

042 Carmel & Merc Cioe

[0:00:00]

**Interviewer:** It's on. Okay. All right. And I'm at 90 Robert Street at the home of Carmel and Merc.

**Respondent 1:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** How do you pronounce your last name? Cioe?

**Respondent 1:** Cioe.

**Respondent 2:** Cioe.

**Interviewer:** I told you I'm on the history committee for Harbord Village Residents' Association.

**Respondent 2:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And we are gathering information from people who have been here for hopefully at least forty years, and who can talk to us about what it was like then, and the changes, [0:00:30] and what it's like now.

**Respondent 1:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** So I want to say thank you to both of you for agreeing to give me about an hour of your time.

**Respondent 1:** That's fine.

**Interviewer:** Would you please just tell me, for both of you, when you moved into this house, and how old you were. And this is 2012.

**Respondent 1:** Okay. We were both twenty-two. I think I was twenty-three.

**Respondent 2:** Not when we moved in here.

**Respondent 1:** No, no, no. Oh that's right.

**Respondent 2:** When we moved in here.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Respondent 1:** When we moved in here...

**Respondent 2:** We were about twenty-six or **[0:01:00]** twenty-seven.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And what year was that?

**Respondent 1:** That was 1952, September.

**Respondent 2:** September 1952.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** That's the year.

**Interviewer:** What made you decide to move here?

**Respondent 1:** Well I was born and brought up in 88 Robert Street, and stayed there until I got married after the service, and this house here was for sale. I used to **[0:01:30]** babysit Mrs. Sacks, who owned this here place before me. And her mother owned this house before her, so it's been a long time, and I wanted to be close to my parents.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent 1:** So the sale was a good price, good enough for us, anyway, so that's what we did. We got a close house.

**Interviewer:** Turn it off for a minute.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

- Interviewer:** Now we paused because your...
- Respondent 1:** Right.
- Interviewer:** ...your roofing man came [0:02:00] in with some...
- Respondent 1:** Right.
- Interviewer:** ...pretty upsetting news.
- Respondent 1:** Right, right.
- Interviewer:** But we got back to it. You were talking about that you – when you moved in here, but you in fact grew up next door and babysat...
- Respondent 1:** Babysat...
- Interviewer:** ...for the children.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. One of their children that were here. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Right.
- Respondent 1:** And then they – the woman passed away, the daughter who owned the house for her mother, and of course, the boys grew up. The husband, [0:02:30] a widower, had no use for the house, so...
- Respondent 2:** He told your mother, I think, that he was going to sell.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. So we bought the house...
- Respondent 2:** And you were going to live here in...
- Respondent 1:** ...from him.
- Respondent 2:** Interested.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. So we bought the house from him. This house even had gaslight pipes. Could you imagine? Does yours have that there, over there?

**Interviewer:** You know, I don't know. I've been living there for about twelve years.

**Respondent 1:** Oh, you wouldn't know.

**Interviewer:** And I didn't grow up in Toronto.

**Respondent 1:** No, you're from Montreal.

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

**Respondent 1:** [0:03:00] Anyways...

**Interviewer:** So what kind of pipes did you say?

**Respondent 1:** They had gaslight.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent 1:** They were maybe not even a quarter of an inch. Real small pipes. She had electric lights in this house when we bought it.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Respondent 1:** But in doing the repair, plastering, etcetera, then I found these pipes in the wall.

**Interviewer:** Oh my god.

**Respondent 1:** They're disconnected actually.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Respondent 1:** But no more gas in the house anyway. But [0:03:30] I thought it was quite unique, you know?

**Interviewer:** Very special. Yeah.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah. It was.

- Interviewer:** So you know – so you, because you lived next door, knew people who had lived here, and the generation – you knew the generation before.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. I knew the mother. Yeah, the mother. Yeah, when I was a little kid, I remember the mother passed away.
- Interviewer:** And where was that family from? What were their origins? What country?
- Respondent 1:** They were Jewish.
- Interviewer:** They were Jewish.
- Respondent 1:** And they were [0:04:00] – which now? What type of Jewish?
- Interviewer:** Usually from Eastern Europe.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** The ones who came here.
- Respondent 1:** I remember Mr. and Mrs. Sacks, and they were both – I think they were both born here.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent 1:** But her mother who owned this house – I think Polish. I think.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. Well let's just talk about that for a minute. When you moved in here, who [0:04:30] was living here? Who made up the neighbourhood?
- Respondent 1:** Predominately Jewish.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent 1:** Predominately.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent 2:** We had Jewish neighbours here.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. We had Jewish neighbours all across pretty well.

