

048 Faith Jackson

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: Now I'm sitting in the kitchen with Faith Jackson, whose grandfather-in-law...

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: ...was the first black postman in Toronto, and I just want to say thank you very much for coming.

Respondent: And you're welcome.

Interviewer: And that you have been living at 213 Brunswick for – you lived there from 1950 to 1972.

Respondent: [0:00:30] Right.

Interviewer: Okay. So I just want to say that – but I'm very grateful that you're here.

Respondent: Thank you.

Interviewer: So we're going to be talking about your experiences in this neighbourhood because '50 to '72 we want to know a lot about that, but also you have a lot of history that you know because your husband, who is Ernest Bruce Jackson who was born in 1926 lived at 234 Brunswick. That was a place that [0:01:00] his family has bought, his grandfather had bought.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Right. Okay. So maybe we'll just start with a little bit of the history about Albert Jackson, so could you just...

Respondent: I can tell you what I was told by my late husband's mother who was Ethel Jackson. The story [0:01:30] then was she told me and my children that Albert Jackson was the first black postman in the city. He was...

- Interviewer:** And where was he living at that time?
- Respondent:** I believe he was living at that time at 93 – yeah, I believe 93 or 95. Oh boy. It's either 93 or 95 Chestnut Street where the Metropolitan [0:02:00] Hotel is now.
- Interviewer:** Okay. But he bought property in this neighbourhood?
- Respondent:** Yes. He bought...
- Interviewer:** Tell me.
- Respondent:** 213 Brunswick.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** And he was the postman, I believe, from 1883 to 1918 when he passed away. And [0:02:30] then after he passed away, his wife, Henrietta Jackson, started buying property in this area of Harbord Village. She bought 234 Brunswick Avenue, she bought 238 Brunswick Avenue. Already in the family was 213 [0:03:00] Brunswick.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. So they already owned 213 and then they bought 234 and 238 on Brunswick.
- Respondent:** And then they bought 105 Borden.
- Interviewer:** Oh my god. And approximately when would all these have been?
- Respondent:** Oh Grandma Jackson bought after he passed in – I have the papers, I believe, in [0:03:30] 1920-something because my late husband moved into 234 Brunswick when he was just a baby, and he was born in 1926.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** So she'd already owned the houses then, and they're side-by-side, attached together, 234 and 238. There's no 236. And what she'd

done [0:04:00] when my father-in-law married, she sold him 234 Brunswick for a dollar. [Laughter] And she sold her other son, Harold Jackson, 238 for a dollar.

Interviewer: Very nice.

Respondent: 213 where I lived was to be her other son, Richard Jackson's, home [0:04:30] when he married, but he never married. So it eventually became his home because he looked after his mother for many, many years. Yeah. I believe they bought 105 Borden and I don't know that the numbers on Borden Street up near Bloor – there's a [0:05:00] parking lot there.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: And Henrietta Jackson had bought three small cottages that used to be there, and the city expropriated them and put in that parking lot. They weren't fabulous places, you know? They were small and attached together. Now there is a house that's standing that didn't get bought [0:05:30] by the city or expropriated by the city that's still standing there. My father-in-law bought that house on Borden Street.

Interviewer: So is that south of the parking lot?

Respondent: Yes. It's the house that...

Interviewer: The first house that's south of the parking lot.

Respondent: ...standing at the parking lot as you're walking down from Bloor to Harbord.

Interviewer: Yeah. I know that house. Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah. That was my father-in-law's. And my mother-in-law sold that house in [0:06:00] 1972. Where else did they own in this area? Well when they left 93 Chestnut Street, after Albert Jackson passed in 1918, she sold 93 or 95 Chestnut and she bought a big house at [0:06:30] 277 Palmerston Avenue, and it's a thirteen-room house.

Interviewer: So they really liked to own property.

Respondent: Oh she was something else.

Interviewer: Yeah, I'll bet. I'll bet.

Respondent: And I really don't know all the houses that Richard Jackson owned. I do know he owned a home. I believe it was called Russet Avenue, wherever that is up here, and he owned a lot [0:07:00] in the Leslie, Queen area. And that's about all that I was told that he owned.

Interviewer: Could we come back and talk a little bit? I'm going to want to know your impressions of this area and the changes, but just a little bit more on Albert Jackson about what – the stories that you've heard about his life as the first black postman in [0:07:30] Toronto. So what are some of the stories that have come through?

Respondent: Well he was an escaped slave. His mother, Anne Marie Jackson, brought with her seven kids.

Interviewer: From where?

