

025 Jane Adams

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: I'm meeting with Jane Adams at 275 Major Street. Jane, I want to say thank you very much for offering to speak to us. As I've already told you, I'm on the Board of Directors of Harbord Village Residents' Association, and we are gathering information. We want to speak to people who have been here for a very long time and learn the changes that they have experienced [0:00:30] and witnessed, so we'll touch on many topics and you'll share with me the changes that you've lived through. So of course you'll talk about what was in the past and what you see now. Would you just tell me how long you've lived here, approximately what age you moved here, and what brought you into this neighbourhood?

Respondent: I moved here in 1979, and I have been living on Bernard, and [0:01:00] my son went to Huron Street School, and we were looking for a smaller house. And at first my son went to...

Interviewer: Lord Lansdowne?

Respondent: No. A community school at College and Bathurst. The community school.

Interviewer: Oh, I don't know.

Respondent: Okay. Anyway, so he went there for a little while, but then he went back to Huron Street. So we were looking for a small, neighbourly neighbourhood [0:01:30] close to a good primary school and we came here.

Interviewer: And you've been here ever since.

Respondent: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: So your son was – so you were three of you living here at that time.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: What was the nature of the house at that time?

Respondent: Very, very good question. It had been owned by a Portuguese family. In fact, two cousins had bought the house together, and two whole families lived here. **[0:02:00]** So upstairs there was a kitchen and a family of four or five. Kitchen, living room, and then several people in each of, like, the two other rooms. And then on the ground floor, there was like the living room, the bedroom in the middle, and then kitchen, dining room, and then another bedroom with a bathroom in the basement. So I think at maximum there had been eleven people in those two families, and I think they were **[0:02:30]** very hardworking people, and then when they moved out, then they both were able to buy separate homes farther afield.

Interviewer: Well since we're talking about what it was like then and the house, what was in the back garden? Do you remember?

Respondent: I do remember. Pigeons, big pigeon coop for eating pigeons, and then a big dog run for a German shepherd.

Interviewer: **[0:03:00]** So those pigeons were for the family. Did they sell them too?

Respondent: Yes. I don't know. I don't know.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: There was a tiny little cement patio, very, very tiny like maybe six-foot by six-foot, and then a big pigeon coop, and then the dog run.

Interviewer: So all these changes that I see, you've done those.

Respondent: We tried to do the minimum number of changes. We did take down several walls, two walls in the living, dining room, so **[0:03:30]** that is now one big area, and in the back we took down the wall
~~between what was the kitchen, dining room, and the back area,~~

which was a bedroom. So virtually the ground floor is now just basically two large rooms.

Interviewer: Were you living here while you did that?

Respondent: Pretty much. Pretty much.

Interviewer: Ah. When you think of this neighbourhood, so you've been here since '79, what are the largest or the most significant changes as you think of **[0:04:00]** them?

Respondent: I'll speak about the ethnicity.

Interviewer: Please do.

Respondent: This is what I know of.

Interviewer: Excellent.

Respondent: People when I moved here told me that pre-1900, there had been a very rich and important wave of Ukrainians, and that some of the trees in this neighbourhood, specifically the Trees of Heaven, do you know that tree that I'm talking about? Well that's what its **[0:04:30]** name is. And those were planted by the Ukrainians who came here before the wave of Jewish immigrants. So when I came in '79 there were no Ukrainians that I know of, but there were lots of elderly Jewish people, and next door – well many houses had elderly Jewish people who had been here for forty years or more. And they were very **[0:05:00]** companionable with each other and with the rest of us, so that was my welcoming committee when I moved onto the block.

Interviewer: So you knew about the Ukrainians, but they were long gone by the...

Respondent: No. The Jewish people told me about the Ukrainians and how they had lived here prior to their arrival, and had planted those kinds of trees.

Interviewer: Okay. So since now we're on that topic, who else was here besides the Jewish people in '79? I mean the elderly [0:05:30] Jewish people who – yeah.

Respondent: So I would say the Jewish population had moved out largely, except for the old parents. And it was largely Italian and Portuguese. And at that time the houses were wonderfully coloured. Everybody painted their colour, their house a wonderful colour, and it was really a pretty street to move onto. Pretty in that it was very colourful, but some of the details were pretty rough. [0:06:00] Like everybody had a pipe fence. Do you know what I mean? Like it was – like everybody's fence was made out of, like, plumbing supplies, and I guess a lot of the people who lived here were in construction and so they would bring home these pieces of pipe and make fences.

