

084 Abraham Blank

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

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: I'm sitting at 90 Harbord with...

Respondent 1: 90 Borden.

Interviewer: Borden. Borden. We're still going to talk about Harbord. I'm sitting at 90 Harbord with Dinny Biggs, her husband, Abraham Blank, and the two – first, I just want to say to both of you thank you very much for inviting me into your home to see the changes that have been made, to look at pictures, and of course, to speak to both of you. And you've lived here at 90 Borden since **[0:00:30]** 1983, but Abraham, you lived – from 1974 you lived above Calandria.

Respondent 1: Calandria, yeah.

Interviewer: On Harbord.

Respondent 1: And that was 117 Harbord.

Interviewer: Okay. So – and you lived there for a while too, so you have a long history in this neighbourhood. And I want to hear your stories.

Respondent 1: Okay.

Interviewer: So thank you both very much.

Respondent 2: You're welcome.

Interviewer: I'm going to start with what brought you – what made you choose this neighbourhood?

Respondent 1: **[0:01:00]** What made me choose this neighbourhood?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: God. There's a – I was living up in Kendall in a basement apartment for a couple of years, and I had a girlfriend and we wanted a place that wasn't in the basement, and I ran into somebody who's moving out of her place above, you know, above the hairdresser next to Harbord Bakery, [0:01:30] and we called. She asked if I wanted to take it over, and I said yes. And I met Goldie, and Albert, and you know, they took a liking to me and rented the place. That time I think it was a hundred and twenty a month. I'm sure right now it's ten times that.

Interviewer: Yeah. But what you're telling me already is that what is now Harbord Bakery and includes Calandria...

Respondent 1: Yeah. Calandria was a hairdresser when I moved in.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Respondent 1: And it was a [0:02:00] hairdresser for about, I don't know – it was Calandria when you moved in. That was '83. I think the hairdresser moved out in '80.

Interviewer: So Albert bought that.

Respondent 1: They owned that.

Interviewer: Oh, they owned it and they were renting that out as a hairdresser.

Respondent 1: No. I think that was the original bakery there.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Respondent 1: Yeah. I mean, the bakery actually extended back, in the back of Calandria too. [0:02:30] You know, like...

Respondent 2: The bakery's 115.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Bakery's 115.

Respondent 2: The address was 117.

Respondent 1: Yeah. But behind the hairdresser was also part of the bakery.

Interviewer: The bakery. Oh, so the apartment was the hairdresser.

Respondent 1: The hairdresser.

Interviewer: And the back and the rest of it was...

Respondent 1: Yeah. They originally started the bakery back there, and then they bought the properties and they built that newer building there.

Interviewer: Now that...

Respondent 1: I don't know what year exactly.

Interviewer: Okay. So [0:03:00] beginning in 1974, you moved into this neighbourhood.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: How old were you at that time?

Respondent 1: What was I? Twenty-eight?

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Twenty-seven.

Interviewer: So you were an adult.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: And where were you working?

Respondent 1: Where was I working then? In '74 – I had a couple of things going on. I was in school at Ryerson in planning. I was basically

employed in summer [0:03:30] and through the year by a group called Downtown Action. It survived on a number of grants. We did research for community groups, basically title searches, corporate searches, and all that, and helping to fight developers with their various plans. This was the days when, you know, just as the reform council was taking over and the whole city was under trap by, you know, like bank developers trying to Manhattanize the downtown.

Interviewer: Well we're still fighting. I mean I'm on the board of directors of [0:04:00] Harbord Village Residents' Association and we are still – those are some of our important issues today.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: It's a lot easier – what do you call it now – the bylaws protect the neighbourhoods more than they did in those days. Those days, they can...

Interviewer: So you were active. You came to Toronto and you became active immediately.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. And you've continued being politically active, socially active?

Respondent 1: Yeah, well, what do you call – I got back – I was in Toronto [0:04:30] from '68 to '70 – I was out in B.C. for a year-and-a-half, and I came back in '71 and got involved in, what do you call, this neighbourhood actually in Bob Beardsley's federal campaign.

Respondent 2: Bob Beardsley.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Bob Beardsley in '71, and then a month later, the municipal campaign started up, and I actually worked as a canvass organizer for Dan Heap. I was actually in charge of the canvassers in this neighbourhood in what was called [0:05:00] Sussex-Ulster then.

Interviewer: That's right.

Respondent 1: It's still Sussex-Ulster to me.

Interviewer: To you. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah. And you know, like I was in charge of fifteen canvassers who, you know, canvassed for Dan, and we won that election.

Respondent 2: Was that Dan's first year as a councillor?

Respondent 1: His first year. Yeah.

Interviewer: And has this neighbourhood, Sussex-Ulster slash Harbord, politically – is it similar, has it changed from what it was in around 1974?

Respondent 1: Oh yeah. It's changed dramatically. When I [0:05:30] got here in '71, it was, I don't know, maybe about thirty-five percent what you would call Portuguese, and you know, a decent percentage Italian, and you know, probably less than fifty percent, you know, like English-speaking, I would say, at that time.

Interviewer: Less than fifty percent English-speaking.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Whoa. Okay.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah. Less than fifty percent English-speaking. You know.

Respondent 2: I think Eleanor's asking politically though too.

Interviewer: But this is very good, so please stay with that. Yeah.

Respondent 1: [0:06:00] Politically, what do you call it, you know, like it constantly was changing. You know, like it depended on which election was going on, and it depended on the amount of manpower you had to canvass. And in those days, you also had to be a little bit more sensitive in regards to asking people if they could they could afford

enough, they were citizens. Especially if you were in a Portuguese household because there were a lot of Portuguese living here, and they weren't exactly legal at the time, so you just didn't want to, you know, make anybody worse.

Interviewer: You didn't want to get them into [0:06:30] trouble.

Respondent 1: No, you don't want to make anybody nervous.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. So let's stay with that because that's an important part of this neighbourhood, how it has changed through every decade.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: So the Portuguese, Italian – just please talk a little more about the make-up, and then how it changed as you recall to where we are today. And Dinny, participate as much as you like.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: Oh, it's always been, you know, kind of being gentrified to one degree or another. [0:07:00] You know, continually. It's just...

Respondent 2: I remember there were a larger number of Jewish families.

Respondent 1: Yeah. There was a larger number of Jewish families here. Most of them, most of the older people have died off by now, in that sense, you know. Fanny was up the street, was in her late nineties.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Mrs. Jade is gone. I mean, there's just – I can just remember tons of...

Respondent 2: And [0:07:30] was there a number of Chinese families...

Respondent 1: Yeah, there were.

Respondent 2: ...when you started?

Respondent 1: Yeah. There were actually more Chinese families than there are now. There were more then than there are now.

Respondent 2: Oh.

Respondent 1: A lot more then.

Respondent 2: Okay.

Respondent 1: Actually, I actually think that – what do you call – and the Chinese families now are more – that are in this neighbourhood are more well-to-do than the ones, you know, that were there in the '70s.

Interviewer: I think we can make that as a generalization now. Certainly the people who have bought in the last twenty [0:08:00] years are more upper-middle class.

Respondent 2: But a number of the families that are still here that we know, our neighbours, say the Portuguese neighbours, they're a little older. They're in their seventies and they've been here longer, and their children were raised here, and then most of those children have moved to live in the suburbs. They're now living here in houses where they're the only two. So [0:08:30] you have to wonder what's going to happen next when that generation passes.

Respondent 1: That's been constant. You know, like people have been dying off, and the houses have been resold to people who have been gentrifying them.

Interviewer: I've certainly heard people say – not with my interviews, but just living in the neighbourhood for so many years, that the children often say to their parents, "Why are you staying in this old place? Why don't you come up north with us?" And the parents say, "No. This is where I want to be."

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: And we'll see if the children ever feel that they want to come [0:09:00] back, but I think a lot of them are glad to be up north in bigger, wider houses with more grass or whatever.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: It sort of depends. There are a lot of people who have been raised here too that have stayed here. When my son moved out, he moved out next door.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: You know?

Respondent 2: Renting.

Respondent 1: Yeah, renting. And yeah. I mean, there's been a combination of both, but it also depends on how they related to the neighbourhood.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: But I think [0:09:30] some people did feel that it was a show of success. They came as poor immigrants, and lots of people lived under one roof, and they felt that they were showing that they were successful when they could move out of the slum. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah. The gentrified, what you call gentrified families, the kids have a tendency more to stay in the neighbourhood than the older Portuguese families.

Interviewer: Who's living here now? Who do you see as on your street?

Respondent 2: Well there's an increased number [0:10:00] of people who are professors at the University of Toronto.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: And they're paying high prices to come and live in the houses, and fixing them up, and we have three within very close range of our house right here, and that's new for us, since '83 certainly.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. That's more than just professors. It's just basically professionals.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: [0:10:30] Yeah.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent 1: Professional people, one nature or another.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well that's who can afford it now. The prices have gone up so much. Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Prices were pretty high even in the '70s here. It was – Sussex-Ulster was actually more expensive than even Palmerston for a while, and you know, west of Palmerston.

Interviewer: Of course, you're an expert on that because you sell real estate, so you really know [0:11:00] prices.

Respondent 2: Can you ask, can you just generalize what prices were then?

Respondent 1: I've got to look it up, you know?

Respondent 2: About a hundred thousand?