Respondent: From Delaware and escaped here through [0:08:00] the Underground Railroad. And I believe he was the youngest of the lot. He was either two or three years old. And when she'd come here, she was helped by another former slave who was the fellow that owned the first [0:08:30] taxi service in the city. His name was Thornton Blackburn. And I guess as my mother-in-law told me that they went up – when they went to school, she took in washing – Anne Maria did – and helped raise those kids, but before she came, the slave-owner – and the reason why she came, the slave-owner had taken her oldest two sons, John and Richard, [0:09:00] and sold them from her, and she asked her husband to come, and he didn't want to come. For somehow, some reason, he was a free slave, but because he was a free slave did not make her a free slave, or her children. So she didn't want any more of her children taken from her, so she decided to come through the Underground Railroad. And then I [0:09:30] guess they went to school and that. And the two sons that were sold did escape from there through the

same channels of the Underground Railroad and met up with the mother here. And the one son, Richard, became a barber, and he lived with his sister on Elizabeth Street.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: The other one became [0:10:00] a writer, I believe. And at the time when Albert became the postman, the story that we were told was that they didn't want him – the coworkers who were white did not want him to be over them, like have a better position than them, so they didn't let him go out and deliver the papers, [0:10:30] deliver the mail. So the oldest guy, John Jackson, the one that had escaped and met up with his mother, he wrote to an organization and there was all kinds of turmoil about why he wasn't out, and somehow it was an election year, so I hope I get this right, and Sir John A. Macdonald...

Interviewer: Oh my god.

Respondent: ...interceded.

Interviewer: Wow.

Respondent: And two days [0:11:00] after John A. Macdonald interceded, he was allowed to go out and he was a postman from 1883 to 1918 when he passed.

Interviewer: And as he delivered the mail, were there stories that you heard about that? Were there issues or difficulties? Or?

Respondent: My mother-in-law didn't say too much about, [0:11:30] you know, what happened with him delivering the mail. Only she said something to the effect that some of the people – I don't even know what area he delivered in, but she said some of the people just didn't like the idea of a black person touching their mail, so.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: From that I don't know. But people often wonder, as my mother-in-law would say, [0:12:00] what and how on the money that he made

were they ever to buy that property that they bought. Well Henrietta Jackson, his wife, she was a seamstress and the story my mother-in-law told was that those boys never really – the three sons – [0:12:30] never really had to buy clothes. She sewed everything. And they were very thrifty.

Interviewer: I'll bet.

Respondent: I call it cheap, but [laughter] my mother-in-law said you were very thrifty. [Laughter] My mother-in-law lived in that house, as I say, from when my husband, my late husband was a baby until in 1972 when [0:13:00] we bought a house out in Scarborough. We took her with us.

Interviewer: Ah.

Respondent: And I think when I came in the area, there was a lot of Jewish people in the area, and then it seemed that the Portuguese came in and people started moving out. I had a nice neighbour, a lady – a couple by the name [0:13:30] of Mr. and Mrs. Feld, and there was, I believe, an alderman in the city called Grossman. He lived across the road, and when I lived there, got to know his mom. His mom and dad were super nice people. I didn't get to know him that well. Wasn't easy living there at 213, even at the time that I was there from '50. [0:14:00] The early '50s. There was lots of name-calling. These immigrants that came in, especially the Portuguese and that, they were just – the kids were called...

Interviewer: What were they called?

Respondent: They were called "nigger," and – seeing that we were always arguing, and trying to teach these people. It seemed that that probably was the [0:14:30] first word that their parents taught them when they'd seen blacks. There was a Ukrainian family who lived on the same side of the street as me. I don't know the name – the number of the house, but there was two, actually three girls and a boy, and we all became very good friends, and their [0:15:00] daughter is still a friend of my family growing up. And she married and separated, and she had two girls. Those two girls are friends of my grandchildren. Oh yeah. And her children and her are part of my

family. She's what I call my adopted daughter, Tina. All these [0:15:30] many years.

Interviewer: So that's the Ukrainian family.

Respondent: The Ukrainian family.

Interviewer: And you became very close with them.

Respondent: Oh yeah. She's – yeah.

Interviewer: But your children and you experienced some pretty harsh behaviour and language from...

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. Even at school the kids. My husband told us stories about how there used to be at one time some gang or something at Christie Pits. [0:16:00] There used to be a Christie Pits gang, and there used to be name-calling and that, and that's how he learned to take care of himself.

Interviewer: So he had to learn to fight.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And he had a – he said he had a few Jewish friends that these guys used to like to pick on, and he was their protectors. They were his buddies. And oh yeah.

Interviewer: So he had to really learn [0:16:30] to protect himself or else he'd get beaten up, or chased, or taunted.

Respondent: My son, my son that's alive, he was born in '57, so I think he's in his fifties. Fifty-four or fifty-five this year. He would be chased home – one day he was chased home by three kids and crying and that, and I told him, "No, you're going to stop right now," and that kid was [0:17:00] in our pathway and I told him, "No, you're going to go and confront him. I don't want you to fight because that's not the way to do it, but you've got to do something that these guys don't keep

beating you up and stuff when you're walking to school." And well they started, and then I separated them, and then after that he didn't seem to have too much trouble, but once you ran from [0:17:30] the name-calling and stuff, every day he would come home crying.