Interviewer: Okay. What were their front gardens? And compare it to what they have now.

Respondent: Okay. I would say every house involved a patch of grass, and [0:06:30] then right up close to the foundation would be some bushes, some plants, and there are two or three things I want to mention in the course of the interview that I feel I personally helped initiate. And I was the first person on my block who dug up the whole front yard and just planted it to plant. And I could explain why I did that, but I think I won't go into that story. Anyway, I got a fair amount of [0:07:00] comment from my neighbours, as I was digging, digging, digging. Some people said, "Well that's ridiculous. These are not flower gardens. These are lawns, and they should be kept as lawns."

Interviewer: Use a mower.

Respondent: Well especially the elderly Portuguese men had a lot of opinions on this because they were proud of their gardens, but there was a certain way that they must be planted in order to look well in the rest of the neighbourhood. And [0:07:30] these are small yards, so now it doesn't seem like a dramatic thing at all, but it was enough to cause comment. And in fact, some people felt sorry for me because they didn't think I would be able to fill up such a big space with

plants, and a few times I came home and people had dug out plants from their garden to give me for my garden, like iris, or things that they felt would help me to fill out my garden.

Interviewer: To fill your space.

Respondent: So that garden was one of [0:08:00] the very nice early things that made me feel like I belonged on the street because of the controversy and [laughs] the contributions that people gave me for this enterprising garden.

Interviewer: So you were somewhat of a pioneer in changing the form of the little front garden with the grass, and maybe a tree in the middle.

Respondent: That's right. That's right. That's right. That's why I feel good about that, because that's quite a common thing now.

Interviewer: And [0:08:30] what did you have behind, and what do you have now behind your home?

Respondent: We just put in interlocking brick on the whole of the backyard because it's very, very tiny and there was a thought that maybe if I had a car I might plant it there someday, but when we took down the pigeon coop and the dog run, we didn't plant it to grass. We made a big garden, we made a picnic table area, and the rest we covered with insulbrick. [0:09:00] And the hilarious part of taking down those two structures was that they were both just full of mice. There must have been hundreds of mice because, you know, all the grains that the pigeons had been fed were like perfect mouse food. So every cat for miles around was there for the dismantling, and then the eating of the mice, and it was just like a scramble out there. Now there are not so many cats, you know? Just the cats that [0:09:30] just roam around. There were a lot of cats in those days.

Interviewer: Did those mice make their way into the home? The house?

Respondent: Some of them did. Some of them did come straight into the house. [Laughs]

Interviewer: So you had to find a way to – of course you had...

Respondent: It wasn't such a big problem.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: We were able to get rid of them, but it was this free-for-all, and there must have been a dozen cats, just like tearing around catching them all, so it was a very exciting day.

Interviewer: God. That's extraordinary. We're talking about the houses now, so I'm going to stay with it for a while. **[0:10:00]** When people gathered at that time, where were they gathering? Did you see people using back gardens, front porches? Do you have any comments about that?

Respondent: There's some kind of law of physics in my mind between the porches and the front walks, so I think Major Street has the perfect proportions because I sit on my porch a lot, and people can call out and, like, converse **[0:11:00]** from the sidewalk. You know, if it was much farther they would maybe just wave or something. Or much closer, and I might feel like I was sort of sitting in the middle of the street. But like Major Street has the perfect dimensions for people being able to sit on their porch, talk, chat, have a nice conversation.

Interviewer: So does that happen a fair amount? People using their front porches? Or are you one of the few?

Respondent: Maybe I'm one of the few now. It used to be more common with the elderly Jews who lived here.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And they would visit. I had two elderly friends and they would go every day twice to the JCC, Rose and Tilly. And they would **[0:11:30]** come along the street. They were very tiny, and they would come arm-in-arm past my house, and I would call out and I would say, "Would you like some tea?" And they'd say, "Maybe something a little stronger." [Laughter] So then they would come up and sit on the porch, and I would serve whatever I had going, and

they would tell me all the stories about the people who lived on the street. They would have been wonderful people you'd have to interview.

Interviewer: So you're saying that the front porches were used more thirty years ago than they would be now.

Respondent: I would say so. I would say so.

Interviewer: Well that's my experience because I moved into this neighbourhood shortly after that.

Respondent: Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: And we used the front porches a lot. But you're still **[0:12:00]** using your front porch a lot.