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: In 1980? Uh-huh.

Respondent 2: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: A hundred thousand. And now that same house would go for?

Respondent 1: Mil.

Respondent 2: A million.

Respondent 1: A million.

Interviewer: Wow. Since 1980.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Or under a million if it was in the same condition as it was in 1980, and if it was renovated, it'd be a million plus. [0:11:30] Yeah. You have to look up that stuff statistically because you can't remember it.

Interviewer: But it's good to have a general ballpark figure.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: It's good enough.

Respondent 2: Yeah. Yeah. It's interesting.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Tell more about back when you moved into Harbord apartment.

Respondent 1: What do you mean?

Respondent 2: It was a large apartment.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: It was huge. Yeah, it was huge.

Respondent 2: It was quite large.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: And what was it like with your relationship as you got to know [0:12:00] Goldie and – was her husband alive then?

Respondent 1: Yeah. Albert.

Respondent 2: Albert. Yes.

Respondent 1: He was great. There was always a problem because what ended up happening was they would turn up the heat in the – what do you call it? They would turn up the heat in the beauty parlour, and I would have to go down and knock on the bakery door and get into the back, and Peter finally turned it down every now and then, and Albert and – you know, like it would happen quite a [0:12:30] bit in the winters. About once a week. You know, they got to know me, and they would hand me baked goods.

Interviewer: [Laughs] But you had this little battle going on of the hairdresser turning...

Respondent 1: Yeah. Somebody there just would, you know, like flip it up, or crank it up and not turn it down. It would get too hot.

Respondent 2: I remember the apartment being quite warm anyway being over the bakery.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent 2: So – and the smells. Oh.

Interviewer: Was it good or was it difficult?

Respondent 2: Very tempting.

Interviewer: [0:13:00] Yeah.

Respondent 2: I think we made a deal that we wouldn't go in to buy the bread just because it was too tempting.

Respondent 1: Mm-hm.

Respondent 2: Just to live over a bakery, so yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. I got heavy with cheese Danishes.

Interviewer: [Laughs] We all have certain things that we love the most. I love their lemon meringue pie. [Laughs] So then you moved into this house together and you have two children who were born here and grew up here.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Interviewer: [0:13:30] What was the nature of the street at that time? Did children play outside, using the front of the house, back of the house? What?

Respondent 2: Ours use more the front of the house and wandered around. They often would cross the street over to Lippincott and play at King Edward when they were younger.

Respondent 1: Yeah. They also used the backyard.

Respondent 2: And the backyard. There were a number of – well, for my son, there were quite a few [0:14:00] boys his age, so that was easier for him. For my daughter, not as many, and they attended an alternative school near – much further downtown, so they weren't neighbourhood kids from the school until they both – we changed and brought them to King Edward School.

Interviewer: And how old were they at that time?

Respondent 2: Naomi was eight and Josh was eleven.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Mm-hm.

Respondent 2: Yeah. So they had more friends then for sure. And...

Respondent 1: [0:14:30] More neighbourhood friends. Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yeah. And then Naomi went to high school at Central Tech, and Josh went to Harbord high school.

Interviewer: And how did each one make that decision, Central Tech versus Harbord?

Respondent 2: Well I think for Josh it was a push from friends and teachers to go to a more academic school, and for our daughter, Naomi, she just looked at a map and said, [0:15:00] "This is the closest school. It's the easiest to get to."

Respondent 1: And I wanted to go there.

Respondent 2: Oh yes. And she took the art program, the visual arts.

Respondent 1: She wanted to go into the art program.

Respondent 2: And that was a good fit for her.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what did she do with that art program? Where is she? What's she doing now?

Respondent 2: Well she's finishing a fine arts degree at Ryerson in theatre production.

Interviewer: Okay. So she stayed on that.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Ah.

Respondent 2: Very creative.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: And our son went onto university at Carleton in Ottawa. Didn't quite [0:15:30] finish a degree in public policy, but is now a farmer.

Interviewer: Really?

Respondent 2: Mm-hm. He's an organic farmer, but his summer jobs were in the Market, the Kensington Market, and he was very influenced by the organic farm – works through there. A man named Potts, everybody calls Potts, and when the farmers would come early, early in the morning to deliver their goods, Josh got to know them, and one of them challenged him one year and said, [0:16:00] "Why don't you take some weeks off and come work at the farm and see where the food really comes from." So he did, and then every summer he then turned – and it all turned into his career.

Interviewer: So does he have a farm somewhere?

Respondent 2: He's a partner with a farmer near Peterborough, and that's where he lives with his family. He has a son who's one-and-a-half.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent 2: Our first grandson, so that's exciting.

Interviewer: Yeah, it is.

Respondent 2: But he comes back and visits often, and the word goes out that [0:16:30] Josh is back, and there's always people – they come hang out and say hello, and lots of...

Respondent 1: Yeah. Josh is quite popular. He would have parties in joint backyards with four hundred kids.

Respondent 2: Yes. We don't really want them to [indiscernible 0:16:40]. [Laughter] Lots of complaints. Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you have a lane behind your house?

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: We do. It's Croft Street.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh, that's right. Of course, it's the same lane that I have.

Respondent 2: It's the same as yours. Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Was that used in any way by the children or by the adults, Croft?:

Respondent 2: Well our kids [0:17:00] certainly used it with...

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: ...roller skates or skateboarding, or bikes and things.

Respondent 1: Yeah. And I got – there's a parking space back there, and there's a basketball net there, and right across there's another basketball net, so they would, you know, play.

Interviewer: So there was a lot. It sounds if they played out there a fair amount.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. And there were more kids then when they were growing up than there are now, so I don't hardly see anybody playing back there.

Respondent 2: Well yeah. I guess I was thinking about that. As a parent, you sort of notice [0:17:30] what age group of the kids are because you hope they'll be playmates for your own kids. And there was sort of a gap for a while, and ours, in their late teens, seemed to be the only

ones right near the street, but by then they were going out of the neighbourhood for their fun, wherever they went. But now it's – we've noticed there's several more babies now on the street.

Interviewer: I have that near me, on both sides, babies.

Respondent 2: Yeah. And across the street, a new family moved in with two school-aged kids, and [0:18:00] it's good. And it's good. I see lots more babies it seems.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent 2: I'm thinking back to when you lived above the bakery, and the hairdresser. Just more about the street scenes at the time and what other stores were there that have changed. Was the gas station always there?

Respondent 1: No, the gas station was always there.

Respondent 2: Tarantino's?

Respondent 1: I don't know if it was Tarantino's. I remember before Tarantino got there, [0:18:30] there was somebody else there that used to complain about it constantly because they would be – those were the days where cars had – gave off a lot more leaded gas and fumes, and it polluted the air. And they would be, you know, like – you know, like if you left your window open sometimes, you could just get the fumes coming in.

Respondent 2: Were there as many restaurants on Harbord as there are now?

Respondent 1: Where the sushi place – there was a variety store there. A guy called Jack. [0:19:00] I forgot his last name already. Yeah. Frequent there. I think he was still there when you moved in.

Respondent 2: He was there.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. And there was – on the other side of me was the fish store, you know.

Respondent 2: I do remember that.

Interviewer: Okay. The fish store. Which point – that was on the corner of Major?

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And?

Respondent 2: Harbord.

Respondent 1: And Harbord. It's right on the corner there.

Respondent 2: Southeast corner.

Respondent 1: They were there until about '88 until about when [0:19:30] Naomi was born, I remember.

Respondent 2: Is that Loire restaurant now?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. They were there. Drum Travel was there for a long time. They moved in about '78 and they've been there ever since.

Respondent 2: That's on the west side of the...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Down the other side.

Respondent 2: All right.

Respondent 1: Yeah. And it's...

Interviewer: Any memories about the fish store at all or anything?

Respondent 1: Yeah. Fish was actually easier to buy there than the Kensington Market.

Interviewer: [0:20:00] So you bought fish there.

Respondent 1: Yeah. I always bought fish there. I found them to – you know, I don't know. I can't really remember well. They were Jewish and I just had an easy time going in there and getting fish from them in the market. What do you call – most of the fish stores were run by the Portuguese and I always had a, you know, had more of a cultural problem with the type of – they kept pushing their fish instead of letting me choose their fish. You know? It was a [0:20:30] difference at that time. And it was close by, and yeah.

Interviewer: More about Harbord Street then. Since we're talking about the stores on Harbord.

Respondent 1: Well, yeah. Harbord was – I don't know. It was just a great street. The bus ran by there. You always – the Harbord bus was fantastic. I think it ran more frequently then than it does now.

Respondent 2: It would have to be fantastic.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. And [0:21:00] you know, there were always bookstores there. You know, especially the first block.

Interviewer: Well there still are. Like Caversham is there and...

Respondent 1: Yeah. But there were more.

Respondent 2: There were more.

Interviewer: More.

Respondent 1: A lot more. A lot more bookstores.

Interviewer: So it was a block of bookstores.

Respondent 1: Block of bookstores. I mean, there was the Fifth Kingdom, which is a – a bookstore, Women's Bookstore, there was on the other side of the street there were about three or four used bookstores.
[0:21:30] And...

Respondent 2: Was the Royal Bank on the corner?

Respondent 1: Royal Bank was always there. Yeah. It was rebuilt. It was an old bank building that they rebuilt.

