway next to Midoco, and I ran into a former student. She had just finished, and she had done her thesis research. This was a PhD student, I'd supervised it, [0:51:30] on money. On how people deal – alternative currencies. How people negotiate prices when you don't use the market, and especially the gender dimensions. It was a brilliant thesis. Really interesting. She knew all this about money in this deep way, and I just ran into her and I said – this is the first time I'd had the thought. It came out of my mouth. I said, "I'm going to steal" – I'm going to steal? [Laughs] "I'm going to sell my car." And she called me up later and she said, "I'd like [0:52:00] to buy your car." I said, "No, you can't have it. It's bad karma." She said, "I've thought about that, and I've decided it's not the car's karma, it's your karma, and I want to buy it, and I want to figure out a fair price for it." And I said, "Okay. But you have to do all the work to figure out the price. I'm not." So she did. And she got the most interesting set of responses. People said, "This is not what you do. You pay as little as possible," [0:52:30] and she asked as much as possible, and then you come to a – and she says, "No, no. I want to come up with a fair price," and she talked to dealers, and she looked at books, and you know, websites or whatever, and she came up with a price, explained it all to me, told me many of these interesting stories and I said, "Fine." So she took it.

Interviewer: She said, "No. It's not the karma. It's your karma." [Laughter]

Respondent: Well she had a great time with it. [Laughs]

Interviewer: So she bought that red Neon.

Respondent: Yeah. Took it to St. Catharines, [0:53:00] and eventually – she had it for years, and then eventually she gave it to her sister somewhere in northern Ontario, and so it's still going somewhere, so yeah.

Interviewer: And how has that worked for you?

Respondent: Great. I never regretted it for – well, the only nanoseconds where I've regretted it were with AutoShare when I had to be much better at planning because if you book it for a certain amount of time, you really do have to return it then. [0:53:30] And you can extend it if nobody wants it, but you have to remember to do that, and if somebody wants it, it's extremely inconvenient and you can't do it very many times if somebody – if you're unlucky and somebody wants it. But that actually doesn't happen too often. I'm getting better at it, at planning it or just booking extra time, and also there are many more cars. And because of this – you know, their fleet is increased, and this neighbourhood is so well served. There's no shortage [0:54:00] for me. And I see they're in use. You know, I walk by their places and they're...

Interviewer: So how do you usually get from place A to place B?

Respondent: Bicycle. I do a lot of cycling, TTC, taxis. This is – to me, taxis are the urban car, right? They are. They are, you know, for – you don't have to park, you're like a princess. They pick you up and they drop you off. [Laughs] [0:54:30] Now it – and it works because we're in a big city, so you can hail a taxi when you are downtown or in most places, and it's such a luxury, and you can take so many taxis for the amount you pay to keep a car.

Interviewer: Keep a car. Yeah.

Respondent: You know? AutoShare has done some of those calculations of how much, you know, it costs to run a car. The insurance, maintenance. Of course, once you have the car, then it's the cheapest thing to do usually to use it.

- Interviewer:** To use the car.
- Respondent:** Right? Because it's the fixed [0:55:00] cost. But if you don't put those fixed costs in, you can live a very luxurious life, in my view.
- Interviewer:** And you have door-to-door service.
- Respondent:** Absolutely.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. Meet interesting people. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** So you have conversations with the drivers.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. Yeah. I recruit them for farming for world crops, you know? Because a lot of them are astrophysicists, right, who are driving taxis and they grew up on a farm, or some of them are agronomists and [0:55:30] they're driving taxis, and it never occurred to them because they're so far from the countryside that, you know, somebody from Pakistan might have grown peaches, wheat, sheep. Like you can do that here. You can't automatically do it, but that's what farmers have always done here. So yeah. So.
- Interviewer:** They say, "Watch out for this white-haired woman when she gets into your car." [Laughter]
- Respondent:** Oh, I can't tell you how many people I've given numbers and websites to who – I mean most of them are. [0:56:00] You know, I don't raise it with everybody, but if they seem at all interested, so yeah, I turn it into part of my kind of political work in the city, my way of living.
- Interviewer:** And they have an interesting twenty minutes with you.
- Respondent:** Oh, and I learn a lot from them. And it may not be about that; may be about something else.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.

- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So you are very comfortable with...
- Respondent:** Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...using AutoShare occasionally and using all these other bike lanes...
- Respondent:** A walk is good. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** I mean [0:56:30] there's so much you can do on foot in this neighbourhood. I even get a little conservative, you know? Like there are days when I don't have to go anywhere outside of four or five blocks, right? Or even two.
- Interviewer:** And then you walk.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Well that's one of the advantages most of us love about this. I love that about this neighbourhood.
- Respondent:** Absolutely.
- Interviewer:** Even walked all the way to your house.
- Respondent:** Oh really? [Laughter]
- Interviewer:** It took me about four minutes. [Laughter]
- Respondent:** Right.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. You know, I think that we've pretty well [0:57:00] touched on most of what I wanted to talk about.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.