Respondent: Yes. And we had to have the porch rebuilt, and I made sure that it was big enough to take two chairs, and then often two people will come. They'll come and stand around, or talk, or even sit on the steps, but in the summertime it's wonderful. I just love it.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well when I moved into the neighbourhood I remember my Portuguese and Italian neighbours, and I was one of them. [Laughs] But sitting outside until twelve at night, one in the morning, and very friendly sidewalk living...

Respondent: That's right.

Interviewer: ...as Jane Jacobs would have called it.

Respondent: **[0:12:30]** Yes. We have some of that, for sure. If you want it. If you want it, you can have it.

Interviewer: So you've talked about the waves of immigration. Can you talk a little bit as part of that about the class structure as it was then thirty-something years ago and as it is now? Any comments about that?

Respondent: **[0:13:00]** Well now I think that most of the people who live on this ~~block are, like, cultural workers. TV, journalism, dancers, writers,~~

artists. A lot of people in the – and the law, and medicine, and academics, naturally because we're so close to the U of T. And interestingly a lot of single women in the last, say, [0:13:30] fifteen years.

Interviewer: Of what ages? What are you talking about?

Respondent: I'm talking about women whose children have flown the coop, and maybe they've flown the coop too.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. [Laughs]

Respondent: And they've bought a home.

Interviewer: Are they in their fifties? Sixties?

Respondent: I would say so. I would say, you know, forties and fifties.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: The houses are small and they're a very companionable size. You don't feel like you're hardly over-housed, but they're bigger than a condo or an apartment, and that's a new thing.

Interviewer: [0:14:00] So these single women.

Respondent: Middle-aged women. Yeah.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: I think I'll say a word about the use of the houses. This was a point I'd made in my email, that when I came here there must have been a dozen boarding houses in this one block. And the tenants all seemed to be sort of forlorn looking, middle-aged white men. And I would say some of them had had unhappy [0:14:30] lives, or you know, workplace injuries, or maybe an addiction of something or other, but they were certainly harmless, but they were very frequent. They were a common tenant on this street. And then we had a very, very bad fire in a set – a fire that was set by the
~~concierge about four doors down, and she died in the fire, and~~

some people were trapped. The doors were locked, some people were trapped but they got [0:15:00] out, and after that the city came in and went to every door to find out who was running illegal boarding houses. And then after that, several of them closed, and then they just seemed to kind of go out of favour as the value of the properties went up, and some of those places became single-family homes or triplexes. People would just have them divided into triplexes. So you know, I often think when I see, you know, [0:15:30] unhappy looking guys on the street I think, you know, a lot of those people wouldn't have had many places to go, you know? Shelters and affordable housing is a very rare commodity in this city, so you know, we kind of squeezed out some very needy people.

Interviewer: Well the psychiatric institutions also squeezed them out.

Respondent: Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: It was a period when they housed a lot of those people, and they pushed them out.

Respondent: That's absolutely true, and [0:16:00] that convergence – those two elements converged at about the same time.

Interviewer: You have notes, so if you want to just move along with those, I'm really fine with that.

Respondent: No, I love your questions. It's making me think of some.

Interviewer: Okay. What about languages? What languages did you hear then, and what's – because of what you're saying now, I'm thinking there's a lot of English.

Respondent: Yes. Oh yes, now I would say it's [0:16:30] very, very predominately English now, but it was Yiddish, Portuguese, Italian, and then mostly English. And now I think in the last couple of years almost everybody who's bought a house has been Chinese.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Respondent: Mm-hm. I've noticed that. Of course, there's always students live on this street. Whether they rent a room or there's two or three houses that I would say, like – **[0:17:00]** we call them student houses. And exactly the setup I don't know, but they cater to a student population. And some of the houses that have been triplexed, they seem to attract graduate students. You know, couples who are graduate students. They have a bit more money, they don't have to just rent a room. They can rent...

Interviewer: A smaller space. Yeah.

Respondent: ...a decent apartment.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: One of the questions you have here is about the renovations, and I mentioned the triplexes, **[0:17:30]** and I mentioned also the coloured houses, and now most of them have been, you know, blasted or in some ways clean, so it's a very brick-looking street. But the funny thing about many of these houses is that they're not brick houses; they're just brick façade, and – turn this off for a sec? The thing about these houses are a lot of them are not brick houses, they're brick façade. They're wood houses **[0:18:00]** with this one little layer of brick along the front. And there was a house just south of Sussex – this was quite a few years ago – but some men were pulling off the front porch to replace it with a new one, and the whole façade fell in a heap. Just this big pile of bricks in the front yard. And we all gathered around to admire it and say, you know, sort of therefore the Grace of God – I don't know why, because any one of our houses could just sort **[0:18:30]** of fall – the face could fall off. But anyway, that's just a little story about that. I wanted to mention about schools. You were asking about...