Interviewer: And I know Knox College was there.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. I remember canvassing in Knox College for Bob Beardsley in '71. There were a whole bunch of seminary students in there, and boy, they went at me over – the NDP's policy on abortion. Was the first time I had to really learn to hold my own in a debate I knew nothing about. [0:22:00] [Laughs]

Respondent 2: Was Morgentaler's clinic there?

Respondent 1: No. It came later. It came later in the, I think in the mid-'70s. They came after I move into the bakery.

Respondent 2: Okay.

Respondent 1: Moved into the bakery. They probably came around '76. I'm not sure.

Respondent 2: So there were some protesters in front of there you always had to deal with?

Respondent 1: I had to deal with them more later on in the early '80s, and [0:22:30] no. It was – they actually – at first they moved in, it was quiet and they just went about their business. I think in the mid-'80s, that's when the anti-abortion movement started really picketing and going crazy there, and literally nuts and bringing people...

Respondent 2: Do you remember the explosion?

Respondent 1: Yeah. I remember the explosion, but it – you know, you'd see women being escorted in there, and these people coming [0:23:00] out with, you know, with plastic fetuses and, you know, going after them. You just got disgusted. You got disgusted, you know, like by that.

Interviewer: So it's quite military at that time. And I know they brought busloads of people.

Respondent 1: Yes.

Respondent 2: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: Well I used to have to – you know, I would get off and walk on the north side, and come on the north side and then cross the street at Robert.

Interviewer: Because you just couldn't get past.

Respondent 1: No. I just didn't want to be near those people.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: [0:23:30] They were really repulsive, you know? And you know, like there were so repulsive that I just couldn't stand them if – you know, like I probably would start yelling at them if I was walking by them.

Interviewer: And then who knows what would have happened to you.

Respondent 1: Oh, I would have been okay. They wouldn't have bothered me. It's – they picked on people who were vulnerable. They were just, you know. It's a real shame. I mean the [0:24:00] – you know, you know, pregnant ladies are quite vulnerable, and that's who they picked on and it was very disgusting. Yeah.

Interviewer: Well I had a friend who owned a printing company just next door and after that fire or whatever, she had to move away. She was just too shaken up. She couldn't...

Respondent 2: Oh, it was very dangerous.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah. No, it shakes everybody up.

Interviewer: So that block, or these first few blocks west of Spadina were interesting [0:24:30] blocks.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: I mean with bookstores and the Morgentaler clinic, and a lot of immigrants moving in. I certainly have heard stories of immigrants moving in and more and more, you know, families filling up these places until the new family members got established. A lot happening.

Respondent 1: Yeah. The first block was always a bit more commercial, even with the few residential houses that were being – slowly but surely being converted to commercial enterprises. And [0:25:00] it also started happening between – the corner store at Robert opposite Porretta's was called Fuda's, and it was always – it was an Italian family. There was a very active concern. Remember how Mrs. Fuda – her English, because she had to go for citizenship test, her kids and her husband were citizens, but she couldn't – her English was – I mean she'd run the store, [laughs] and her knowledge was [0:25:30] poor enough that she couldn't pass it. I think she finally got it in the early '80s.

Interviewer: Well let me tell you my story about that.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: I rented – they owned 158 Robert Street, and before I moved to Borden, I rented that place for twelve years. And their son, Johnny...

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: ...was my landlord.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: And I just interviewed Mrs. Fuda about a month-and-a-half ago.

Respondent 2: Oh good.

Interviewer: Same Mrs. Fuda.

Respondent 1: Yeah. How old is she now?

Interviewer: She's old.

Respondent 2: She might remember you.

Interviewer: [0:26:00] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: I'm sure.

Interviewer: But Sylvia Porretta drove me there.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Oh nice.

Interviewer: Nice family. Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent 2: Nice.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Oh, isn't that nice?

Interviewer: But they owned the corner store, and she was – always liked being a businessperson. I mean she raised a family, but she wanted to be working in the store.

Respondent 1: Is 158 where Eli Comay lived in?

Interviewer: No, no. Comay lived right on the lane.

Respondent 1: Yeah, okay.

Interviewer: And 158 is about ten houses south of that.

Respondent 1: Oh okay. I can't remember.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah. I remember Eli Comay.

Interviewer: Yes. Yeah. He lived [0:26:30] on the lane.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: There were as many colourful characters in the neighbourhood.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: I remember you telling me more about Alan Powell. He was at Major and...

Interviewer: And he owned the restaurant.

Respondent 1: He owned the restaurant at Major and Robert.

Respondent 2: Major and Robert.

Respondent 1: Yeah. He's a crazy guy.

Interviewer: Did he live here too?

Respondent 1: Yeah, he lived at, I think, 211 Brunswick.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 1: Yeah. He bought that house and he renovated it, and yeah. Yeah. I mean, [0:27:00] I got involved with Alan way back in – I think in even '74 when he was seeking the nomination for St. Andrew-St. Patrick NDP. He lost it, I think, by about fifteen votes to Robert Beardsley.

Interviewer: Whoa.

Respondent 1: Yeah. But yeah.

Interviewer: What is the neighbourhood politically? It's very much NDP now.

Respondent 1: It always has been, [0:27:30] it's always NDP. It's just that the difference was that now, there's a lot more, you know, like – then there were, like, a few activists that canvassed really hard, and we won the polls. I remember I canvassed Robert Street the first time in my life in '71. Robert from Harbord up to – you know, from Harbord up to Bloor.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: [0:28:00] No, no. Yeah. Yeah. I canvassed – no, I canvassed south from Harbord south from '71 for Bob Beardsley, and Beardsley won the poll. And then in '81 I was working as Dan Heap's alderman assistant. I canvassed in '81 and in '81 – I got to look at the results. I won the poll like something like a hundred and eighty for [0:28:30] Dan and twenty-four for Coutts, and fifteen for [indiscernible 0:28:34]. I mean – but that was the best poll we had, but part of the reason was that the political system makes a big difference. In, you know – was it in '82, I was working for Dorothy Thomas who [indiscernible 0:28:50] spot, and I canvassed three polls for Dorothy. I won all three polls, in those early polls that she beat Jack. So when you're a political assistant, you [0:29:00] have a certain advantage. But you know, like you can – were you living on Robert in '81?

Interviewer: No, not yet.

Respondent 1: Not yet. Yeah. Yeah. It was a mixture, but it was really easy, you know? Canvassing in those days. You just reminded people who you were.

Interviewer: So you've been politically active for many years.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: Well that's [0:29:30] his heart and soul.

Respondent 1: Yeah. I got a little less politically active as of '93. After the '93 election, after the federal.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: Yeah. You get a bit long in the tooth, and you don't have the energy and the drive.

Interviewer: But I think when you have a passion like that, it's exciting.

Respondent 2: Oh yeah. And you can do so much reading and talking. Maybe armchair politics now, but still very active, yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: [0:30:00] Thinking back to...

Respondent 1: How is Mrs. Fuda's English now? Is it still heavy Italian?

Interviewer: Oh for sure. For sure. But she participated two of her – well Sylvia was with us, and two of her granddaughters were there, and one of them with some of her children.

Respondent 2: Oh yes.

Interviewer: I took some pictures. I can show it to you.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: I'm sorry. You were going to ask...

Respondent 2: Well I was just thinking when you were Dan Heap's [0:30:30] assistant in this area, what were some of the issues for people then in the neighbourhood?

Respondent 1: Here?

Respondent 2: Same as now?

Respondent 1: NIMBYism. Yeah.

Respondent 2: NIMBYism.

Respondent 1: Yeah. I remember – what do you call – getting the park at the corner of Bloor and Spadina where the UTS school is there.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: And got that passed through, and we called in – then when – after federal [indiscernible 0:30:55] became the alderman, for some stupid reason he wanted to cancel spending [0:31:00] the money on it, so I had to get on the phone and phoned people to call John to get on his back so it went through. But you know, the parkette on Brunswick Street where Lutz's auto body shop was that the city bought out, we got that park in there.

Respondent 2: That's the Sally Bird Park.

Respondent 1: Yeah. The Sally Bird Park.

Respondent 2: You want to talk about Sally and how the park was named was after here?

Interviewer: Please do. Please do. No?

Respondent 1: No. It's [0:31:30] a little later.

Respondent 2: Okay.

Respondent 1: And I'm just trying to think. I'm trying to think of things...

Respondent 2: Constituency work?

Respondent 1: I did a ton of constituency work.

Respondent 2: But what were the issues then? Was it things like...

Respondent 1: There weren't as many issues.

Respondent 2: Raccoons? Street noise?

Respondent 1: No, no. Oh. I had – the biggest problem I remember with the constituency work was the air conditioners.

Respondent 2: Really?

Respondent 1: Yeah. People would put – [0:32:00] there were a lot of air conditioners being installed in the neighbourhood, and the companies would put them in on the side of the house in between the two houses, and so they'd make enough noise and they would vibrate, and you know, the neighbour would call me and complain, and I'd send an inspector out there, and a month later you'd see the air conditioner moved from the side to the front. You know, stuff like that. A lot of building complaints.

Respondent 2: What about the...

Respondent 1: I mean I worked on bigger issues, [0:32:30] but there weren't any big issues in this neighbourhood I can remember. The Market was a lot more important.

