

032 Judith Robertson

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

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: I'm in the home of Judith Robertson on Robert Street. I want to thank you very much for agreeing to meet me. And you know, this is a history project being done by Harbord Village Residents' Association, and I'm meeting people who have lived here for some decades. We want to know your experience of living here, and the changes that you have witnessed and experienced. And so I just want to start by saying thank you very much.

Respondent: Oh, you're very welcome.

Interviewer: [0:00:30] So, Judith, would you just please tell us your address and how long you've been living here, just to start us?

Respondent: When I first moved into the neighbourhood I lived on Brunswick Avenue.

Interviewer: And when was that?

Respondent: 252 Brunswick. 1976. And I had – my job was at the corner of Brunswick and Bloor. I was teaching at an alternative school and we rented space from John Sign and the three schools of art. [0:01:00] And that was how I found my house, because in the spring there was an apple tree in the front yard, and an apple tree in the back. But I saw the apple tree in the front yard and I fell in love with the house, and then the for sale sign went up, so I kept going down and looking, and looking, and looking, and then in the end I could buy it.

Interviewer: So you moved here because your school was here.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: That's what first brought you here.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: And then the apple tree. [Laughs]

Respondent: Seduced me. [0:01:30] [Laughter] Yes. Yeah.

Interviewer: So you've lived here for many, many years.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: That's right.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And so I lived on Brunswick until 2002, I think, when I moved into this house on Robert Street, which is 260 Robert Street, and this house had belonged to my mother, who moved to Toronto in her late seventies. She had spent her life in Ottawa. [0:02:00] And she came and at first was in an apartment, and then we found this house and she bought it. Now I'd have to go and check when that was, but it was probably in the – it was in the '80s because it was the period when prices in this neighbourhood had suddenly spiked up, because I paid fifty thousand dollars to buy Brunswick, or fifty-four thousand, and my [0:02:30] mother paid a hundred and fifty to buy on Robert Street that much later.

Interviewer: What do you think Brunswick is worth now, that you paid fifty for?

Respondent: I think around seven hundred.

Interviewer: [Laughs] Oh my god.

Respondent: I know. I know.

Interviewer: And your mother paid an exorbitant amount. What seemed like that at that time.

- Respondent:** At the time.
- Interviewer:** And now it's worth? [Laughs]
- Respondent:** I know. Yes. Yes. But that time there had been that – do you remember?
- Interviewer:** I do.
- Respondent:** People were moving out of this neighbourhood and other people of another background were [0:03:00] moving in and buying, yeah.
- Interviewer:** So would you mind mentioning the ages that you were since you started to live here?
- Respondent:** No. Well I was born in 1942, so in 1976 I was thirty-four, and when I moved here I was – was I fifty-eight? No. I was nearly sixty. Fifty-nine, I think.
- Interviewer:** So you've been here a long time. Yeah.
- Respondent:** [0:03:30] Yes.
- Interviewer:** Well you're two years younger than I am.
- Respondent:** Oh. Is that right?
- Interviewer:** [Laughs] 1940.
- Respondent:** Oh, I wouldn't know that. [Laughter] It doesn't seem such a long time. It's funny. It's gone quickly.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. Well I'm just going to say it for the record that when I walked into your house I told you how much I had been admiring your garden, not knowing you, not knowing that it was your home, but admiring your garden for years, and that I've taken a lot of pictures of it.
- Respondent:** That's very nice.

- Interviewer:** And then you showed me the back, but your front is spectacular.
- Respondent:** Well you'll have to look at the [0:04:00] back. And then I tried to grow a garden on the other side of the street.
- Interviewer:** Oh that's yours. I've been watching that too...
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...and appreciating it.
- Respondent:** Expanding.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. Well it's very beautiful. Where were you born? Are you from Toronto originally?
- Respondent:** No, Ottawa.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. So that's where you grew up until you came here.
- Respondent:** Yes, though my father was in the diplomatic service, so I spent actually a lot of my early years [0:04:30] in England.
- Interviewer:** I can hear a little bit of that.
- Respondent:** Well maybe, yes.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Do you know much about this house? So you know your mother was here for many years before you came.
- Respondent:** Well she was here – yeah, she was here for twenty years, I guess, because she died in 1999, and she was ninety-six, so it was nearly twenty years. She lived a long time.
- Interviewer:** Do you have any idea about the history before you moved in?
- Respondent:** I think for a while it was [0:05:00] a rooming house going back, and then a Dutchman, Mr. Bokelmann, renovated it. He gutted it, and that's when I saw it going by. My mother was in Holland staying with relatives, and I sent her the description of the house and said,