Interviewer: Yeah, please.

Respondent: ...education?

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

- Respondent:** And right now I'm going full-time to the adult art program at Central Tech in the Arts Centre, and that is like one of Canada's little-known secrets. There's nothing like it in the rest of Canada, that Arts Centre. You know the program I'm talking about?
- Interviewer:** [0:19:00] Yeah. I've taken stained glass classes there. Yeah.
- Respondent:** Okay. Well that's actually continuing ed. Like you can go as an adult student into the high school program for three years and it's a very intense, very, very sophisticated art school for four hundred dollars a year, and I can think of half a dozen people who have gone there from our immediate neighbourhood within the last few years. So I would say over the last [0:19:30] fifty years, which is as long as that Art Centre has been up, I'd bet there've been hundreds of people from this neighbourhood who've been able to get an exceptional art education at Central Tech.
- Interviewer:** I know Gail went, and Alison is going now.
- Respondent:** Yes, Alison. That's right. She's in my class.
- Interviewer:** And Gail was there a couple of years ago.
- Respondent:** Gail who?
- Interviewer:** Singer?
- Respondent:** Yes. Yes. She's another Winnipeg girl, from the north of Winnipeg.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. So that's a very big deal to me.
- Interviewer:** And any other comments [0:20:00] about the schools as they were, as they are now? Public schools, Hebrew schools, anything that's happened in your thirty-something years here?
- Respondent:** No. I didn't have very much to say about that.
- Interviewer:** ~~Yeah. Okay.~~

Respondent: Because my son went to Huron, and then he went to Jarvis. I forget what the middle school was called, but anyway. I wanted to say about the U of T that for the years when my son was going to university, [0:20:30] and when money was really scarce, I as a single parent was very grateful to have U of T there where he could go and get an education, but also he could live at home.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: So that was the biggest thing. He got a good education that I could afford.

Interviewer: Do you have any comments – now that we're talking about U of T and how grateful you are that it's close – the impact of the university on our neighbourhood?

Respondent: Well the skating rink was just glorious. [0:21:00] You know what I'm talking about?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah? The skating rink on Sussex. I mean for years I went there and skated with my friends.

Interviewer: Is it not there anymore?

Respondent: I don't think it's functioning now, but when it did it was wonderful. In the evening you'd go, they'd play music, you could skate with your friends. My son went there like every day and he taught a few of the younger children in the neighbourhood how to skate, you know, on that rink, so it was a wonderful facility.

Interviewer: Yes. And [0:21:30] so when would your son have been going? Twenty years ago?

Respondent: Well he's forty-two now, so I would say thirty – twenty, twenty-five, and thirty for about that ten-year period.

Interviewer: ~~So that's a change that's not for the better.~~

Respondent: We used that rink a lot. Yeah, that's right. And they're talking about – I won't say anything there about that. But the JCC is just fantastic. I've belonged for thirty years on and off. Met [0:22:00] so many friends, had such a good time, feel healthy and fit. It's just really in many ways the heart and soul of the community.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. And it's a community centre. I think it's a community centre much more than a recreation...

Respondent: It is.

Interviewer: ...more than a fitness centre.

Respondent: No. And it makes everybody feel welcome. So I am actually Scottish and Irish background, and I've met enough Scottish women there that every Robbie Burns Day we have haggis here [0:22:30] [laughter].

Interviewer: And you met them at the JCC?

Respondent: Yeah. These are all my swimming buddies from the JCC. So you know, whatever your, you know, age or your interests, or your ethnicity, you know, you will be very welcome and comfortable there.

Interviewer: I'm having dinner tonight at the JCC. There are twenty of us meeting at a restaurant on Bloor. Yeah.

Respondent: The friends that you've...

Interviewer: We all go at seven-fifteen in the morning. This is just the early morning group, [0:23:00] so I agree. I mean it's been that in my life too.

Respondent: I've met wonderful friends.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: And we encourage each other in our lives in a unique kind of way in that we're all there for health, fitness, and well-being, so we encourage each other at sort of a very basic life force level. We're not professional friends exactly; we just want to live a good life.