Respondent 2: What about the directional signs with all the streets? When did that all get changed now?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. I wanted to bring – so thank you.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah. Richard Gilbert dealt with all of that when he was the alderman.

Interviewer: So what happened that made him come back to that?

Respondent 1: No, he became the alderman for ward three, which was north of Bloor Street on the other side of Dufferin.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: But he lived [0:33:00] there, and he proposed the maze.

Respondent 2: Why?

Respondent 1: What?

Respondent 2: Why?

Respondent 1: He has to stop the traffic. The traffic would just drive up straight up Borden Street. You know, like it would just go straight up, up Borden Street and...

Respondent 2: Cut through to Harbord.

Respondent 1: Would cut through to – not cut straight through to Bloor.

Interviewer: I guess Bloor to College was...

Respondent 1: No, you could...

Interviewer: You could do it very quickly.

Respondent 1: No. I mean, going up Bathurst was horrible. You know, actually [0:33:30] – yeah. Yeah. You still see traffic coming out, like at five o'clock. You still get a lot of, like, you know, you'll get a car, about three cars a minute coming up the street. I remember before they put the maze in, you could get a whole lineup of cars. Just constant, going up the street.

Interviewer: But it definitely slowed it down because you had to...

Respondent 1: It slowed it down tremendously. Yeah. Yeah. Quite a bit in that sense. But that wasn't then – it wasn't even [0:34:00] Allan Sparrow who I worked with, it was Richard Gilbert. He just took it on, and...

Respondent 2: Well there's a story for Richard's interview.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Now he...

Respondent 2: Have you interviewed him yet?

Interviewer: No, I haven't interviewed, but about three months ago I was interviewing somebody who lives south of Bloor on Borden, and she brought his name up with such gratitude.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah, no. He – yeah. Richard in a lot of ways was more the alderman for this neighbourhood than [0:34:30] Dan or Allan Sparrow, or even Gordon Chong. It's because he lived here and he was involved with the Residents' Association. And yeah. He just – you know, like people used to refer to him. And also, Dan was a little bit – until there was a real problem, he had two good assistants. They started, and then for two-and-a-half years he had

Alice Heap as his assistant, and his career went downhill. And, you know, like [0:35:00] – and he went from being senior to junior alderman, and so, you know, like, then I got brought in, you know, like, to be his assistant. I had to make a deal with Alice that she wouldn't interfere in the office, and I turned him around completely. But it was really easy. I mean you just had to – you needed somebody – you know, like family doesn't work well. Somebody who could placate you, keep you calm, and all that stuff.

Respondent 2: But Abraham remained very close friends of the [0:35:30] family, the Heap family.

Respondent 1: Yeah, oh yeah.

Respondent 2: They lived just off of Wales.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Just off of Kensington Market. But Dan lives in Kensington Gardens now, but he's suffered from Alzheimer's, and Alice...

Respondent 1: Just passed away.

Respondent 2: ...passed away about six months ago.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yeah. I'm thinking of another political person was Joan Doiron, who lived on Brunswick.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Actually...

Respondent 2: 252.

Respondent 1: ...the first time I met Dinny was at a [0:36:00] conflict that she had with Joan Doiron. The Toronto School Board was there, and Joan was the house next to it, and in the front, there was a small little wooden fence that Barbara removed. It was, according to city bylaws, considered a division fence, which you can't remove unless

you have permission from both sides. And Joan complained, and this was when I was working in Dan's office. I had to go out there and, you know, talk to Barbara, and...

Respondent 2: Did you know me then?

Respondent 1: [0:36:30] I didn't know you. [Laughter] I didn't even know Barbara. I mean I didn't – I had no idea.

Respondent 2: Barbara was my mother, and she founded the Toronto School of Art, which in '69, 1969 – and it moved to – the family bought the synagogue at Brunswick and Sussex.

Respondent 1: Yeah. 229.

Respondent 2: 225. 225.

Respondent 1: 225. Yeah. Right.

Respondent 2: And the synagogues, [0:37:00] the congregation had dwindled to a very small number, and they wanted to move out to a new synagogue in Bathurst, so they put the synagogue up for sale. And so they moved in, and...

Interviewer: The school bought it?

Respondent 2: And the Toronto School of Art bought it, yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: And your mother?

Respondent 2: Well she's the founder. She was the founder and director, and it was really a family business. And eventually it became incorporated and then run by a board of directors, [0:37:30] a non-profit organization. And it lasted quite a while until just a week ago, in fact. Sadly, we heard it had declared bankruptcy, so.

Interviewer: But your mother was a force then, especially for her generation.

Respondent 2: She was amazing. Yeah. She was amazing.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: So that was '69, '70. She was about in her mid-fifties when she – I was the youngest and left home, and she was bored, and she decided to pursue this interest in art, and one thing led to another with people saying [0:38:00] to her, "Could you organize a club or bring an artist in?" Or they were using their living room, and enough people supported the idea that they decided to start a little school, and an instructor said, "Oh, I like this. I'll come and do this." And then they had a set of models who used to keep coming, and one thing led to another.

Interviewer: So that was Brunswick north of Harbord, well near Sussex.

Respondent 2: Sussex. Right at the corner.

Respondent 1: Right on the corner. Right on the corner. Where [0:38:30] Energy Probe is.

Respondent 2: Energy Probe's there now.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. I was actually the real estate agent for her mother and sold it to Energy Probe. Yeah.

Respondent 2: And Joan Doiron was the school trustee in this area for a long, long time.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: I met Joan once. I was sitting on a train between Montreal, Toronto. Got into a conversation with this very interesting woman and it was her. [Laughs] So that's how I met her.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah. I worked with her downtown. I actually hired her back then.

Respondent 2: [0:39:00] Oh did you?

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: This is before she ran for trustee.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Way before she ran for trustee. Yes.

Respondent 2: Oh.

Interviewer: But I'm interested in your mother and what she did because that's right in our neighbourhood, and she created this school here.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm. And it lasted forty-five years.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: It moved away from that location because it got so big.

Respondent 1: That's '86, '87.

Respondent 2: '86. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: And they moved to a location at Dovercourt and Queen, and by then she was in her eighties. [0:39:30] Yeah. She was in her eighties or late seventies, and we got the hint of Alzheimer's developing, and so she sort of had a forced retirement at eighty. And the school then became its very own piece, and the family was not much involved at that point. And they did very well there, and then they moved again to Spadina and Adelaide at the corner, and

then moved [0:40:00] around the corner to Adelaide where they were until recently.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: But...

Interviewer: But it was founded right here in this neighbourhood.

Respondent 2: Actually the first year, they rented a house on Walker Avenue near Summerhill and Yonge, but they were quickly too big for that and it went – I think it was '70, '69 or '70, and then they moved there. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yeah. So there's still a number of people around who would remember it because there's a lot of drop-in [0:40:30] classes, and weekends sort of – you could come in and I think it was two dollars you could sit and set up your easel and things, and there was a model, and it was really a very supportive atmosphere.

Interviewer: Fantastic.

Respondent 2: The sculpture is in the basement.

Interviewer: I saw a few of her paintings here.

Respondent 2: Yes. And we've got the most of them.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah. It's really – what you call – I don't know. Has anybody talked to you about the history of the Narayever synagogue?

Interviewer: Not yet. Would you like to?

Respondent 1: I don't know that much about it. All I know is that [0:41:00] – what do you call – Barbara actually bought the synagogue and paid the congregation, and they moved. With the Narayever, it was a Romanian synagogue and what ended up happening there is

people who moved into the neighbourhood joined it. And basically took it over, and kicked the Romanians out, you know?

Interviewer: So it was a synagogue.

Respondent 1: Yeah. A Romanian synagogue.

Interviewer: So somebody ousted the Romanians from it?

Respondent 2: Well I guess the new majority was not Romanian.

Respondent 1: The new majority [0:41:30] was basically younger people who ousted them.

Interviewer: Do you have some idea when that would have been approximately?

Respondent 1: That was in the '70s, and I don't know much about it other than what I hear, you know? But it's – you know, like it's a bit of a scandal. No, a bit of a scandal in a sense. And then I mean then there's the other synagogue that's over there on Markham Street that was owned by...

Interviewer: Oh, that's Joe Greenberg.

Respondent 1: Joe Greenberg.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: [0:42:00] Yeah. He's retired, I think?

Interviewer: Yeah. He was forced. Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah. He had – yeah, he had to. In a sense though.

Interviewer: But he kept that shul really alive.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Was he the doctor too?

Respondent 1: Yeah. He's the doctor. Yes.

Respondent 2: Because John used to go there.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: My son had his bar mitzvah there [laughter]...

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: ...thirty years ago.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah. And then yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: But the Narayever, you're saying, somewhat of a scandal?

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Respondent 1: Instead of [0:42:30] paying the Romanians off so they could go and buy another synagogue, they were just – the shul was just taken over by the other people who joined it. You know, it's...

Interviewer: So it was not the respectful way.

Respondent 2: Were there a lot of Romanians living in this area?

Respondent 1: No, there weren't, but it's not a thing that's done basically. The history is when one group takes over a synagogue, they buy out the old people and they move on somewhere else. That's generally the rule.

Interviewer: Well why not have a [0:43:00] synagogue together?

Respondent 1: Well, there's clashes of culture and all that sort of stuff. And the neighbourhood was changing. They should have been able to move in – you know, move out too. And you know...