Interviewer: That must have been heart-breaking for you...

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: ...as a mother.

Respondent: So I said, "No." Because I went through the same thing growing up in the city. Yeah. When I lived on D'Arcy Street. That's where I grew up from early, I'd say when I was seven or eight until I got married. But [0:18:00] you had to deal with it. It's so much different now. It's a lot better.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: Everybody seems to try to get along.

Interviewer: So it was hard for your grandfather-in-law initially and through the generations, and you said it got better and better, but even – you said it was hard for you and then your children too, and they had to learn to take a strong stand in some way or another.

Respondent: Yeah. But [0:18:30] it's so much different now because from my children, like, my son, he's married to a German-Yugoslavian girl. Her father's Yugoslavian, her mother's German. So the mixing of the races [0:19:00] oh, the Jackson family is all right at this point in time. So...

Interviewer: Intermarried. Yeah.

Respondent: ...intermarried. I often think about what does Albert Jackson – would have thought from where he came to where the Jacksons are today.

- Interviewer:** So you're saying a lot of them are married to people who are not black.
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. There's a lot of intermarriage in the Jackson [0:19:30] family. Then in my immediate family, as I said, my son is married to a German-Yugoslavian, and my youngest daughter, who's fifty-one, she's married to a Portuguese.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So you have a range...
- Respondent:** Yes. A range.
- Interviewer:** Right. Right.
- Respondent:** And now I have a grandson who's married a girl from El Salvador last year, and I have another grandson that's going [0:20:00] with a young lady from Argentina. And another grandson is going with a young lady from Guyana, and my oldest daughter married a Trinidadian. My second daughter married an Antiguan. [Laughter] And my son that passed, he didn't ever marry. He was just by himself. [0:20:30] And who else? And then now I have a granddaughter married to a Hawaiian.
- Interviewer:** You have a little United Nations in your family.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Just for the record, when you first came you told me about your children, grandchildren, etcetera. Just tell me about that for our tape – all the number of generations that you have.
- Respondent:** Oh. Yes. I married and had five.
- Interviewer:** And you had your first child at what age?
- Respondent:** [0:21:00] I was not quite seventeen. [Laughter] Yes. And then my oldest daughter – well you want to know how we got to all these generations right?
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.

Respondent: So my oldest daughter had three children. She had two girls and a boy. My second daughter, she had three children. She had two girls and a boy. My son, he [0:21:30] never married. He didn't have any. And then my other son is married to the German-Yugoslavian. They have three sons. And my youngest daughter married to a Portuguese fellow. They have one son. And then I have a step-granddaughter from my second daughter's marriage. Her husband had had a daughter previously, so she's my step-granddaughter, and she has two children. [0:22:00] So that made me at that point in time, when they had their children, a grandmother to eleven. And from being a grandmother of the eleven, I am now the great-grandmother of nine. And then two weeks ago I became the great-great-grandmother [0:22:30] of a new baby girl, whose mother is from Bosnia.

Interviewer: Oh my god.

Respondent: And I am seventy-eight years old and I will be seventy-nine in July.

Interviewer: And I'll add that as I said to you before the tape was turned on that you could easily lie by twenty years and nobody would suspect it at all. I can't believe it. You look gorgeous.

Respondent: Thank you. And my daughter, the oldest one that would be sixty-two, [0:23:00] she still looks – she's small and she still looks so young. Nobody puts her past thirty-five.

Interviewer: So you look young and she looks young.

Respondent: And her oldest daughter is forty-two, and she looks like sixteen.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And my fifty-one-year-old daughter still gets carded at a casino.

Interviewer: [Laughs] Lovely. [Laughs]

Respondent: And [0:23:30] she has one daughter and I don't know if...

Interviewer: So all the women are young and beautiful.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Young-looking and beautiful.

Respondent: It's unbelievable. I don't know what it is. My oldest daughter jokingly will say, "Well it's designer jeans."

Interviewer: [Laughs] Okay.

Respondent: Very, very close family. My four children, my grandchildren, and myself, and my great-grands, and I travel all over the world with them. They just have [0:24:00] to have me there. And they like to go with me to my places where I go every year.

Interviewer: And just briefly would you just tell me what your work is at seventy-eight going on seventy-nine? And talk about the community.

Respondent: Okay. I'm with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal and it's an appointment by the government. I have been with them since the tribunal first started in [0:24:30] 1985 and at that point in time you were appointed every three years. The appointment system has changed now, but it's – my Chair still wants me, so I am there until 2014. And if I stay until October 2014, I would be eighty-one years old.

Interviewer: [0:25:00] Ah. Yeah.

Respondent: But I enjoy it.

Interviewer: And some people by fifty-five can't wait to retire. And here you are...