- Interviewer:** When you knew that I was coming, did you have any thoughts about what you might want to talk about, about living in the neighbourhood? The changes? Your experiences?
- Respondent:** No. One thing I might add, because it fits with a lot of these other pieces, is that when I moved downstairs, I had the – the basement had the bathroom and it had a finished room where those women had been working, [0:57:30] but it hadn't been used for anything really. Well, it had been used when it was rented out as an apartment. In fact, it had been used as a bedroom. But I turned that into an apartment. I put a little kitchen unit in there, and it doesn't have a separate entrance. And I bartered that apartment for extra childcare, so Laura was – yeah. So like babysitting nights or sometimes if I want – because I travel a lot for my work too. And that was a [0:58:00] wonderful arrangement. So.
- Interviewer:** Oh. It's a win-win.
- Respondent:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** So you would interview them very carefully, and they would understand that there was a child.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. I didn't usually have to interview much. Oh, the Toronto Women's Bookstore. That was such an asset to this neighbourhood, and in those – for most of the time that – and certainly all the time that I was renting, they had a housing file.
- Interviewer:** A housing file?
- Respondent:** A housing file. And so I would go and put my [0:58:30] ad only there. Only in the Toronto Women's Bookstore housing file. And the people who looked in there and came to me were usually great. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** I didn't know that. I mean, I wasn't renting anything, but I didn't know that that existed.
- Respondent:** Well that's part of the community thing here, and that it was – you know, even though the Toronto Women's Bookstore was the only –

as far as I know, the only one in the city, and [0:59:00] drew all over the city, it was a neighbourhood place in that way.

Interviewer: So before I turn this off, I wonder whether you might talk a little more about the neighbourhood here. You've talked about the neighbours right across the street and the sometimes difficult neighbours that you share a wall with.

Respondent: Uh-huh. Right.

Interviewer: But the feeling of neighbourhood.

Respondent: Well, a lot of the stores. I mean Hutoshi's been here for ages. I can't remember when she moved in, but I know that she did after [0:59:30] I did, and then that's changed. You know, so she's moved to the back now. When MoMo's moved in, and now it's going – oh my goodness.

Interviewer: I know.

Respondent: I remember Mohammed coming in, knocking on my door to sign a petition...

Interviewer: I remember that.

Respondent: ...that it would be all right to have a commercial establishment there. So – and that was a great asset to the neighbourhood, and it came when the Porretta's stopped being so much of a neighbourhood place. In fact, [1:00:00] eventually it stopped being Porretta's. And then when the Laundromat that used to be where the psychology bookstore is now, Caversham's?

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: When that closed and the psychology bookstore moved in, I knew some tipping point had been reached because people didn't need a Laundromat, and there was room for another bookstore, right? It used to be a dentist that was above there. So there were a lot more services on Harbord [1:00:30] Street, and you know, in addition to the shops.

- Interviewer:** So this was for people who had less?
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** And then it became – that's part of the gentrification, I guess.
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. Although, I don't know about a dentist. And then there's this psychologist or psychiatrist that's moved in where the Morgentaler clinic used to be, right? In that space that wasn't rented for a very long time as Emma was there, and then finally it got rented to – so that's – I don't know if that's different from a dentist, you know? [1:01:00] But yeah, certainly it's the kind of dentist office that was upstairs that probably people here wouldn't go to. Now we'd want something a little classier. But the Laundromat for sure, although there is one over on Lippincott, I think, still. Lippincott and Ulster, or Borden and Ulster. Something like that.
- Interviewer:** What's between Brunswick and Borden?
- Respondent:** Yeah. I think it's Lippincott. Whatever it is.
- Interviewer:** Right.
- Respondent:** So and then all these fancy [1:01:30] restaurants – the corner store has stayed here, and it's transformed, and now it has the flowers and, you know, and it's become better. And everyone who's been there – there was a bit of rapid turnover for a while and it was frustrating, but then the present people really settled in and made it theirs, and so things like – they changed their stock. So if you asked for anything, I found, they'll bring it in. And if it doesn't work, they don't keep it. But they introduce us [1:02:00] to Tim Grant, introduced me to these Korean popsicles, melon bars, that are so nice, but they'll also bring in, you know, organic eggs and milk, if that's what we want. So.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. So they're very responsive to the neighbourhood.
- Respondent:** Absolutely. Yeah. And then – so they've been great, and the Harbord Bakery has evolved with the neighbourhood, bust most of

the other things have changed, I would say. I can't think of anything else in this end of Harbord Street, [1:02:30] or even on Harbord Street at all. Even Pizza GiGi I remember moving in there. [Laughs] And the things across from Central Tech. They take their own character. But just around here, the university, and there was changes in the university. So I think it's probably because of the university that all of these more high-end restaurants have been able to move in because, I mean, it's way too many for this neighbourhood to support just like this, even though we do, right? When they open, when they close, [1:03:00] there's usually a group that comes and...