**Respondent 2:** There were Jewish neighbours.

**Respondent 1:** At one time, when we moved in Carmel, they were all Jewish neighbours here.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

**Respondent 1:** And there used to be...

**Respondent 2:** And there was Italians here.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** Mrs. Deferro, Mrs. Andero.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. There was about eight, ten Italian families on this street.

**Interviewer:** Right. **[0:05:00]** Now both of you are Italian.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. Born here.

**Interviewer:** You were born here, and your parents...

**Respondent 2:** We're both born here.

**Respondent 1:** Are Italian.

**Respondent 2:** Our parents were born in Italy.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. They're first-generation.

**Interviewer:** And what language did each of you speak when you were growing up at home?

**Respondent 2:** Oh, Italian.

**Interviewer:** You did.

**Respondent 2:** And I went to school I couldn't even speak English.

**Interviewer:** So it was in grade one that you learned English?

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, I guess so. Grade one.

**Interviewer:** In grade one is when you learned English.

**Respondent 1:** When did we started to learn English?

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent 2:** That's when.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And did you speak Italian at home?

**Respondent 1:** I spoke Italian because my mother didn't [0:05:30] speak much English.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent 1:** But she understood English pretty good, eh Carmel?

**Respondent 2:** Yes. But when we were home, we were not allowed to speak English in our home. We had to speak Italian.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** My father always used to say, "When you're in the house, you have to speak your own language. When you're out, I don't care what you speak."

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

- Interviewer:** Well you know, that's a good idea because often parents will speak the language and the children will respond in English, and they don't know it as well.
- Respondent 1:** That's right.
- Interviewer:** So you really speak the language.
- Respondent 1:** That's right.
- Interviewer:** You know, your father did what I think is a good idea.
- Respondent 2:** [0:06:00] That's right.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** I always tell people that, well no, I can't even speak English.
- Respondent 1:** No, no. You do all right.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So it was predominately Jewish. You're Italian, or your parents came from Italy...
- Respondent 1:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** ...and there were some other neighbours. Any other groups? Or was that pretty much it at that time?
- Respondent 1:** No. That was it.
- Interviewer:** That was it.
- Respondent 2:** I think that was it. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** That was it.
- Interviewer:** And then what happened through the years?
- Respondent 1:** Through the years?

- Interviewer:** The changes in terms of immigration.
- Respondent 1:** Well I know that when I was a little kid going to Lansdowne school, the old [0:06:30] Lansdowne school, I remember there was a great amount of immigrants that came into Toronto, and they were still – I mean they were Jewish, all Jewish kids because they had their hair all shaved.
- Interviewer:** Oh really?
- Respondent 1:** I think they had to do that when they get off the boat, I think.
- Interviewer:** I don't know. I guess maybe to...
- Respondent 1:** For lice. You know, I think they'd done that for health reasons.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent 1:** And I know our schools were packed. And then they grew [0:07:00] up with me. I mean they came to school. They were maybe seven, eight years old, the ones I remember there. They learned English, and they had done well. There's a lot of big families here that – where those people...
- Interviewer:** So they had lots of children.
- Respondent 1:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** Those families.
- Respondent 1:** Yes, yes. Well not a lot, but they'll say four, five.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** The Greenspans, I remember, down the street here. There was some prominent people.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.