Interviewer: Do you want to talk about Major Street per se? Or should we stay with the whole [0:23:30] Harbord Village, for what's significant to you?

Respondent: Well I only have a couple more things that I was interested in mentioning.

Interviewer: Oh please, go ahead.

Respondent: And one is the TRANZAC Club, which is a very ugly building on Brunswick, and I rarely if ever hear anybody in this neighbourhood talking about it. Like, "Oh, I had a fun time at the TRANZAC." Never. Never. But I have gone there hundreds and hundreds of times. It was, you know, for the last twenty-five years of my life it [0:24:00] has been, like, really a centre of folk music, and I love folk music. And for years I went at least once a week, sometimes twice a week. I had my fiftieth birthday party there. I learned how to do Irish dancing. I met Chris there.

Interviewer: Wow.

Respondent: He was – there's like a whole underground sort of dancing thing in Toronto, and he was teaching French-Canadian step-dancing. Not professionally, but just for fun.

Interviewer: Chris was teaching.

Respondent: Yeah. [0:24:30] He's a wonderful dancer, and he was teaching that at the TRANZAC, and I was there learning Irish dancing, and then there were a whole bunch of people doing like that English Morris dancing, so you know, I stepped into his class and started learning French-Canadian step-dancing, and then romance ensued. [Laughter] So it means a lot to me, and we still go a lot, and we got very involved in that Irish music scene. And in fact, this weekend ~~there is a big Irish music festival [0:25:00] at the TRANZAC, and~~

we're billeting some people from Ireland and we're having workshops here right in our living room. People teaching each other how to play Irish musical instruments. So the TRANZAC has been fantastic for me.

Interviewer: I've gone to the TRANZAC around Christmastime when they have about five weekends of different artisans selling their wares at Christmastime, and I have a few quite charming things hanging in my home that I've bought there, [0:25:30] so that's the only time I've used it. Yeah.

Respondent: Well it's been a transitional thing. I'm going to mention it in case nobody else has, but the TRANZAC means Toronto, T for Toronto, and then ANZAC, which means Australia and New Zealand Club. So it's the Toronto and Australia and New Zealand Club. So in the days, like in the '20s and '30s when Toronto was full of, you know, very distinguishable ethnic [0:26:00] communities, many of them did have social club. Like the Portuguese club, and the Austrian club, and this was the Australian New Zealand social club, so it was very dominated by Australians and New Zealander's, and I would say they were very exclusive in the use of that building. They really didn't welcome other people. And then gradually as they dispersed and became more integrated, far fewer Australians and New Zealanders [0:26:30] went there, so then the dominant culture there became the folk music community, which was much more, like, Europeans, British, English, Irish people who loved singing folk music, and that's how I first started to go there. And that still is part of the culture of the TRANZAC club, but now I would say it's more musicians playing, like, new music, music that doesn't personally [0:27:00] interest me, like more contemporary youth-oriented music, so I don't go as much. And I don't think there's any New Zealanders or Australians involved at all anymore.

Interviewer: And are you seeing that that's still being done, or not as much? The dancing that used to be there.

Respondent: Not the dancing that I was involved in.

Interviewer: Yeah. So even the TRANZAC club has gone through major changes.

Respondent: Oh yes. Yes. Yes, indeed.

Interviewer: Well you're the first one who explained what TRANZAC stands for, so that's very interesting for me. Thank you. Yeah.

Respondent: Okay. **[0:27:30]** And I wanted to tell about something about our block, and this was something that I started eleven years ago and it's our annual street party.

Interviewer: Just remind us what street you're talking about.

Respondent: Okay. I'm talking about the north block of Major Street, so that's the block between Sussex and Bloor on Major Street. So once a year, the first week of December, **[0:28:00]** everybody on the block is invited, and we rotate houses so every year it's a different house. Somebody volunteers to be the host, and we have a really refined process from everybody who comes and does the same thing, so the hosts don't have to do very much work. And we invariably get over sixty people in the course of like a cocktail party, you know, four to eight or something like that. And it's wonderful, people love it.

Interviewer: So **[0:28:30]** people bring some kind of snack food?

Respondent: Yes, yes, yes. It's definitely a potluck, and they bring wine, and the food is fantastic. And people come and they stay because – and over the years it's gotten more and more friendly, so intimate as people get – they see each other on the street, they have more to talk about. You know, it was always more to say.