Interviewer: Well, and people come from other neighbourhood to eat at Harbord.

Respondent: They do. They do. But it's hard to know what's cause and what's effect. Like why did they move in here? And my guess is – my experience at the university was we started a lot more elaborate recruiting, and not just – you know, the whole – all the departments, and so that involved dinners, and lunches, and so on, and so I think that kind of provided a...

Interviewer: So that's...

Respondent: ...a base.

Interviewer: ...been one of the effects of the university on this [1:03:30] neighbourhood.

Respondent: I think so.

Interviewer: Any other thoughts about the university right on our doorstep?

Respondent: Well, it's good news and bad news, right? You know? So now they're going to build more of these residences for the – that they're not even restricting to students, so these unattached young people, and it intersects with the changes in the whole economy, with youth unemployment, and I wish that weren't so, but I'm not sure I think accommodating them in this way, in this neighbourhood, [1:04:00] is going to solve the problem. So it's a very, very complex question

between personal and global kind of perspectives. I really don't like some of the architecture. That Graduate Student House. But I can – there it is, you know? The Athletic Centre is a great asset, although I do have to say I don't use it. I even belong and I'm not using it. [1:04:30] I'm going to stop belonging because I see I'm not using it. Yeah. I think that expansion of the university is a real problem – both the way it's expanding, and the fact of the expansion, you know? So the land part and the number of students. And it's a problem for the university itself. It's a problem for me as a teacher in university. So it's hard for me [1:05:00] to distinguish it because it's been incredibly convenient. When I was teaching my geography classes, I could be in class in under five minutes from my house, you know? Like how could I be more privileged, you know? I couldn't even ride my bike. [Laughs] I mean any faster, you know? And at the same – and when I went out to Erindale, I would take the bus from – there's a direct bus from central campus.

Interviewer: Oh, from campus to campus.

Respondent: From campus to campus. Yeah. So I mean if you missed the bus, it was a problem, but you know, it was good [1:05:30] for my chronological challenges.

Interviewer: So you're saying it's a real mixed bag, the university being our...

Respondent: And for me, it's all entwined with the university as my employer, and the neighbour, right? The neighbour of the institution in the neighbourhood.

Interviewer: So there's not a simple answer.

Respondent: No, no. No. But I mean in general, I think having the bookstores and the, you know, a lot of the institutions that [1:06:00] come with an academic setting has been mostly good, so bars and some of that. But that's partly accompanied to change with student culture too, I think.

Interviewer: Meaning that there's a difference in the nature of the students? Or?

Respondent: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. Yeah. And you know, my daughter's been explaining this to me. She has been a student – she went to McGill, which isn't any different. All universities that I know of have been going through [1:06:30] this. It's a generational and cohort kind of phenomenon in conjunction with larger economic changes, and changes in universities themselves. That could get us into a very long story, but yes. I think there is a change in student culture, and it's, on the whole, not for the best in terms of intellectual engagement. So that the ones who do want to do that [1:07:00] find themselves swimming more against the stream of their colleagues, right? There are always good students, and there are always intellectually engaged people.

Interviewer: But you're saying that could – that's part of the...

Respondent: The party scene.

Interviewer: ...university being so close to us, or we're so close to the university.

Respondent: It's part of the effect on us.

Interviewer: Yeah, yes.

Respondent: The change in student culture.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And there's a lot more partying. And there's a lot more of the [1:07:30] motivation of being part of student life in a social way that's not deeply attached to the intellectual part of it.

Interviewer: Well that's a whole other long conversation...

Respondent: That's a whole other long conversation.

Interviewer: ...that you and I can have.

Respondent: Yeah. You only teach graduate, so professional.

Interviewer: Masters degrees. Yes. Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah. People who are...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: They're there for a reason.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well, Harriet Friedmann – [laughter] today is the [1:08:00] 8th of August. I forgot to mention it earlier.

Respondent: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: I want to say thank you very much. This has been a pleasure for me to listen to your experiences and your description and perceptions, so thank you very, very much.

Respondent: Well thank you. It's been actually fun going over it all. [Laughs]

[1:08:26]

[End of recording]