Interviewer: Were there any other synagogues in the neighbourhood?

Respondent 1: Yeah. What do you call – David Pincus, I don't know if you know him, who lived in Kensington Market, he was the one who was responsible for the Kiever synagogue there and had it restored. And then the other one in Kensington Market, [0:43:30] I used to – my dad passed away, it was the only place that I could go to say Kaddish. What do you call – [laughs] I would show up there in the morning and they would just welcome [laughs] me.

Interviewer: They would what?

Respondent 1: They would welcome me, and then I would just...

Interviewer: You weren't happy to be there.

Respondent 1: I was – what do you call it? After a while, I just got tired of it and just told my mom I went. [Laughter]

Respondent 2: Okay. True confessions out here. [Laughter]

Respondent 1: Yeah, no.

Interviewer: Obviously it was her thing and not yours.

Respondent 1: [0:44:00] No.

Respondent 2: Was it our house or a neighbouring house where we found the – you know, I can't remember the proper name that you touched...

Respondent 1: The mezuzah.

Respondent 2: Yeah. We found one.

Respondent 1: There were mezuzahs here.

Interviewer: On a door you mean?

Respondent 2: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent 2: So there are several Jewish homes that...

Respondent 1: No, some neighbourhoods were quite Jewish...

Respondent 2: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: ...way back in the '40s.

Respondent 2: In fact, who else we met – was it a dentist or something who said their father had grown up on this street, and he was Jewish?

Interviewer: [0:44:30] I don't know if it's correct, but somebody told me that if you have a mezuzah on your door and a Jewish family's moving in, you're not supposed to take it off. If it's not a Jewish family, you can take it off, but if it is a Jewish family, you're supposed to leave it there.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Is that correct? I don't know.

Respondent 1: That's basically it.

Respondent 2: It is.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah. I mean they would – do replace it, but you're not supposed to be taking mezuzahs off anyways, yeah.

Interviewer: What about churches in the neighbourhood? Were there some? A lot?

Respondent 1: Yeah. [0:45:00] What do you call – the churches are just disappearing. I mean Bathurst Street United Church, which is where the theatre is at the corner of Lennox and – was very, very active as a church politically, and there used to be polling stations there. We had NDP meetings there, and it's sort of sold and moved out. And you know, so that's been a theatre, a church on the corner of, you know, College and [0:45:30] Bathurst – what do you call it now? You know, so that's become a condominium. There was a bit of a scandal.

Respondent 2: Well they retained...

Respondent 1: Yeah. They retained the room.

Respondent 2: ...the bottom floor and the sanctuary.

Respondent 1: Yeah. And the tower there. But basically the condominium corporation went bankrupt and the people – it was a long story there. I can't really remember it.

Respondent 2: What about the church there? There was the German church. Was that always [indiscernible 0:45:55]?

Respondent 1: Yeah, that was always there. I don't know where the – [0:46:00] they come from afar.

Respondent 2: Well except for our neighbour, I mentioned. I'll get you her number to be interviewed. She lives at the corner of Croft and Vankoughnet.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: That teeny little cottage house. And she's a very interesting person because she's a very formidable woman. She raised a...

Respondent 1: A thalidomide baby.

Respondent 2: ...by herself.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: And her daughter lived until she was about thirty with her there. And had [0:46:30] no arms.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: No arms at all.

Respondent 1: No arms.

Interviewer: I would be very happy if you could give me her name and her number, and introduce us.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: It took quite a while, it took me about ten years before she would talk to me. You know, like...

Respondent 2: The daughter?

Respondent 1: The daughter.

Respondent 2: I never – she never spoke to me.

Respondent 1: She talked to me. She actually became friends with Roberta.

Respondent 2: Oh. Nice.

Respondent 1: That way – you know, she was incredibly shy.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm. Were Roberta and Ron living here before us?

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: Long before us?

Respondent 1: Yeah. [0:47:00] Not long.

Respondent 2: No.

Respondent 1: A couple of years before us.

Respondent 2: Because that's another possible person to interview, and she'd be very interesting. She's a film producer herself, so she does a lot of interviews.

Interviewer: Anybody...

Respondent 2: Roberta King.

Interviewer: If you – what I need is I need names with phone numbers, and then you will have to tell them Eleanor will call.

Respondent 2: Yes, I'll do that.

Interviewer: So that – I'd appreciate it.

Respondent 2: Sure. I'm just thinking of the area too. When you were here earlier, do you remember along Croft Street towards the bottom, I remember one was [0:47:30] a factory...

Respondent 1: There was a carpet factory.

Respondent 2: ...that did carpets.

Respondent 1: Carpet factory.

Respondent 2: Persian – they did and cleaned Persian carpets.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: So it was right on Croft just north of College?

Respondent 2: Yeah. It's been now renovated into these very expensive lofts.

Respondent 1: Condominiums. Yeah.

Interviewer: I have a friend who used to live in one of them.

Respondent 1: A friend there – Peter Patterson actually – I forgot the house. It goes 24 Borden. We actually made an offer on 24 Borden and – when we were going to [0:48:00] make when we saw it, and it sold. Peter Patterson bought it, a photographer. Then he bought the building next to the carpet factory and turned it into a studio, and he was there for about twenty years. You know, as a photographer. I don't know where he is now. You have to look him up, but he would be an interesting person because I'm sure...

Respondent 2: Especially if he has photographs.

Respondent 1: He would have lots of photographs, and he had his photo studio behind there. [0:48:30] He was actually – yeah. You'd find him quite interesting.

Respondent 2: Peter Patterson?

Respondent 1: Yeah. Peter Patterson. Maybe Richard Gilbert might – he was across the street. Might still know where to contact him. But Peter Patterson.

Interviewer: What about Kensington Market? What do you feel? Have you used it much?

Respondent 1: Oh, I used it a lot.

Interviewer: That's one part of the question. And the other is its influence on our neighbourhood?

Respondent 1: [0:49:00] Listen, the cheese store there, I went in there back in '68 and there was this young fellow who was probably maybe – I was twenty-two, he must have been about seventeen called Dave. And would call – I used to always go there and he was always there. You know, until he got gray hair. I think about eight years ago he passed away. It really hurt. Yeah.

Respondent 2: He had a sudden heart attack.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you felt a nice connection with him.

Respondent 1: [0:49:30] And I had to – his brother's there. You know, me and his brother always – like he used to, you know, used to take to each other, but that's because we go back that far, you know, like in that sense. In that sense, I was really sorry to see European Meats go. It was always there. I always bought my meat there constantly. And...

Respondent 2: Yeah. We shop there a lot.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: And our son, as I was telling you, got his first summer jobs – well, not his first. But he had many summer jobs [0:50:00] that led to his current career. And our daughter lived there when she moved out.

Interviewer: She lived in the Market?

Respondent 2: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: Yeah. In the Market.

Respondent 2: For a couple of years.

Respondent 1: For years. Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yeah. She's moved back home now for financial reasons, but yeah, they're very comfortable there and...

Interviewer: So the Market has been very much a part of the fabric of your lives and your children's lives.

Respondent 2: Yeah. Well, it was an attractive – to why we live here.

Respondent 1: Well any family that comes to visit from the States, we take them to the Market. They're astonished. Yeah.

Interviewer: [0:50:30] Oh yeah. We're so lucky to have it there.

Respondent 2: Yeah. Do you shop there often?

Interviewer: I like it a lot. My husband works at the Toronto Western, and I used to work at the Toronto Western, so it's...

Respondent 2: Very close.

Interviewer: ...walk through the Market.

Respondent 2: Yes. Perfect. Yes. Very close.

Respondent 1: Yeah, yeah. I'm familiar with the emergency room at the Western. [Laughs]

Respondent 2: Oh, we go out a lot. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yes. Yeah.

Respondent 2: What stories do they have?

Respondent 1: Yeah. Okay. David Pincus was on the board of the Toronto Western when I had gone off with Dan Heap in '72 [0:51:00] actually and met him. He was on the board...

Respondent 2: Where did he live?

Respondent 1: He lived on...

Respondent 2: Has he lived here?

Respondent 1: No. I'm getting confused with Alan Swan. Alan Swan on Nassau. Pincus lived on – Pincus lived on Bellevue. And he was a very connected person politically [0:51:30] with almost everybody, all three political parties. I used to – really liked him because he would

forewarn me and Dan about the political scandals that were happening. He basically gave me about two months' notice before the Hydro building became a scandal, if you remember that in the early '70s. There was a big scandal over how it was developed and how it was being financed.

Interviewer: At University and College.

Respondent 1: Yeah. University and College.

Interviewer: I remember that.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I mean he was into everything. [0:52:00] He was actually – he was a very close friend of Dan Heap's in terms of giving him political advice, and he actually kept him out of trouble. I think he passed away at some point when Alice became Dan's assistant. That's another reason why there was real problems there.

Interviewer: Let's come back to the transportation. You talked about the bus along Harbord.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: What other transportation do you recall [0:52:30] was here? And how has that changed surrounding us, and anything interesting?

Respondent 1: Well there'd always been – to me it always felt like they were always rebuilding the College streetcar lines, the tracks. They must have rebuilt, I would say forty years, it must have been done maybe about three or four times. I think it's done every ten years, every twelve years, and so every time it takes a couple of months, and you remember that really...