Interviewer: People take great pride in this street. I interviewed a person farther **[0:29:00]** south who's been here his entire life. He left for about fifteen years or so, but he's been here the rest of his eighty-two years, and he loves this neighbourhood, and people are very kind to him. And he's substantially...

Respondent: Yes. That's right. And something that's happened in the last couple of years is that two people, Helen Breslauer and Gwyneth Pierce-Murdoch, have set up like a Google Yahoo group, and I think

there's fifty people on that group. So if somebody wants [0:29:30] information or wants to invite people to something, or you know, the other day I wanted to know is there a B and B in this neighbourhood for some relatives who are visiting, so I just sent out...

Interviewer: So this is for your block? What is this?

Respondent: Just our block.

Interviewer: Oh. I didn't know about that.

Respondent: Mm-hm. It's a lot of people. And you get instant response. I heard immediately of several...

Interviewer: So it's another feeling of community. This is our...

Respondent: Yes. Yes. And we've had a lot of interesting things to communicate. [0:30:00] You know, one, well two very tragic – somebody died in our neighbourhood, you know, a few weeks ago and so that was – we were informed about that, and now we're being informed about a memorial service, and it's just great because we're all kind of up to date on what's what. And then if somebody moves in, often a neighbour will say, "Oh, I want to tell you about the new neighbours I have. It's William and Wendy, and their son Ian, and [0:30:30] you know, bah, bah, bah." So it's a very, very nice effort.

Interviewer: Yeah. So much of the city has nothing similar to this.

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And these things build on each other, so once you're talking to each other, and once you're sort of feeling like more companionable, other things come out. So about two or three months ago, this was after the Christmas party or the December party, I thought, you know what? Do you know, I love soup. [0:31:00] And so I thought, you know, it's kind of a lonely thing because so many of us just –
~~there's just two or three people per house. I said, "Why don't we~~

have a soup collective?" So I put out on the email, the Yahoo group, "Does anybody want to be part of a soup collective?" So ten people said they would. So now we have two groups of five that wants – like once every five weeks you make, you know, soup for – make four cups of soup for five other families, [0:31:30] and they have been delicious. They have been fantastic. So you know, we're into our – we're going through like our second round now, and then we're having a party on the fourteenth to discuss our soups.
[Laughs]

Interviewer: So this is all still this one block...

Respondent: Just this one block.

Interviewer: ...of Major Street. Wow.

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah. Now these things, you know, they might peter out or whatever. It doesn't really matter. It's not a business, any of these things, it's just...

Interviewer: It's not carved in [0:32:00] stone.

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: And it'll have its own life.

Respondent: That's right. So sometimes if I think nobody's volunteered for the party in December, I think well that's a little bit – but somebody always says, "I want to do the party this year." Or, "Where's the party happening this year on the street?" I said, "Where are we going to get together?" And then, you know, we've had it – somebody has volunteered every year, but it's getting almost to be like it would be hard for me to have it again because I can't [0:32:30] easily get sixty more people.

Interviewer: Yeah. That's a lot. [Laughter] Well and they'd stand. Yeah, but yeah, I agree. Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah. So that's all I'll say about that. Those were the points that I wanted to make. Was there anything else in your list of questions that...

Interviewer: Perhaps you can talk about traffic. How traffic moves and has moved [0:33:00] from the time you've moved in.

Respondent: I don't have anything much to say about that.

Interviewer: Okay. Uh-huh. Renovations?

Respondent: Oh, I did have a word to say about that, and I think there's a category of things, like the use of the homes. And there was the boarding house issue and how there's an increasing number of triplexes, as these houses get sort of subdivided. So that's much more common than a boarding house now. But when the Portuguese [0:33:30] who lived in these houses, they had an astonishing way of using the space, and that was like the ground floor was extremely formal, and the front room was almost like a shrine. It would have like all, like, religious icons and photographs, and was not to be sat on. Lovely furniture, but not to be used.

Interviewer: Off-limits for daily use.

Respondent: Absolutely. And then a very nicely [0:34:00] decorated dining room, and then a kitchen, which was not really used very much either. And then the whole of the family's activities took place in the cantina in the basement, and I really think somebody should record this because there's a woman named Maria Mercedes, and she often asks me in to see her house, and it's kind of astonishing.

Interviewer: So hers is in that – she still lives that way.