Respondent: And I – on the Appeals Tribunal, I'm what you call a worker member. Next to me sits a neutral Vice-Chair, and then somebody from the employer community. How I am referred to, it's a worker member. It's because I was involved with the union and I used to be a business agent with a union, [0:25:30] and when this tribunal started they wanted a visible minority, a woman, and the Ontario

Federation of Labour is the one that put my name into the government, and that's how I got the position.

Interviewer: And they never looked back. And you never looked back either.

Respondent: No. I never looked back.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. So this is a wonderful background to your family, your husband's family, and yourself too. Now you mentioned that [0:26:00] there were problems in all the generations because of being black.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: So that is something that I wanted to talk about and it was there as I would have suspected. Unfortunately, it was there, but you're saying that your perception is that it has genuinely changed.

Respondent: Yes, it has changed a whole lot. I mean it's just [0:26:30] totally different because this is now such a multicultural city.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And everybody is mixed, mixed, and mixed, and I think things have – myself, I feel things have changed.

Interviewer: Definitely for the better.

Respondent: Yes. And getting back to even my workplace, [0:27:00] people from every part of the world there, and we just work together. The collegiality of being there and being friends, you know, it's unbelievable.

Interviewer: So your husband's grandfather did not have that experience.

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: He had...

Respondent: He wouldn't have.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And my mother-in-law, she didn't have that experience [0:27:30] either. My mother-in-law was originally from Cincinnati, a border of Kentucky, and her sister worked in service because that's the only job you could have.

Interviewer: Service meaning?

Respondent: In living in a person's house, cleaning and stuff. And the people she worked for in Cincinnati are – my mother's sister – brought her to Toronto. They came here to work and to live. And so after [0:28:00] my mother-in-law's sister was here for a bit, she sent for my mother-in-law. My mother-in-law was only thirteen years old and she brought her here. But my mother-in-law saw things down there that really were horrible. She saw a young boy that she knew, he was eight or nine, lynched and so – like tarred, and feathered, [0:28:30] and the Ku Klux Klan in the area where she lived and that. That's why my mother-in-law's sister wanted to get her up here, and when my mother-in-law came here, she didn't – you know, she didn't have a very good love for white people.

Interviewer: No? No wonder.

Respondent: And [0:29:00] I think I changed that. Yeah. Because I've always had friends of every – tried to be nice to everybody, and I had lots of friends and lots of white friends.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well she had learned to be afraid of them. She had learned that they would hurt her and hurt her family.

Respondent: But as she got older when she was in her seventies and eighties, [0:29:30] she said to me, you know, "It's so different in how you live and how I live and my children lived, and how my children were to

respect everybody. That's what I taught them. It was hard for her to see all the intermarriage.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: [0:30:00] But I think I won her over because she said to me, "It's not all that bad. There is some good people." I said, "Sure, there's good and bad in every race, like there's good and bad in every person. No matter how bad that person is, you must look for the good. There's got to be some good."

Interviewer: That was a gift that you gave to her to help her move along and let – because the other was fear and anger.

Respondent: Yes. That's exactly...

Interviewer: So you really gave her a lovely [0:30:30] gift by helping her let go of some of that, but it's understandable that she had it, considering what she grew up with.

Respondent: Yeah. But you can't be all your life against a race of people or someone for – you can't blame a whole race for – and I'm sure you understand what I'm trying to say.

Interviewer: But did you realize at the time how much you were helping her and making her life better by helping [0:31:00] her let go of some of that?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Good for you.

Respondent: And she wasn't a bad person. She was a good person. She was. I loved her. I loved her like a mother. She was very special to me.

- Interviewer:** So she must have felt that way about you too, that all these things – I talk about the mirror effect. So if you loved her, it's because she loved you and she was a loving person. Yeah. Okay. So you talked about what it [0:31:30] was like living here, you know, different colour, different race, and that it really has improved. What are the languages that you remember in the neighbourhood?
- Respondent:** Well Jewish, and then there was Italian, but not – I can't say there was a lot of change in the area to Italian. I remember lots of Portuguese.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. So the waves of immigration, [0:32:00] Jewish people were here?
- Respondent:** And then they sort of moved out.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. To Bathurst.
- Interviewer:** I think that they felt that that was improving their lives.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** When they had enough money they moved to bigger places out of this neighbourhood.
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah. Bathurst and Steeles, and Sheppard and stuff, and but you know, you never stopped going up there and buying – I used to love – [0:32:30] what is it? Gefilte fish? [Laughter] Oh yeah. And a lot – what was that other – my husband used to love some kind of – it's red. Eel or something?
- Interviewer:** Lox?
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Fish?
- Respondent:** Yeah.