Respondent 2: Well the 506 streetcar on College has been my main piece for [0:53:00] transportation to work.

Respondent 1: Yeah. You know.

Respondent 2: That's the main line.

Respondent 1: Yeah. I got here – when I got here in '68, I think they just opened the University line, you know, at that time.

Interviewer: The subway.

Respondent 1: The subway line, yeah. The newer subway line was just opened. And let's see. You know, Bloor line was always there.

Interviewer: When we lived down here, we had so many options for public transportation.

Respondent 2: Yes. Very fortunate.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Every one of the major streets near us has...

Respondent 2: Yeah. We are very [0:53:30] fortunate. I'm thinking too about you might have more stories around the neighbourhood's politics with Sussex-Ulster before it became Harbord Village. Who were some of the characters then?

Respondent 1: God, well Dick Nellis passed away. I don't know if you heard of his name.

Respondent 2: Where did he live?

Respondent 1: He lived on Brunswick, I think 32. I don't know if his wife is still alive. If she's there. Doris.

Respondent 2: And Barbara Godard.

Respondent 1: No. Barbara...

Respondent 2: No?

Respondent 1: ...didn't have [0:54:00] much to do with – she was more on the Island. She was an Island resident.

Respondent 2: No, no. Barbara Godard.

Respondent 1: Yeah. She was an Island resident.

Respondent 2: She lived on...

Respondent 1: On Major, but she lived on the Island before that. Yeah. Yeah. Oh god. You have – it's hard to think of people until you mention them, and then...

Respondent 2: Oh sorry. I don't know all the names.

Interviewer: [Laughs] Let me move on. I mean you can come back to this. What about the University of Toronto? Its – what kind [0:54:30] of relationship we have had with it all these years. Is it a good neighbour? Does it – what? [Laughs]

Respondent 1: Listen, I got here in 1968 and we walked around the university, and you know where Fort Book is? Where the Robarts Library is? That was all Victorian houses all the way around the block, and I think in '69 they all got boarded up and they were torn down, and you know, eventually they built that monstrosity there.

Respondent 2: Yeah. I was still a university student. It was finished [0:55:00] around '78 or so.

Respondent 1: Yeah, it took a long time, but...

Interviewer: Victorian homes.

Respondent 1: Yeah. You know, like nice Victorian homes. But that basically – people objected to that, and that's basically what saved the rest of the Huron-Sussex neighbourhood. The university bought it up, but you know, like in the '70s we were protesting that, and the university eventually made a deal to keep the houses and to keep renting them out to residents, not to...

Interviewer: [0:55:30] The rest of the homes.

Respondent 1: The rest of the homes.

Interviewer: The ones that they hadn't razed.

Respondent 1: Right. Yeah.

Respondent 2: Wasn't the Peebles one of them? Peter's mother?

Respondent 1: No, she was rented.

Respondent 2: Oh.

Respondent 1: She rented there.

Respondent 2: I thought she was pretty vocal.

Respondent 1: No. She's actually quite older.

Respondent 2: Okay.

Respondent 1: There were a lot of people there that were involved there. Let's see. One person that you would really like to interview would be a person called Pierre Stevenson.

Respondent 2: Oh yeah.

Respondent 1: He lived at 666 Spadina. [0:56:00] He's got incredible memories. I don't know.

Respondent 2: Wasn't he here when you moved in?

Respondent 1: No. He – I forgot which election campaign I first met him in. I think it was in '78. I first met him, and he was quite actively involved for about the next ten years with the – you know, like organizing the tenants in that building, and we won that building – like once he got

there. The other two we went after – dramatically we were [0:56:30] winning. And that building, by over a hundred votes.

Respondent 2: Pierre was one of the first male nurses to graduate, and has amazing stories about that. But he was very active politically, and has this phenomenal memory. He lives in Vancouver now, but he comes to visit us occasionally, so...

Interviewer: And he lived at 666 Spadina?

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: For more than ten years. Yeah.

Interviewer: Well the next time he visits, I might ask him.

Respondent 1: Yeah. He'll talk to you on the phone for [0:57:00] hours. Long distance now. If you got a free Canada-wide long distance plan...

Interviewer: You know, I wouldn't know how to tape it.

Respondent 1: Oh. Yeah.

Interviewer: I don't have whatever equipment to tape it. If he visits you sometime in the next four months, maybe I could confirm that.

Respondent 2: I'll suggest it.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Last time he was here, he was here for the NDP convention...

Respondent 2: And then Alice's funeral.

Respondent 1: ...and then Alice's funeral. Yeah.

Interviewer: Now were you already here when the whole thing happened with the Spadina Expressway?

Respondent 1: [0:57:30] Yeah. I wasn't very involved with that. What happened sort of – it was – like I was out in BC when most of it was being organized, and I came here at the tail end. You know, like, by then – I got here in – what do you call it? In '72 and Colin Vaughan was winning that election, and they already stopped it, Bill Davis just stopped it.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent 1: So I was...

Interviewer: So things had already happened.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Things had already happened [0:58:00] in that...

Interviewer: Important things.

Respondent 1: Important things. Yeah. I was – yeah. It was a really big thing. I remember when Bill Davis made the announcement, but that's about as, you know – stopping it. Boy, you know, people look back at him, because at that time we were really critical. Now you look back at him [laughs].

Interviewer: Yeah. Hindsight.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: What about – I'm becoming more kind of concrete. Since you've been here in your home...

Respondent 1: [0:58:30] Yeah.

Interviewer: ...have you changed the heating at all?

Respondent 1: No. It was forced air gas.

Interviewer: And it's always been that since you...

Respondent 1: [indiscernible 0:58:37] furnace. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: When we moved in, it was the original structure, so the front was a very small Victorian living room size, with a fireplace. And all the hallways you see, these are all narrow.

Respondent 1: Now they are wide. They were very wide hallways. Like they were almost rooms.

Respondent 2: Okay. Okay. And on the [0:59:00] second and third floor, each room had a lock on the door, so we knew it was a rooming house. And we're part of four houses. We're rural housing. We're all connected, and we're all mirror-image of each other. So in the house next door was a Portuguese family, the Do Ramos's. And they had still that border structure with the locked rooms and things, and a second kitchen on the [0:59:30] second floor.

Respondent 1: And a third kitchen on the third floor.

Respondent 2: And a third kitchen on the third floor. And I don't know if it was to code at that time, but so they had tenants longer. And when we moved in, we took all that out to make a one-family home again.

Interviewer: How wide is your house? Do you know?

Respondent 1: What? The lot is sixteen and four, the inside is fifteen, eight.

Respondent 2: It's wide.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Fifteen eight.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent 1: Inside, yeah.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. It feels wide.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Oh yeah.

Interviewer: It feels very spacious.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: Yeah. This is only [1:00:00] twelve here, but it's fifteen eight in there.

Respondent 2: Yeah. So we're attached both sides. We are the centre.

Respondent 1: Yeah. It's nice for heating costs.

Respondent 2: [Laughs] Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: We don't use ours at all. So cold.

Interviewer: [Laughs] I keep my house cool too.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what about – was garbage collection any different when you first bought here? Or was it pretty...

Respondent 1: Oh yeah. Once a week. Everything was thrown in. Cans, bottles.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 2: That's right. There's no recycling.

Respondent 1: [1:00:30] No recycling. Newspapers. Huge bags, you know? I think when we moved in, we were at least every week put out two big bags.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. But it was a weekly collection.

Respondent 1: Now we put it – you know, unless we get to cleaning up, we put out a bag of garbage like this.

Respondent 2: Every two weeks.

Respondent 1: Every other week. Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh that's right. It is every two. So that's a change.

Respondent 1: Oh yeah. It's changed tremendously. Yeah.

Respondent 2: Recycling.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Recycling, the composting, you [1:01:00] know, like it's changed, you know, dramatically.

Respondent 2: And they didn't do pick-up on Croft Street.

Respondent 1: Yeah, they did.

Respondent 2: Did they?

Respondent 1: They always did pick-up on Croft Street.

Respondent 2: Oh, they did both. So it's called a street because of its width.

Respondent 1: No, it's called a street because there are houses on it.

Respondent 2: And there's some houses that actually face it, so they need that service according to the city, so...

Interviewer: It's very nice for us, so we don't have as many garbage pails in the front. Those of us on Borden Street.

Respondent 2: Well yes. Well we do, but if we're really late putting it out and miss that one, we run to the back [1:01:30] and put it out the other side. So we're fortunate again that way.

Respondent 1: No, actually they pick that in the back.

Respondent 2: I remember – it's certainly been changed with Canada Post. The letter carriers used to be a lot more regular, and there's so much more mail.

Interviewer: Oh, that's true. Of course there was.

Respondent 2: And now there's very little, and it's a different letter. But we used to know the postie or letter carrier personally. And he'd come by for water, or [1:02:00] a cookie or something, you know? And he knew my name.

Respondent 1: It's so wonderful, the house.

Respondent 2: Now it's a different person every week.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: And occasionally, we don't get mail every day.

Interviewer: What do you feel about, in all the years you've been here, the topic of safety of the neighbourhood?

Respondent 1: You know, it's really strange when I moved here because I had lots of people telling me there were all types of criminal activity going on on Croft Street, and when we moved in there was none of it.

[1:02:30] You know? So there was always rumours. Like Croft Street was considered a boogie street.

Respondent 2: Boogie street?