you know, "Maybe this is what we should do. You should get this." And Mr. Bokelmann had wanted to do it [0:05:30] to build it and to change it for himself, and then he put it on the market, so that's how she got it. But I don't know much about its background except that it had been a rooming house at one stage.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: There's quite a lot of history done about Robert Street, I think. I know one woman who lived here and who was involved in, I guess, the residents, and she knew about different houses.

Interviewer: [0:06:00] Well some of the other people on the committee will do that.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: I'm just doing the interviews.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: But this certainly is a far cry from a rooming house. It's beautiful. Lovely, large kitchen. Since you've been living here, what have you observed in terms of immigration – the different populations who have lived here?

Respondent: You're speaking now generally of the neighbourhood.

Interviewer: Yes. Yeah. If you want to talk specifically about Brunswick or Robert, that's fine. But [0:06:30] I'm talking generally about the neighbourhood, but you have more experience with these two streets, so...

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: ...please go ahead. Yeah.

Respondent: Well when I first lived on Robert Street, it was – well on one side I had a family, the Mammolitis, who were Italian. Neither Mr. or Mrs. Mammoliti spoke a lot of English. Their children went to – they had

four children – and they went to Central Tech, and they did very well. They won prizes, and went to [0:07:00] University of Toronto, and have all done well, and Mrs. Mammoliti still lives in that house. On the other side of me was a relative of Mr. Jackson. I don't think he was – he wasn't the postman, because the postman lived down the street, but he was an old man who lived there with his brother, and then his brother died. It was when the two houses to the north of 232 Brunswick were – they were [0:07:30] really pretty – almost like primitive. They weren't shacks, but they weren't much more than shacks. Now they're big houses. They've been demolished and two big houses have been built.

Interviewer: So what addresses are those? I'm going to look at them.

Respondent: It's going to be 232. So it'll be 234 and 236.

Interviewer: Okay. Yeah.

Respondent: And in 236, another Jackson still lives. So that family, [0:08:00] they own both those houses, the family, and...

Interviewer: But those have really been transformed.

Respondent: They're totally different. Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah. 234 and 236.

Respondent: Yes. And a family from Robert Street just recently bought 234 and has moved there. The two men who lived quite close to the Metro Store, there were two boys, and they have – I think they found [0:08:30] their house too small, and then so they stayed in the neighbourhood. And, well, so it was mainly a street of new Canadians. There were Greek families, and Portuguese families, and...

Interviewer: And what years are you talking about?

Respondent: I'm talking in the late '70s and '80s.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Okay. So from a variety of European countries.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: And I remember when I bought my [0:09:00] house and I was having to get – was the first time I'd owned a house, so I, you know, I had to get insurance, all of that, and I said, "I suppose this is for break-ins," and the insurance agent said, "No, no, no. In your neighbourhood, it's really more for fire because the patterns of work are not [0:09:30] uniform. People work shifts at night, people also live very much in their front gardens rather than only on their back gardens," and he said, "that's a very good crime preventative."

Interviewer: That's fascinating.

Respondent: Yeah. It was interesting.

Interviewer: Yeah. With the different shifts and the people.

Respondent: Of course. So that meant that you didn't know everybody's name, but you knew them to say, you know, good morning, or especially since I went up and down that street four times a day or more, you know, because I could come home for lunch from school.

Interviewer: What kind [0:10:00] of school was it?

Respondent: It was with the Toronto District Board. It was the Toronto Board of Education at that time, and it was one of the alternative schools that were started in the '70s, early '70s. It was a secondary school and it was for – it was individualized. There were three teachers. We were really more tutors than teachers, and our students came two or three [0:10:30] times a week, went over their work, were given more work, and a timeline was set up, and then they came back. So we were very good for adults, we were good for kids who'd been sick. It still exists. It's down near the Art Gallery of Ontario now on Baldwin Street.