Respondent: Exactly, but very few people. Like that's all gone now, [0:34:30] except for maybe a handful of people on the street. But somebody should go in and photograph that, especially like on a Catholic religious holiday because that whole front room is full of flowers. Have you seen this? Have you ever gone into one?

Interviewer: ~~Yeah. Yeah.~~

Respondent: Yes. And that is like an amazing use of the space because now it's changed, and most people have done what I've done and opened it up, and it's all – like every space is sort of fair game for everybody doing everything, [0:35:00] and we all live on the ground floor, and put our feet up on the coffee table, and nobody goes in the basement. It's just like storage. But also the basements here were mostly built like long after the houses were built, so a lot of the basements were dug out after the houses were built. So the basements tend to be quite [0:35:30] shallow?

Interviewer: Yeah. They're not for tall people. [Laughs]

Respondent: Not for tall people. There has to be a good word for that.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: Very little height.

Interviewer: Yeah. So I think in fact you can't really rent it out, a lot of them, because there's no exit from there...

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: ...and they're too short. They're not really legal for serious living or whatever. Yeah.

Respondent: So why exactly the Portuguese do that, I don't exactly know. But I've been down in the cantinas for a coffee, or a drink, or a [0:36:00] tea, and they're very, very cozy and it's like a little home in miniature. Like there's the TV, and there's a sofa, and there's a little table.

Interviewer: And that's the livable part of the house. The other is the...

Respondent: It's more formal.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

- Respondent:** And maybe on important holidays they would use the upstairs dining room and the kitchen, but even the kitchen, which has the newest in appliances, has like photographs and vases of flowers, and...
- Interviewer:** On the stove. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Like knickknacks. Yeah. On the stove and the countertops [0:36:30] because it's not in daily use, you know? Sort of chachkas.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** So I kind of loved it. There's something really lovely about that. It sort of shows – I think they're really proud of how beautiful...
- Interviewer:** Well and it's cultural. It's specific to that population, and probably brought it over from Europe I would think, perchance.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm. And maybe it's warmer, maybe it's an economy thing, like you don't want to heat a great big house all day and night. [0:37:00] Maybe being underground is more economical and more cozy. I don't know. But that's something that should be appreciated.
- Interviewer:** Well it's an observation of yours, and it's something that changes. Some of those people are not changing; they're keeping it that way, but their children I'm sure are living quite differently. Yeah. And the people who are buying their homes will do it differently.
- Respondent:** That's right. That's right.
- Interviewer:** Any changes in the heating [0:37:30] systems? Like when you bought this house and what you have now, any comments on that?
- Respondent:** Well not very much.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent:** I'm sure there was – oh well we've only filled in the coalscuttle. The coalscuttle was down there. We only filled that in last year when we

had a bathroom built in right here, but there was still that sort of pit where the coal would have been thrown down into the basement.

Interviewer: So that was summer when the house...

Respondent: But that was after **[0:38:00]** my time, yeah. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Now you weren't here fifty years ago, but in the thirty-something years you've been here, can you comment on the stores on Harbord, on Bloor, on College? Any changes that are remarkable, notable?

Respondent: Well there was a big Hungarian population on sort of the Bloor Street. There weren't very many Hungarians living on these streets that **[0:38:30]** I know of. Undoubtedly they did, but I think that they had all moved to greener pastures, but there are still lots of Hungarian restaurants and stores.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: And then I would say about twenty years ago we got kind of a little rash of fairly high-end stores, like quite sort of gourmet food stores, and like gift shops, and quite nice things, and now I would say **[0:39:00]** the dominant theme on Bloor Street is cheap food, cheap booze, just like cheap stuff. Very, very student-oriented food and drink. And then I would say also that the Korean and Asian influence – I mean there's more sushi restaurants between Spadina and Bathurst than you can shake a stick at, and then increasingly a number of **[0:39:30]** Korean restaurants moving in an easterly direction. So for example, on the corner of Palmerston and Bloor there was a huge McDonald's, and now it's a huge Korean restaurant. Fabulous food. We've been there a couple of times. But I think that in itself is an interesting commentary.

Interviewer: Yeah. Because that used to be around more like around Manning...

Respondent: That's right.

Interviewer: ...and now as you say it's coming towards Bathurst.