Respondent 1: Boogie street. The street that all the dark things happen in the neighbourhood.

Respondent 2: I didn't know that.

Respondent 1: [Laughter] Yeah. It was just rumoured. None of it was actually happening, although every now and then there would be, you know, like some drug activity going on, you know, like there would be a dealer, you know, dealing out of the back of the street. That's basically where it would get this reputation, but it never [1:03:00] – you know, never continued.

Interviewer: But it wasn't a dangerous place, you're saying.

Respondent 1: It wasn't a dangerous place. You know?

Respondent 2: I think too we were pretty strong with the attitude, this is where we live.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: So it's got to be a great place. And we were pretty confrontational if we saw stuff, or reported it, or we cleaned things up. And I think there was an insistence on getting to know neighbours, and talking to each other if there was problems.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Most of the problems were at 60 Borden Street, which is that house on the corner of – that building on the corner [1:03:30] of Vankoughnet.

Interviewer: Oh, the southwest corner.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Before it became sort of a...

Respondent 2: Halfway.

Respondent 1: ...a halfway house...

Interviewer: Ex-psychiatric patients.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Ex-psychiatric. It was just, you know, like also small apartments rented out to people of – you know, like...

Interviewer: Who couldn't afford any better.

Respondent 1: They couldn't afford anymore – that reputable, and the police were always there. And then it became a – what do you call? You know, like somebody bought it and turned it into an ex-psychiatric place. And it was [1:04:00] – it was like that for a long time, for about twenty-five years. And they always were causing problems because – causing problems. Now they – what do you call it? It's got the same ownership, but they actually rent it out, and it's actually causing lots of problems because even though – what do you call – there's still as many tenants in there, they're just a little bit more sane, a little bit. And also...

Interviewer: So it was more dangerous at that [1:04:30] time.

Respondent 2: Well again, we were very proactive and understanding about mental health and teaching our kids how to deal with things if they felt it was unsafe, or they were being confronted. And we said this is part of our neighbourhood. This isn't something that we're going to avoid. To include them.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: So that seemed to be fine. In fact, they often came by our bench and chatted with us. We were very friendly.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: But it wasn't a problem for us.

Interviewer: You know, I didn't put on my glasses, [1:05:00] so I didn't read what's on the bench. I just walked in.

Respondent 2: Oh, it's an anonymous poem that many people quote from the internet. It's the one about when I die, don't grieve for me, I'm not there. I'm part of the snow on the tree, and the rain, and the wind. It was dedicated to Barbara from Abraham.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh, that's lovely.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. My mother-in-law was an extremely selfless person. Extremely. She just [1:05:30] gave, and gave, and gave, you know, in terms of our kids and everything else.

Respondent 2: Well that was her – yeah. And her passion was the arts school.

Respondent 1: Passion was the arts school, but she really loved her grandkids, you know? She was just – I mean she was generous with her time to a fault. Yeah.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm.

Respondent 1: In a sense.

Interviewer: It's a lovely tribute to have that. As I said, I didn't put my glasses on, so I couldn't see what it said.

Respondent 2: It's a lovely poem. Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent 2: Yeah. But the idea of the bench was [1:06:00] a good one. We'd seen it. There's a bench on a house in front of Brunswick. Oh, you remember.

Respondent 1: Morris Fine's house.

Respondent 2: Morris Fine's house.

Respondent 1: Yeah. But it wasn't there. What happened? When I first put the fence in there, I put a – what do you call it? An eight-inch ledge, and put it low and the people would – especially older people would come by and, you know, like rest it against it and put their groceries on top of the ledge. And I put that in when we moved in in '83, and I think it – it fell [1:06:30] down about twelve years ago.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: It fell down in 2000, so I just replaced the bench because I just figured, you know, like you might as well let people rest there.

Interviewer: Do people sit down sometimes?

Respondent 2: Oh, all the time.

Respondent 1: Constantly. Constantly.

Respondent 2: All the time. All ages. Yeah. It's great.

Respondent 1: Actually if you go up right now, there's probably some high school kids sitting there from Central Tech. Yeah.

Respondent 2: Parents with strollers, or toddlers are giving them a break. Older people from Kensington Gardens doing a loop.

Interviewer: [1:07:00] Oh, that is such a...

Respondent 2: Oh yeah. It's exactly what we wanted for it. So it was good.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: We think it's a friendly idea that many more should do. [Laughs]

Respondent 1: Yeah. There's a nice Jewish lady from Kensington Garden, sits down there all the time. She's likely ninety-eight. She comes from a...

Respondent 2: Oh, is that Rose?

Respondent 1: Rose. Yeah.

Respondent 2: Rose, yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah. She comes around. I see her, and takes ten minutes out of my time, so I talk to her.

Interviewer: Oh that's lovely.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Good for you.

Respondent 1: Yeah. I put it – yeah. I put it in there [1:07:30] for my mother-in-law. Had a great time sitting there watching all the people go by.

Respondent 2: Yes. Well she would stay with or visit us, and she kept sweeping.

Respondent 1: The sidewalk.

Respondent 2: One thing she didn't – she remembered how to do sweeping and felt it was very useful. She's very driven. So we'd get her sweeping, and then if I didn't watch, she'd be sweeping ten doors down. She just kept going [laughter] on the sidewalk, so it was quite funny. [Laughter]

Respondent 1: Yes. She just – yeah.

Interviewer: Well I think we've covered a lot of ground.

Respondent 1: One of the things, [1:08:00] what do you call, that I did politically that happened at Harbord Street was I actually – in the '76 campaign for Dan Heap and Allan Sparrow was in charge of

enumeration to where people who are in the voter's list that were lawyers that lived in the city of Toronto and they were on the voter's list, like probably two or three times. One for each floor that they were a partner on, and for their parking spaces. And so I remember I moved about three thousand people off the voter's list. What do you call – in that election campaign and we had to send notices out. And I had a big [1:08:30] crew of maybe thirty people helping me, you know, look things up. And notices at the city had to be sent out, and so I signed all of them and my address was on them. And there must have been about six or seven people who came over knocking at my door because they were moved from the voter's list, what do you call...

Respondent 2: Because they were on it for duplicate.

Respondent 1: Well they – it was just their mistake or they were duplicated or whatever else. Yeah. In a sense. [1:09:00] And then there was a hearing and about three days before the hearing, I moved out state and [laughter] Allan Sparrow – people who had arrived there were furious. And then there was the hearing, and I think it was about twenty-two people showed up. And what do you call it? To object from being removed from – withdrew the application. Every time somebody said, "Do you object?" "Yes." [Laughter] And then it was really funny. People would really [1:09:30] get mad at me. Like you know, like even withdrawing it. Like, you know...

Respondent 2: But twenty-two out of three thousand?

Respondent 1: Yeah. Twenty-two out of three thousand. I mean these were really high-priced lawyers that were being removed from the voter's list. Yeah. And...

Interviewer: But it's still a bit scary to take a strong stand because you don't know how they will try to retaliate.

Respondent 1: They weren't the problems. It was all the errors.

Respondent 2: The what? Error?

Respondent 1: People who would make mistakes. [1:10:00] I mean you have a big crew, you're supervising it. You know, and you're signing these forms, you know, before they're being filled out.

Respondent 2: Oh, I see.

Respondent 1: Yes.

Interviewer: You've made your life very interesting by being so active in politics. [Laughter]

Respondent 1: Actually the more important thing was the '75 rent survey I did for the Federation of Metro Tenants, and I used – we surveyed fifty buildings and about twenty-five, and each one. And we published the survey, but the key thing was that I [1:10:30] would take the rent gouging cases and give them to Hugh Mackenzie and Steven Lewis, and he was in the NDP research office. Give them to Steven every day. Steven would come up with another building where they had thirty percent rent increases. I don't know if you remember this in the '75 election campaign. And so the reporters would run out to the building and knock on their own doors and, you know, come up – you know, find problem cases. Like in that sense, that actually – yeah. That was actually the most interesting political thing I ever did, more than the [1:11:00] organizing in the election campaign in that sense because it really had an effect in terms of...

Respondent 2: Where are those buildings located?

Respondent 1: They were all over metro.

Respondent 2: Oh, all over metro.

Respondent 1: All over metro. Yeah. But the key thing basically was it actually brought in rent control at that time. The Tory government was a minority in that, bringing rent control. One of the best landlord tenant acts in North America at that time actually was the...

Interviewer: So it was just at that time.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That was – if [1:11:30] – talking about something that I felt proud of achieving politically, that was the thing. I mean I'd done a lot of other things, you know, I can be proud of, but that was the...

Respondent 2: That was a highlight.

Respondent 1: That was the...

Interviewer: Thirty percent.

Respondent 1: Oh yeah. Rents were going up crazy at that time.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well before I turn off – this has been delightful.

Respondent 2: Yes. Sorry, you got...

Interviewer: No, no. It's great.

Respondent 2: Taken a lot of your time.

Interviewer: No, this is fine. I'm just wondering because when I came in, you had – were kind of alluding [1:12:00] to stories and things you had been thinking about. Both of you together, is there anything that we haven't touched on at all that you think would be interesting for us to have about this neighbourhood in the decades that you've been here?

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Changes for the better, for the worse?

Respondent 2: Well I remember one thing to mention is around Lord Lansdowne Public School. I taught there from [1:12:30] 1987 or '88. I taught

there for about five years, and it was one of only twelve, I think it's twelve...