- Respondent 1:** I mean, which is good. Good for us. [0:07:30] It's good for everybody.
- Interviewer:** And so you were the minority at that time.
- Respondent 1:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** How did your families and their families get...
- Respondent 1:** Perfect.
- Interviewer:** Anticipated my question.
- Respondent 1:** Perfect.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So you got along well.
- Respondent 1:** Italian and Jews always got along.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Always. No matter where.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Then it changed. Jewish people started bettering their lives, you know, becoming more businessmen, [0:08:00] making more money, and they moved north. And the Portuguese started to come in.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent 1:** And then it became mostly Portuguese. The neighbourhood changed greatly because there used to be a whole bunch of houses down by the school there. It's school property now. There was maybe twenty more houses, at least twenty. About twenty houses on [0:08:30] Robert Street, south of Russell, and again, they were all – they were mostly Jewish too. But they were all – because I know the school kids, you know? In classes with us. I knew where they lived because they're all together all the time. But

again, then after that it was Portuguese and there wasn't many – there was no Anglo-Saxons.

**Interviewer:** Really? So it was immigrants?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, yes.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Respondent 1:** **[0:09:00]** Now there might have been on parts of Willcocks, but in this part...

**Interviewer:** And those were bigger homes, I think. Some of them were bigger.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, they are. Some are real big. Real big.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Respondent 1:** Nice homes.

**Interviewer:** And then as the Portuguese people moved in, was there still harmony? Did people get along?

**Respondent 1:** Oh yeah.

**Interviewer:** So whoever came, people got along.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. Then most of the Italians moved out, and then we started getting a **[0:09:30]** business class of people.

**Respondent 2:** Which it is now.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. Which it is now.

**Interviewer:** So when would that – when do you think that all began?

**Respondent 1:** Well that's within the last ten years.

**Interviewer:** So around 2000.

- Respondent 1:** Yeah, yeah. I would say though. Would you, Carmel?
- Respondent 2:** Oh yeah. Well Paul got married in '88, so...
- Respondent 1:** No, it was after that.
- Respondent 2:** It was after that.
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah. It was after that.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. There's a lot of professional people in the area now.
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah. A lot of professional, [0:10:00] and Anglo-Saxon, and – no, not only Anglo-Saxon, but Anglo-Saxon we never had before in this area.
- Respondent 2:** No.
- Respondent 1:** But it's not as close harmony.
- Interviewer:** Okay. That's what I wanted – so I was going to ask you how it seems to have – what changes occurred as the immigrants made more money, thought they had a better life and moved up north.
- Respondent 1:** That's right. Then they bettered themselves and their families, which is the way it should be.
- Interviewer:** Well some of those think they were better off right here.
- Respondent 1:** No, you think of that after.
- Interviewer:** [0:10:30] [Laughter] Yeah, yeah. So what changes have you felt since the immigrants moved up north, and it's become more business and more professional?
- Respondent 1:** Right, right. Well I think it was closer before because most of the professionals that are living here, there's no children left on the street here.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

- Respondent 1:** At one time this street was humming with children.
- Interviewer:** Oh, that's a change.
- Respondent 1:** Really, you know?
- Interviewer:** That's [0:11:00] such a lovely picture.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Really. There's no kids here, is there?
- Respondent 2:** But it's very quiet now.
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah.
- Respondent 2:** And we sit on the porch in the evenings in the summertime, and there was not a child playing out in the street, whereas at one time when Paulo was here, there were kids playing all over the place.
- Respondent 1:** All over the schoolyards.
- Respondent 2:** And they were playing ball, we'd always yell at them, and say, "Please, go and play in the schoolyard. You're going to break a window." [Laughter] But...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, it's a...
- Respondent 2:** But [0:11:30] that's a change. When they all moved away, well that's changed.
- Respondent 1:** And the professionals here, they like their privacy, I guess.
- Interviewer:** So it's less of a community, I think you're saying.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** And in terms of – you mentioned sitting on the front porch.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. We do that in the summer all the time.

**Interviewer:** You do that. And do some of your neighbours, or a lot of your neighbours, or a few of your neighbours?

**Respondent 1:** A few of the neighbours. Not many now.

**Respondent 2:** Just a few. Not very many. Not very many sit out on the porch.

**Respondent 1:** No, not at all.

**Respondent 2:** But we do, because we like it.

**Interviewer:** Why is that?

**Respondent 2:** And a couple of people – Tony across the road, and Arthur maybe, they sit outside.

**Respondent 1:** Right, right, right.

**Interviewer:** Excuse me. This is flashing.

**[00:12:07]**

[End of recording]