Interviewer: But it was right here in our village, in our Harbord Village.

- Respondent:** Yes. And we tied into the three schools of art, so the students could take the courses, if there was room in them. They could take – and there were acting courses with the Poor Alex. [0:11:00] It was fun.
- Interviewer:** Sounds like it.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. And are you retired?
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** Are you working part-time? You're retired.
- Respondent:** No, I'm retired.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. So you're saying that when you moved here in the late '70s it was a lot of immigrant people...
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...and what were the languages that you heard spoken?
- Respondent:** Well I remember Greek families, and often there was a pattern – and some of them are still there, but there was that moment in the '80s when the prices went up, [0:11:30] and I knew different families, two or three maybe, who sold and moved to bigger properties further north. But different women worked in the twenty-four hour Bloor Save, and actually one of them still – she comes from a long way because she likes the neighbourhood, and her son works there now. So they keep the tentacles going.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. [0:12:00] Were there influences by these different ethnic groups on the neighbourhood that you're aware of?
- Respondent:** I guess maybe more the gardens were interesting because you often had vegetables. My neighbour to the south had a tiny garden, had his tomatoes, his peppers, and they were all you could see in the window in the basement. The lineup of jars.

Interviewer: So [0:12:30] were these in front, in back? Where were they?

Respondent: No. It was in the back. In the front they – he and his wife would sit out in the front, but it was they had a wonderful rosebush. They didn't have – and daylilies in that garden. It was the back, and it wasn't a big garden, but it...

Interviewer: A lot of vegetables.

Respondent: A lot of vegetables, and for quite a big family.

Interviewer: So they grew the vegetables in a very practical way.

Respondent: Yes. And they made wine. They didn't [0:13:00] grow the grapes. They got the grapes, but he would make it in the backyard.

Interviewer: Do you remember other – I mean since you're talking about gardens, we'll stay with the gardens for a minute or so because you have, as I said, a beautiful garden. What have you noticed about the garden since the late '90s since you've been – '70s since you've been here?

Respondent: I think people pay more attention to their gardens now, but sometimes they're not – it's not all flowers. Sometimes it's a plant garden. I guess that's [0:13:30] changed a little bit. But I do think – well and I've always felt Robert Street was a different street from Brunswick, and its makeup, and I don't know – I don't have as much of a sense of it, except that it's more uniform in our row. I'm in the row, you know, opposite the tennis courts, similar houses, and there's a white [0:14:00] woman professional, and then a couple. She was a teacher, now retired, and her husband, and then me, single white woman next door. And then...

Interviewer: So it's become more homogeneous.

Respondent: Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: I quite liked that it was – you know, you didn't know if you knocked on the door you'd find somebody like you on the other side..

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah, [0:14:30] yeah. So...

Respondent: But Robert Street's a very nice street, and I like this house more than my other one. I like my other one too, but I like this house.

Interviewer: Yeah. But so you're saying – did you know other people's back gardens? Were there other people who had similar back gardens to the one you described?

Respondent: Well again, it was on a lane, so – and actually on Brunswick the lanes were more open. Here, I think I'm the only one that you can see into the garden. Now people put up real fences.

Interviewer: [0:15:00] Uh-huh.

Respondent: But I don't think there are any real – well Joanne and Don to the south of me, they have a real garden too in the back. But on the whole, it's – where there's your table to eat, when you eat out.

Interviewer: I think what you described to me, the family that had all the vegetables there...

Respondent: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: I think forty, fifty years ago, [0:15:30] I think a lot of families had those.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: They sat in the front, was what I've been hearing.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: They sat in the front, and the back was...

Respondent: Yeah. For produce.

Interviewer: Yeah. Right. Yeah, yeah. And it fed the families for many months.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. So when you say – you said white. So it's becoming a different population now.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: How would you describe what it is now?

Respondent: Well I would think on the whole maybe professional middle-class.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. So [0:16:00] that's...