- Interviewer:** Sliced lox?
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. Yeah.
- Respondent:** And...
- Interviewer:** So you know, now that we're talking about that, I wonder whether – so when you were living on Major...
- Respondent:** On Brunswick.
- Interviewer:** ...on Brunswick, [0:33:00] what was the cross-street, the east-west cross-street that you were closest to?
- Respondent:** Sussex.
- Interviewer:** Okay.
- Respondent:** I lived three houses south of Sussex on the east side of Brunswick.
- Interviewer:** Got it. Okay.
- Respondent:** Three houses down. My mother-in-law, and two houses, 230 and 234, were on the west side of Brunswick.
- Interviewer:** Right.
- Respondent:** [0:33:30] And she was three houses down. So I'm three houses up from Sussex corner, and she's three houses down.
- Interviewer:** Right.
- Respondent:** So I saw her every day of my married life.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. That's a lot. So what – tell me – I mean you're talking about gefilte fish and lox, these kinds of things, and that...

- Respondent:** Knishes. [Laughter] I love them.
- Interviewer:** Me too. Talk to me please about the stores in the neighbourhood, the stores, the [0:34:00] corner stores, the Jewish stores, the Hungarian, all these kinds of things because we're moving kind of naturally into that topic.
- Respondent:** Yeah. There was a store at the corner of Major. Major and Sussex on the west side. There was a lady in there by the name of Nelly who was Jewish. And you know, you didn't have – we didn't have a lot of money at that time, and my husband was struggling, and I had these kids. He worked for Imperial Oil. [0:34:30] 111 St. Clair. He started on Church Street and ended at 111, and Nelly would trust you for whatever you needed until payday if you ran out of money.
- Interviewer:** So if you wanted to buy...
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...a loaf of bread, you'd say...
- Respondent:** Yeah. A loaf of bread.
- Interviewer:** She would just mark it down on a little piece of paper. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Some pickles and stuff like that in a barrel she had. Yeah, she was a sweetheart.
- Interviewer:** But isn't that a lovely feeling that you know she trusts you...
- Respondent:** [0:35:00] Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** And that payday...
- Respondent:** And he knew her. My husband knew her, knew Nelly from, I guess, from when he was younger, you know?
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. So that was a corner store where? Nelly knew you, and did she know everybody's name in your family?

Respondent: Pretty well.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: And she would trust you. So if you...

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: You could kind of buy on credit – and yeah, yeah.

Respondent: I forgot about that. And even when I moved I came back, Nelly was [0:35:30] still alive. She was getting old, but somebody else was running it, but she was still living there, and I asked to see her and speak to her. Then I had at the corner of Major and Harbord Street there used to be a – like a – it wasn't a grocery store. It sold cigarettes and pop and stuff, and their names were Eisenberg and [0:36:00] I had a good relationship with them too. They were really, really nice. I'd buy stuff and that. And then one time I went to Acapulco and I met both him and her there. Can you imagine?

Interviewer: [Laughs] Oh god. Coincidence.

Respondent: And their son had married a Mexican girl.

Interviewer: Talk about all this intermarriage.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: It goes all ways. Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah. Then there used to be the – [0:36:30] oh god, let me get the right – Harbord Bakery?

Interviewer: It's still there, yeah.

Respondent: Yeah. We used to go there to Harbord Bakery and there used to be, on Brunswick Avenue just before you got to Harbord, there

used to be Feld's Drugstore and it was on, you know, the same street as us.

Interviewer: And would they have known your family by face, by name?

Respondent: [0:37:00] Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Could you do the credit thing there if you needed to?

Respondent: No, we never did.

Interviewer: You didn't do it there, but you had it at Nelly's corner.

Respondent: Oh yeah. I'll never forget Nelly.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: And who else? What else was around in terms of stores?

Respondent: Used to go on Bloor Street a lot. It was – you know...

Interviewer: What was on Bloor at that time?

Respondent: So hard to...

Interviewer: Anything at all that comes to mind. Theatres? [0:37:30] Movie theatres?

Respondent: Yeah. There was a show at – just as you – just before you got to Bathurst Street on the north side.

Interviewer: So that's now the Bloor Cinema.

Respondent: Yeah. There used to be a club on the other side of the street, the south. Something to do with Orchid, the Blue Orchid or something because that's where we had [0:38:00] the wedding of my first daughter. What else was up there?

- Interviewer:** You know, I'm not forgetting that you lived here a long time, you left forty years ago.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** You lived here from '50 to '72, so you actually left forty years ago.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So if your memory isn't crystal clear, it's understandable.
- Respondent:** And then I had this lady friend, I think probably everybody knows her, Rosie Schwartz?
- Interviewer:** I've heard about her. Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** [0:38:30] I was a good friend of Rosie's. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** I think I have to meet Rosie.
- Respondent:** She's a sweetheart.
- Interviewer:** She lived on Brunswick?
- Respondent:** Yeah. And she was still on Brunswick, and I used to come down periodically to see her. I haven't seen her for a while. I hope she's okay. And she had her brother, Max, knew a couple of her brothers and my son that died. He was a good friend of Max. Yeah. And [0:39:00] her son, Paul, and I went to Paul's bar mitzvah. [Laughter] I'm not sure if I went to Paul's wedding or not.
- Interviewer:** What you're saying is you had a friendly relationship with Rosie and with other people around.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And her family too.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: And then who? There was another lady up near Bloor called Mary Peters. I was a good friend of hers, and I think Mary was Ukrainian or Polish. I think she's [0:39:30] still there too.