- Respondent:** You're right. Yeah. And replacing a McDonald's is pretty cool. So I think that the [0:40:00] state of the sort of businesses on Bloor is really very low. I think that the rents went zooming up about ten years ago. I think they got really, really greedy, and so anybody who was trying to offer some sort of a special, sort of specialty product, they just couldn't. They couldn't afford it, and they all went out of business, and it just left room for the wings, and the...
- Interviewer:** They can [0:40:30] share, sell a lot of them. Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And coffee shops, you know, the Starbucks, etcetera.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I make the same assumptions as you. Yeah. Let's see. Kensington Market. Is that something that you have any comments?
- Respondent:** Mm-mm.
- Interviewer:** No. So that's not influencing you. Talk about, please, the livability, the security in this neighbourhood as it was when you moved in [0:41:00] and as it is now, thirty-four years later. Thirty-three years later.
- Respondent:** Well there have been these many changes that we've discussed, but it's always had a very friendly feeling. And I think that the Harbord Village Residents' Association is a very important part of who we are and why it's as good as [0:41:30] it is. They're a very, very active organization, and they should be given a tremendous amount of credit.
- Interviewer:** It is a very lively, passionate group of individuals, and group. I think that – I mean the other topics that I have here wouldn't have – you wouldn't have been here at that time. The Spadina Expressway and Rochdale, and of World War II. No, you [laughs]...
- Respondent:** No. [0:42:00] I do remember Rochdale. But one of the things that is a change is how few children there are on the street. And when I see those old photographs, you know, of the turn of the century – do you know the pictures I would be referring to?

Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Respondent: William James photographs. There's all these rafts of children playing and making carts, and wagons, and playing on the street, and very, very few children now.

Interviewer: [0:42:30] Yeah. My block seems to be increasing in that, but I think, you know, a lot of people like you and me, like you and I like living in this neighbourhood, and our children are not in the neighbourhood and with their children.

Respondent: That's right.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And families that do have children, the children often go to school somewhere in some other part of the city. Not sure why.

Interviewer: And they go to daycare, and they don't play on the street as much. Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: No. If you see a child just [0:43:00] strolling along the street, I stop and I look around to see who's with that child. Well that wasn't the case when my son went to school. You know, he would walk to school every day by himself, or possibly with a friend, and they were kids. They were kids a lot.

Interviewer: Yes. Those are changes that have occurred.

Respondent: Mm-hm. People having smaller families and then just fewer people per house. Like when I referred to the eleven people who lived [0:43:30] in this house, I mean I'm sure most of them then were kids.

Interviewer: That's right. So now there are two of you.

Respondent: That's all – yeah. Two people and two animals. That's right.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. So before I turn the tape off, any thoughts? Anything that we haven't talked about that had interested you that you thought you might want to talk about?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Okay. **[0:44:00]** Thank you very much.

Respondent: Oh. Maybe I do. [Laughter] No, no. I think I talked about it already. Okay. [Laughter] I've loved having Trinity-St. Paul at the corner of my street. Over the years I've had many, many different associations with it, even though I'm not a member of the congregation. But for a long time, there was Offices of Grindstone Island, which was like a socialist political camp **[0:44:30]** near Ottawa, and I was involved with them, and I've been to lots and lots of fundraisers, and weddings, and political events in the sanctuary, and I love it because it forms a fantastic sound barrier between my house and Bloor. So [laughs] when I'm sitting out in the backyard in the summer, it's just like it's as peaceful as the countryside. You don't hear a peep, and it's very beautiful.

Interviewer: Yeah. It's hard **[0:45:00]** to believe we're in the centre of the city.

Respondent: Yes. And I love it that they do a soup kitchen, and that they have a centre for – let me see. It's called Peace Justice of the Arts, I think it's called. So they really try to encourage arts in the church, and they have a connection with Central Technical School in that regard. **[0:45:30]** So it has really tried very hard to be outreach to the community, but also to elements of the whole city who are, you know, terribly, terribly poor, and they're a very gay-friendly, Native People-friendly centre. So we are blessed. And I think that like many, many churches, they're in difficult economic times, and so that makes it even more **[0:46:00]** sort of precious in a way because you worry about what would happen if they can't continue to function in that way. A lot of people would be losers.

Interviewer: I wonder if they have any serious fundraising that happens. I don't know.

Respondent: I'm sure they try to do fundraising in every way they can, but you know what? The congregation is a lot older and sparser. That's a very common, common problem.

Interviewer: [0:46:30] Done.

Respondent: But it is another treasure. We have so many treasures in our neighbourhood and that's one of them.

[0:46:32]

[End of recording]