Respondent: Now I'm not so sure about Brunswick. I do know there's still some people, and there's – and it was never totally white middle. It was never totally ethnic when I moved in. No, it was a mix, but it was probably more of a mix than it is now.

Interviewer: Well you know, you mentioned earlier what the houses are costing now.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: So I think the people who moved here when the prices were low have moved away.

Respondent: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: And people who can afford [0:16:30] five, six, seven hundred are moving in.

Respondent: Are moving in. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Some of us really love it very much.

Respondent: Yeah, a lot of people stay, don't they?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. When you first started to live here and it was more of a mix, were you aware of any people who were working from home? The men or the women?

Respondent: Oh that was a change I noticed because there is a building on the corner of Sussex and Brunswick [0:17:00] on the west north side. It's a big – there are four apartments in it, and I'm a part owner. There are three of us who own that building. And I'm the one who does the rental, and I noticed – now I'm not very good at timing, but there was a moment when – at the moment we have all doctors except for one. We have three apartments, and each one [0:17:30] has a doctor, a medical doctor. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Oh my god.

Respondent: And then the fourth one, which is really a maisonette, there is a man and his partner, and they've been there – he's been there for twelve years. So he doesn't fit. He didn't change, but over the years with those three apartments that are now occupied by doctors, there was a moment when suddenly I realized that everybody in there was [0:18:00] to do with computers. And one of those people worked from home, and there was always the possibility – I don't remember another person who was only working at home, but you could – they did sometimes work at home. And we had two chefs for a while in two apartments. Partly, I think, goes word of mouth, and then they want somebody they know, but the computer change I did notice.

Interviewer: [0:18:30] But that is a huge change from what was going on in the '70s.

Respondent: Mm-hm. Because originally we had students often, and it's not that we've put our rents up enormously because we haven't. It's just a reflection of the popularity of the area, and what's happening in this society, I guess.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: What's your impression about – while it was still more of a mixed [0:19:00] neighbourhood, whether people assimilated, mixed with each other, or stayed with their own ethnic groups? Any impressions?

Respondent: Well I don't think there was much difference. I wasn't in a lot of other people's houses. I remember being very flattered because when the Greek family moved away, they invited me for their party that they were giving to say goodbye. And [0:19:30] occasionally if there was a child – none of their children – is that right? I don't think any of the children on the street, no teenagers on the street, came to us. Somebody from Sussex came, but nobody on Brunswick. So sometimes though when something happened with a child in a family that had to do with schooling, like a graduation, occasionally I was invited to that. And my Italian neighbours – [0:20:00] I was on very good terms with them, but I was only in the front hall really of their house, you know? But we'd always – you know, this nice, neighbourly feeling.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Yes.

Respondent: And I knew I could borrow something [laughter] if I had to.

Interviewer: Yeah. You mentioned – we were talking about the back gardens, and that your lane is a lot of a more kind of closed off – do you have anything to say about [0:20:30] how the lanes have been used in the years since you've been here? How they've been used, and maybe whether there's any difference in the thirty-plus years that you've been here?

Respondent: This one's become a gathering place for kids, I guess from Central Tech. I'm not sure. Who come in the lunch hour. There was an issue, people were upset by that. I don't think they do very much except [0:21:00] come and, well they probably smoke up. But they're not destructive. They don't always pick up all their garbage, but you know...

- Interviewer:** But they're not damaging anything.
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. But some...
- Respondent:** I don't think that happened when my mother was in this house. They've discovered this spot. Maybe another spot that they knew about before. Disappeared.
- Interviewer:** But you said the neighbours were concerned for a while?
- Respondent:** Well actually [0:21:30] the Meyers, who you know, where you went...
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** ...he brought – I think he brought it up at the last meeting of the residents.
- Interviewer:** Right. Uh-huh. Yeah. Well I have them a lot because I live on Borden Street. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Oh well. Yes.
- Interviewer:** So I'm just south of Central Tech, so I see them a lot.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. I bet you do.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So you see them hanging around in the lane...
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** ...eating, and smoking, and just – but you know.
- Respondent:** But it doesn't – I don't [0:22:00] like them to leave the garbage, but I tell them it doesn't – they say, "Oh no, we never would do that." [Laughs] But of course they do.
- Interviewer:** But you're not intimidated by them.

- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** I mean you do speak to them.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Well I know that sometimes when I pass them in my lane and I'm on my bike, I just move quickly because I'm a little anxious about what they think, that I might report or notice or something.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** So you seem more relaxed than I do.
- Respondent:** Well it's probably because [0:22:30] I taught that age group, maybe. I don't know.
- Interviewer:** Your house, as you say, was a boarding home.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Approximately when was it renovated to be this beautiful home it is now?
- Respondent:** Well let me think. I would have thought maybe in '81, but I can't...
- Interviewer:** Approximately, yeah.
- Respondent:** ...around that. It was...
- Interviewer:** So it was about thirty years [0:23:00] ago.
- Respondent:** Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Do you have any comments on renovations that you've seen in the neighbourhood over these decades?

Respondent: I think they've been – sometimes what people do to their houses is – it's one of the few times I've seen dissention in the neighbourhood. There's a house on Sussex, which I think people thought was going to be turned into **[0:23:30]** a rooming house. Suddenly that – do you know the one I mean on the north side? Just between...

Interviewer: Sussex corner?

Respondent: Sussex. It's between Major and Brunswick. It was a big – it's a big, brick house, and it isn't a rooming house. There are lots of members of the family in it, but I remember that – when that renovation and change was going through that...

Interviewer: **[0:24:00]** People didn't want a rooming house, you're saying.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And they wouldn't believe that it wasn't going to be, so it was unpleasant. But that's the only – I mean people do – they put on, oh, what's happened in this lane? Maybe a place at a certain level to sit out at, you know? That's more what I've seen.

Interviewer: **[0:24:30]** So you're not seeing big extension of it.

Respondent: No. I don't think so. I'm not always very observant, but.

Interviewer: Yeah. And any comments about the front of the homes as they're being renovated?

Respondent: I think they've stayed pretty much...

Interviewer: In character?

Respondent: ...in character. Yeah. I have trouble with U of T as a neighbour, but that's another issue.

Interviewer: No, it's not another issue. It's something I wanted to talk about.
[0:25:00] So please, since you brought it up, please in what way?
It's something I was going to ask you about that anyway...

Respondent: Oh all right.

Interviewer: ...so let's go there. [Laughs] Yeah.

Respondent: Well it's the little parkette on Sussex.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Which when – because my mother lived here I was very familiar with her surroundings, and that was a parkette where there were swings and things for children. And those [0:25:30] were removed. I think at the time, there was a scare about playground – playgrounds, in schools too, there was the safety laws changed, but nothing ever really replaced it, and it's been allowed to just decay, and now they won't put any garbage cans there to pick up the garbage. You know, that's been a [0:26:00] longstanding fight. I was [indiscernible 0:26:02]. I just – I mean I got to feeling – and then with the skating rink too, things were being allowed to decay, and I thought it was – and it's probably paranoia, but I did think that there might be an element of dissociating the community with those facilities, so that when the university decided to do something [0:26:30] different there wouldn't be the strong link that there certainly was when kids from the neighbourhood could go and skate on that skating rink.

Interviewer: Yeah. That's a real loss.

Respondent: Oh yes.

Interviewer: And that was an asset.

Respondent: It was all to do with the community.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. That's really too bad. It's such a lovely, big piece of land that could be used.

Respondent: Yes. And the playing field – well, I mean it's got that chain-link fence all around it. And the other [0:27:00] thing, the other area is that volleyball or...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: ...beach ball? I've offered, and the man who has a guerilla garden behind the bookstore has offered that we'd look after it. They just want it roto-tilled, and put in wildflowers.

Interviewer: And that's Don you're talking about, to do that – that garden on Sussex

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: It's fabulous.

Respondent: Isn't it?

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah. And he said...

Interviewer: So the two of you have offered [0:27:30] to make it...

Respondent: Yes. We would. And they said, "Oh no, you're not going there because the insurance." Well I'd sign a waiver, you know? And what – I just thought it's such a waste, and it would make it look so much nicer, wouldn't it?

Interviewer: Well I watched him work for years on that piece that he did, which was just gravel and weeds.