Interviewer: But what do you recall about either synagogues, churches – any that you can remember?

Respondent: Well there was a synagogue on Brunswick. I don't know if it's still a synagogue...

Interviewer: Well there is one on Brunswick just north of...

Respondent: North of Harbord.

Interviewer: ...Harbord.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: On the east side.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. It's a very lively place right now.

Respondent: And my neighbour next door, the Felds, I used to turn on [0:40:00] the lights and turn off the lights. I used to do all that down on D'Arcy when I was little.

Interviewer: So these people were religious and they wouldn't turn their lights on and off and you did it for them.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh yeah, yeah. Now people can set timers, but at that time the timers didn't exist.

Respondent: I even have it on my stove, my new stove. You know, for the Sabbath.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh my god, so you did that for one of the Jewish [0:40:30] families in the neighbourhood?

Respondent: Yeah. Probably did it for more. I know I did lots more on D'Arcy Street when I lived down there when I was younger.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Yeah. So the Jewish people and the Jewish stores in your neighbourhood were quite central in your life.

Respondent: Yeah. We got along very well.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. What did you have behind the house that you lived in? Like I have a [0:41:00] table and some plants and stuff. Did you use it at all? And what was behind? I assume that there was something behind your house.

Respondent: There was no lane.

Interviewer: No lane.

Respondent: There was no lane on that side of Brunswick.

Interviewer: Okay. So what was behind?

Respondent: We had a backyard.

Interviewer: And do you use it?

Respondent: Oh god yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Respondent: Oh yeah. A huge backyard.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: Little house and a huge backyard to have barbecues.

Interviewer: [Laughs] Little house and a huge backyard.

- Respondent:** [0:41:30] I used to have the kids out there and play with the kids, and yeah. And it was the neighbourhood, like as they got a little bigger and got to be teenagers, and got to go around and meet more people, and so – there was this young black guy. Every time he saw smoke coming from our yard, I don't care where he was, he was there. He...
- Interviewer:** He wanted to sample what you were eating?
- Respondent:** Yeah. And barbecuing again. [0:42:00] Yeah. We had lots of fun in that house. It was an old house, but we had fun.
- Interviewer:** And who lived there? You and your husband and your five children?
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** That's it.
- Interviewer:** And how many bathrooms did you have? Of course. [Laughs] For the tape, we'll say that you pointed with one finger.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Right. Now people with a family of seven would think we need at least two or [0:42:30] three bathrooms.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. My grandkids and kids always need something, you know? They have to have...
- Interviewer:** Yeah. They need it. I love the word need.
- Respondent:** The same granddaughter I went to New Orleans with this weekend, she's married to a guy from Trinidad who does computers and does programs, and I guess he does very well. And she has this SUV and she has two [0:43:00] small kids, and they're both in their – well she's now thirty-eight and her daughter's five, and her son is

four. So they waited to have kids. So she had the SUV and when you put the car seats in and then him and her, and my daughter, then there was no room for me, right? So it was just enough room to hold them. And so this same granddaughter said to him one day, she says, [0:43:30] "You know, I don't like this because I can't get Nana in the – there's no room for Nana in the car. What we really need is a seven-seater." So he said, "Well if you need a seven-seater so Nana can have a seat, then you get a seven-seater." So she went and she got her seven-seater. So not too long ago I was visiting with him and [0:44:00] visiting her, and she's now in Mississauga, and he said, "Nana, you're not in the car very often, that much anymore like you used to be." But you can't keep up with them, like they always want to go drive to Buffalo, they want to go here and there. So I said, "No, not as much as I used to be." So he said, "Well, your seat's in the car, so make yourself available for now."

Interviewer: Ah, so that was please come and spend more time with us.

Respondent: Yeah. I'll tell [0:44:30] you, you've only got so many hours in a day, and...

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. And everybody wants you.

Respondent: Yeah. The second daughter is very needy because she had a heart attack when she was fifty-six and she's now sixty, sixty, sixty-one this year. She's doing not too bad. She had congestive heart failure at fifty-six and she almost died that night, but she's [0:45:00] still hanging in.

Interviewer: Those are pretty big worries, eh?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. So you're saying you used your backyard with barbecuing and feeding people, and people did...

Respondent: Yeah. And lots of fun.

Interviewer: What about the front of the house? Did you use that much? Sitting outside the front? Or?

Respondent: Yeah. We had a little porch. I used to sit out there, but we had a lot of grass and that, and the kids were always doing something out there too. And there was always gangs of kids at my house.

Interviewer: Inside [0:45:30] the house and on the porch?

Respondent: Yeah. Outside, inside, and my husband would come home from work and, oh my god. So where did all – because it was a house where all of them were welcome.

Interviewer: Yeah. And they felt it.