Respondent 1: Heritage.

Respondent 2: ...heritage language schools in Toronto. And the heritage language school is where the board supported first language learning during part of the school day, as opposed to being an after-school [1:13:00] piece that was – and the province would fund it if it was after school. But if it was part of the curriculum, they wouldn't. So the board still felt that this was very important, and for the residents in the area who were Portuguese...

Respondent 1: Italians and Spanish.

Respondent 2: ...Italians and Chinese.

Respondent 1: And Spanish.

Respondent 2: There weren't that many who were Spanish. It was Chinese. Could enroll their kids in that, and the kids who didn't want – the parents didn't want them to take either [1:13:30] of those three languages could do a...

Respondent 1: Concurrent.

Respondent 2: ...concurrent program. Usually it was art or something. And I as a teacher, that really influenced my teaching to look at English as a second language learners, that their first language was actually a resource, was a strength, not a deficit that was a problem that we had to deal with. It was something that became a strength because then I could go through the cultural [1:14:00] roots of the families, I could bring it into the social studies. We could use it with language and storytelling. Like it was very exciting for me. And I'm not sure where that state is now, but it was one of only a dozen schools across the board that had that and kept that for quite a long time. That was a...

Interviewer: Congratulations. That's a...

Respondent 2: Yeah, it was really good.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 2: And so a number of the kids who came into my class, I remember their parents – they got in, [1:14:30] to the school at that time. It was very strict by boundaries, and you had to live in a certain boundary that fed to those public schools, and those public schools had much higher population of numbers. They were very strong. So what a number of the parents did, they wanted their kids at these schools. They had them enroll with their grandparents.

Interviewer: At the grandparents' address.

Respondent 2: Because the grandparents' address, the grandparents still lived nearby, and the grandparents were the child – [1:15:00] gave them childcare, so the kids would go there for lunch, and be there early in the morning, and be picked up much later at night by the parents who often lived in the suburbs. But we never – even though I might have known that, I didn't say anything, and so another aspect of the teaching was this intergenerational part. And so the other reason I want to mention it is the board at that time had very strong statistics showing – in particular, for Portuguese families – that their kids were not being [1:15:30] successful in the school system. And there were a number of components that the system was not doing well to adjust or accommodate that for Portuguese learners. And shockingly the rate is – they're still one of the groups where the system shows a high rate of drop-out or a lack of success at school. It's usually measured by drop-out. So [1:16:00] it hasn't been well addressed, and there's pockets of really strong programs in parts of the city. This area now no longer has a high number of Portuguese-speaking students.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent 2: But if that was looked at, you would want to interview some of the Portuguese families and talking about that. So that was a real eye-opener as well.

Interviewer: And they would drop-out what? They would – at about sixteen years [1:16:30] old?

Respondent 2: Often.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Respondent 2: And one of the rationales that somehow seemed either justified or hid under the carpet, I guess, was that many of their parents themselves were not – had not finished school. And in coming to Canada, they didn't have high school education, and often got jobs at a very young age of sixteen, fifteen when they arrived in the office cleaning, or...

Respondent 1: Construction.

Respondent 2: [1:17:00] ...construction, and so when their kids were coming through Toronto schools, they were very supportive of them staying in elementary school. But by the time they went to high school, there was quite a tug for them to drop out and take these available jobs. And some have done that very successfully, but there was never that option that was strengthened for them to try high school and stick with it, and see where that might have led as well. So.

Interviewer: [1:17:30] As I've spoken to people, I see something that – in common, and that is the Chinese families and the Jewish families often felt – the parents had come from China, Hong Kong, Eastern Europe, and they didn't feel that way. They wanted their children to stay in school, so I think that they were...

Respondent 2: Yes. They were motivated. They seem to be – had a higher motivation for their kids to do well through school, but I think it's because [1:18:00] of their own experience in their home countries of education having a much higher value than perhaps some of the cities or – actually it was more countryside that a lot of the Portuguese families had...

Respondent 1: The Portuguese came from the Azores.

Respondent 2: In the Azores Islands.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Which didn't spend much money on schools in the Azores. That was really a problem. I mean it was the hinterland.

Respondent 2: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

P Yeah. Spent this money in wars in [1:18:30] Mozambique. Tried to hold onto them.

Respondent 2: Yeah. Yeah. So it's sort of a side story, but I think it's a bit – it is reflective of some of the make-up and some of the thinking in how the community developed. And I'd be interested to ask some of the older Portuguese families now.

Interviewer: Well when I lived on Robert Street, I shared a wall with a Portuguese family and Fatima grew up there, and [1:19:00] her parents are still there. And her father raised her children when she and Fernando went out to work.

Respondent 2: Right.

Interviewer: So they're a family – I lived beside them for many years, and we sat outside on the front porch at twelve o'clock at night enjoying wonderful conversations. And I remember when their son Jordan was born. Benny came banging on my door. I mean, and that was twenty-five years ago, so they've been there for a long time and that's a Portuguese family that's...

Respondent 2: They would have attended Lord [1:19:30] Lansdowne then? Were you above or below Harbord?

Interviewer: Below.

Respondent 2: Yes. So they would have gone to Lord Lansdowne, I guess.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Certainly Jordan went there, and his sister Aliya.

Respondent 2: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. So that's a family, a Portuguese family I want to speak to.

Respondent 2: What about the Carvalhos? Philomena and – was her sister you knew on Brunswick?

Respondent 1: Alda. Yeah.

Respondent 2: Alda and Rose? Or?

Respondent 1: Rose?

Respondent 2: Rosa?

Respondent 1: That's the – [1:20:00] Alda's daughter.

Respondent 2: Oh okay. Right.

Interviewer: Well okay. Anyway, I do want to say that as you think of more people, if you can make that initial connection and then – so that I'm not going to be looking up telephone numbers and email addresses.

Respondent 2: No, no, no. We'll do that in the introductions.

Respondent 1: The thing too you should probably get in the tape is with some people with more knowledge about is the building of the Spadina LRT, and how long it took, and how they let the road deteriorate, and all the [1:20:30] traffic accidents.

Respondent 2: Who would know? Who was in the thick of that?

Respondent 1: I'm not really sure. I mean...

Respondent 2: I bet you Sue might now.

Respondent 1: ...I don't know any of the details about it anymore. I just remember the history. It was a – I think for five years they didn't do any repairs on Spadina Avenue, and you know, they're filling in potholes. It was just really a rough road. And finally they...

Respondent 2: Yeah. Doing them and...

Respondent 1: You know, like [1:21:00] they started construction and that took a couple of years, and messed up the...

Respondent 2: What about my brother, John? How long's he lived in – he lives at Robert and Ulster, the corner.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Sussex.

Respondent 2: Sussex. He was there before us, before me.

Respondent 1: Yeah. He was there.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: He was probably there from at least the mid-'70s.

Interviewer: Well...

Respondent 2: I should call my brother.

Interviewer: ...please do. Please do.

Respondent 2: Yes. John.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 2: I know he and a few friends had this project to do a film on Major Street, and it was [1:21:30] a hundred years of Major Street or something. It sounded great, but filming, you know – the movie cameras were pretty archaic then, and they never finished it. I've asked him many times.

Interviewer: But your family's been involved in this neighbourhood for a long time then.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: I mean you came when the two of you hitched up, and your brother was...

Respondent 2: My brother was already...

Interviewer: ...already here. Your mother had the school here.

Respondent 2: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well I want to say to both of you, Abraham, Dinny, thank you very, very much for your time. For all your stories and...

Respondent 2: You're welcome.

Interviewer: ...I know either [1:22:00] today or another time we'll – maybe I can find some pictures in your albums.

Respondent 1: Yeah. What I'll do is I'll try to bring them up – I'll put them on a stick, on a USB stick and bring them up to you.

Interviewer: Well thank you very much.

Respondent 1: That's the easiest thing to do. I just have to – bug me sometime, you know, like in the early part of the new year.

Interviewer: Excellent. Excellent.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Because I...

Respondent 2: We were thinking of photos and, you know, you take so many of your family, but not necessarily in the neighbourhood.

Interviewer: Yeah. And we do want to have [1:22:30] something of the neighbourhood showing something.

Respondent 1: I've got tons of photos of our backyard, I know that.

Interviewer: Well...

Respondent 2: Well, one that we do have of the backyard is – you can't see it from here, but we now have a seventy-five-foot blue spruce, and when we moved in it was about twelve feet high. And we have a picture of it then.

Interviewer: Well I'd like to have that.

Respondent 2: I have a picture of it now. That would be fun.

Interviewer: Yeah. I would definitely like to have both of them.

Respondent 2: That shows growth. [Laughs]

Interviewer: I did interview with somebody on Robert Street some months ago and he had a picture of this skinny little tree that he had planted, but he [1:23:00] planted this tree and he suggested to his neighbours that they plant also. So I have the picture of this tree in front of this house, and then the next day, on my way up to the JCC I took a picture of these three huge, beautiful trees.

Respondent 2: Oh, that's nice.

Interviewer: So I would love to have what you're describing.

Respondent 2: Okay.

Interviewer: Okay. So on behalf of the history committee, I say to both of you thank you very, very much.

Respondent 2: You're very welcome.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

[01:23:23]

[End of recording]