Respondent: Yeah. Neighbours, kids across the street, and everybody. Tina and – not so much her sisters, and her, and...

Interviewer: So you had a very welcoming and lively home.

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: And the kids used to play records, put the record player [0:46:00] out in the back and dance. And well it's one place where you knew where they were.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. During your years here, or now when you come back, what are some of the changes that you see? Or did you see even in that – from '50 to '72?

Respondent: Hm. What are the changes I see? [0:46:30] Well for one thing, Bloor Street is totally different. Harbord's different too. It's just different. There's more restaurants, and bookstores. The whole neighbourhood changed. I can remember just before we left, I think that there was that pottery store at the corner of Brunswick and Harbord.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's there now.

- Respondent:** Yeah. And...
- Interviewer:** It's been there a long [0:47:00] time. So you left in '72 and it was already here.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Okay.
- Respondent:** And there used to be – or there's apartments now that are not too high on – is it Borden and...
- Interviewer:** Harbord.
- Respondent:** Harbord. Used to be a laundry. My mother-in-law used to work in that laundry when she was younger, and that's now, like, apartments or...
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. And it might be some kind of [0:47:30] subsidized housing.
- Respondent:** Yes, it is.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. So you said the feeling on Bloor Street was very different at that time.
- Respondent:** Yes. Because it's – oh, and Starkman's – is Starkman's still – Starkman I don't think is still there.
- Interviewer:** No.
- Respondent:** It used to be at the corner of Major and Bloor.
- Interviewer:** So that might be where Kinko's is now.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Starkman's – is that a drugstore? Or is that the place [0:48:00] that has all the handicap wheelchairs and all that kind of stuff?

- Respondent:** It was like a drugstore back then.
- Interviewer:** Right. So I think it's evolved into what it is now on Bathurst.
- Respondent:** Yeah. Now it's Starkman's – yeah. Down on Bathurst Street.
- Interviewer:** Right, right, right.
- Respondent:** Yeah. It's a totally different neighbourhood.
- Interviewer:** What about – you said you didn't have a back lane right behind you, but there are a lot of back lanes. Did your children ever play in the back lanes? Or was that **[0:48:30]** not something in your life because you didn't have one right behind you?
- Respondent:** Oh I don't know.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Where did your children go to school? Which school?
- Respondent:** My kids went to Huron Street School. My daughters, when they were little, small, started at Lansdowne, but then when I went to start my son, they said that he had to go to Huron Street **[0:49:00]** School, and so I took my daughters out of Lansdowne and had them go to the same school. And my husband spent all his public school years in Huron Street School.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** And my son's sons went to Huron Street School.
- Interviewer:** Oh, so Huron Street has that – several generations of the Jackson family.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** **[0:49:30]** The – let's see. We've talked about the stores, the churches. Are you aware of the kind of dating that people did during those years in this neighbourhood? You didn't date, you just got married and had kids. [Laughs]

- Respondent:** Too busy with the kids. No, I...
- Interviewer:** No, that's not something that...
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. **[0:50:00]** What about the University of Toronto? Do you have any impressions of its significance to this neighbourhood?
- Respondent:** I think some of the students that went to the school, some people rented rooms to the students. Some people on Sussex Avenue, and I don't know. And higher up **[0:50:30]** on Brunswick towards Bloor, because my friend, Rosie, she rented to students in her house, and her brother's place next door.
- Interviewer:** I'm going to have to meet Rosie. She lives on Brunswick?
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Do you know the number?
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** Okay. But I'll find her. What about the Kensington Market? Was that something your family used at all?
- Respondent:** Oh god, I loved Kensington.
- Interviewer:** So and **[0:51:00]** what did you love about it and...
- Respondent:** I loved the fresh fish. The fresh vegetables. We shopped there a lot.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. Yeah. So is that what...
- Respondent:** Even when I lived on D'Arcy Street...
- Interviewer:** You went to the market.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: So might that be where the family did most of your shopping? Or did you go to a supermarket?

Respondent: Well they had this supermarket at Dominion at Robert and – they opened up.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: But we did a lot **[0:51:30]** of going down to the Market. My husband would go and get the fish, and carry home fruit, and all the vegetables, and stuff like that. Then we used to have a guy – I don't really remember his name. He used to come with a small – well see, when I moved down there on Brunswick, when I first was there, we didn't have a refrigerator. **[0:52:00]** We had the icemen...

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: ...delivering the blocks of ice for the old – that old...

Interviewer: Icebox.

Respondent: Icebox.

Interviewer: So how did he deliver it? What was the means of getting it to you? Was it a truck? Was it a horse?

Respondent: If I'm not mistaken, I think it was a horse.

Interviewer: Likely.

Respondent: Yeah. And that was maybe when we first went there in the '50s, like in '51. **[0:52:30]** Maybe, maybe '52 and then we got a refrigerator. I remember when my mother-in-law got her first fridge.

Interviewer: Was she quite delighted with it?

Respondent: Yes, she was.

- Interviewer:** Did she trust it? [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Yeah. That was really something.
- Interviewer:** But they were not self-defrosting fridges.
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** Nevertheless, they were still a big jump from the ice.
- Respondent:** Yeah. But then there used to be a guy who came with his little truck, and I used to buy – some days he would be in our **[0:53:00]** area and we would buy whatever he had...
- Interviewer:** He would sell stuff? Sell...
- Respondent:** Yeah. Vegetables. Always had good asparagus.
- Interviewer:** [Laughs] You have a good memory...
- Respondent:** Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...considering you left forty years ago.
- Respondent:** Loved his asparagus.
- Interviewer:** That's funny.
- Respondent:** Too bad I couldn't remember his name. So many people to remember.
- Interviewer:** How safe did you feel at that time? Aside from, as you say, being black had some **[0:53:30]** problems because people were discriminating, but in terms of the general safety of the robberies and...
- Respondent:** No, it was safe. I don't think half the time that we ever had our front door locked.
- Interviewer:** Ah.

Respondent: Yeah. I was safe. We used to get a lot of guys when the kids were small. I'd say maybe five, six years old. That would bring you into the early '60s. A lot of guys would be hungry and looking for food, **[0:54:00]** and would knock on the door and ask you, yeah, you know, money for food. I fed everybody. I baked every day. You come to my door, you don't tell me you're hungry.

Interviewer: Yeah. I'll feed you.

Respondent: I'll feed you.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: I never – living on Brunswick I can tell you I never – I never felt unsafe.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Respondent: **[0:54:30]** Never. Walk Bloor Street.

Interviewer: And you didn't lock your doors.

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: That's interesting. Yeah.

Respondent: Oh for a long – for many years. Well half the time the kids would lose their keys anyhow.

Interviewer: Yeah. [Laughs]

Respondent: No, we never.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you remember the end of World War II? Would you have any memory of that happening?

Respondent: What year was that? 1945?

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: Well I was born in [0:55:00] '33.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. So you were young.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: All I remember back there was living on D'Arcy Street once we – I don't know what year it was. In the '40s, I guess, and we had a big snowstorm once where the snow was higher than – isn't that funny? Now this year we've got it warm.

Interviewer: Yeah, right. Right. Well [0:55:30] we're coming to the end. I'm wondering when you had agreed to be interviewed by me – and I'm wondering whether there's anything that you had thought we might talk about that I haven't touched at all that would help me understand your having lived here, your experiences in the neighbourhood, changes, anything at all?

Respondent: Well I had been in the neighbourhood [0:56:00] for over twenty-some-odd years, so when I moved, I really, really missed the area, and I had moved to Scarborough, and the first – I'd say the first year or so I just had to come and walk the streets.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Respondent: Yeah. And my husband missed – a lot of times [0:56:30] I would meet him at Imperial Oil and would leave the car there, or drive down a bit and then come down and be in the area to walk around. I did. I missed – I really missed Brunswick.

Interviewer: What did you miss? Do you know? Could you articulate that?

Respondent: I missed saying hello to people, talking to people. I missed Rosie and [0:57:00] her brother. And then there were some black families that moved in, the Garys. I missed them, and I used to come in and see them, then this other Polish friend, Mary – I miss her. I used to go to some church that – it was Mary up off of Bloor Street – and do

arts and crafts and stuff like that, where I learned how to knit and how to crochet in the afternoons when the kids were in school. Because I would get up early [0:57:30] in the morning and cook, and bake, and I would be in the area, so I missed it. It took me a good couple of years.

Interviewer: But what you missed was, I think, the community.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: The warmth, the friendliness, the familiarity.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent: At the time that I left I really did miss it.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And then when my mother-in-law passed away, [0:58:00] 234 became my late husband's house, right? And his brother. So at that time, my son was living in an apartment, so we put my son to live at 234, so I had every reason to be in the area.

Interviewer: [Laughs] Good excuse, eh? [Laughs]

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: So his son is twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old now, and then he had [0:58:30] the three boys there, and then my brother-in-law wanted to sell the house so he could get his money. I told my husband not to sell it, just buy him out. "No, I don't want to be bothered." At that time my husband – I think we knew that he was, you know, not going to be here that much longer, so said, "No, I'm selling it. Let him have his money and I can [0:59:00] do what I want." So he just took his share of the money from the house, and took my son, and went and bought my son a house on King Edward

Street in Woodbine and the Danforth area. That's where the bulk of the money from his share of the house went.

Interviewer: So you were very generous with your children.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. **[0:59:30]** So just in terms of this interview, I just want to say thank you...

Respondent: Thank you.

Interviewer: ...so much. Thank you so much. You've just given us a very, very rich history of the Jackson family and your experiences in the neighbourhood.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: And I thank you very much for that.

Respondent: Oh, you're very welcome.

[00:59:48]

[End of recording]