Respondent: Oh I know.

Interviewer: And it's just beautiful now.

- Respondent:** And that's a community because people bring him...
- Interviewer:** I know that. He's told me, you know, they brought me this, and he'll name people. They brought me this, and they brought me this, and they're [0:28:00] all – they're all represented.
- Respondent:** That's right.
- Interviewer:** But that's incredible. So you offered to do something and make it pretty.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Oh what a shame.
- Respondent:** We weren't allowed to.
- Interviewer:** That was a nice offer.
- Respondent:** Well self-serving. I mean I wanted it to look – and I thought it would be lovely to go by and have, you know, wild poppies and – wouldn't it?
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. Oh for sure.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And I don't know what we'd do about the parkette. Certainly they should restore the wood [0:28:30] frames because they're just disintegrating, and there has to be garbage. Then they said, well, people will put their garbage in there. Maybe they will, but it's better. You just then have to empty it more often, but it's better than having it all around on the ground.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** And I think if people – if garbage is looked after, it's like northern Ireland. If you break a window, you fix it right away.
- Interviewer:** That's right. So it doesn't escalate from there. Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. You don't [0:29:00] let things deteriorate.

- Interviewer:** Well I can hear as I'm speaking to you how much you enjoy the neighbourhood, and you want it to be liveable, and practical, and beautiful.
- Respondent:** All of that.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. I can hear it as you're speaking, because that's an incredible offer that you and Don made to take that – because it's quite large. It would be a serious piece of work for both of you.
- Respondent:** Yeah. We would have had to get help with the roto-tilling, but you know?
- Interviewer:** Well, and I think...
- Respondent:** But you see, I think people...
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** [0:29:30] ...they respond.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** So I just feel the university stonewalled. I don't know how good the Residents' Association has been either. We did that survey, and I got a feeling from somebody that there were some things, some balls in our court about a year ago, which we didn't pick up on, so I don't know where it's at now.
- Interviewer:** Well you know, maybe we need a reminder.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** And if you want to send an email out [0:30:00] to Tim Grant, or send it to me...
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** ...and I would forward it to him. It's something I could bring up...

- Respondent:** No, I know Tim.
- Interviewer:** Sure.
- Respondent:** Yes, I could do that. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** I mean it's a very – the meetings are very lively and very committed, so if there are things that were brought up that we didn't pick up on, get us going again. Remind us.
- Respondent:** It was that survey that everybody – remember that?
- Interviewer:** Yeah. I do. I do. Yeah.
- Respondent:** And a group. Actually not my immediate neighbour, one beyond – **[0:30:30]** Wendy, who works at the business school at U of T, and she went. Maybe she couldn't go, but she was part of it because she spoke the language that the university spoke, you know? And she was good. She was a very good intermediary because her interests were in her own house, but she understood where they were coming from, maybe in the way that I didn't. So the next meeting I'll get her and we'll go. **[0:31:00]** I don't know when the next meeting is. I haven't heard anything for quite a while.
- Interviewer:** I know our history meeting is the 20th of February, but if you remind me before I leave, I can let you know.
- Respondent:** Oh that's great.
- Interviewer:** You mean the next meeting for the...
- Respondent:** Yes. The generalists' meeting.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. I would have it in my calendar.
- Respondent:** Oh good.
- Interviewer:** So remind me and I can let you know when it is.

- Respondent:** Okay. Yeah. Because I am a member, so I should find – yeah.
- Interviewer:** What have [0:31:30] the heating changes been since you have lived in the neighbourhood? Heating your home.
- Respondent:** Oh. Well on Brunswick I had a furnace that had one moving part, and the heat came up by convection. I meant it just – it rose. [Laughs] And somebody said to me, "Well, you know, you'll be fine if there's a power failure. Your furnace will go on." [Laughs] But it wasn't – the house was never [0:32:00] very hot.
- Interviewer:** [Laughs] Meaning you wore a warm sweater.
- Respondent:** Yeah. [Laughter] And I had that – I always had that. Then when I started to rent that house, which I do, I had to put in a new furnace, but the furnace probably had been there – well maybe, I don't know. Would it have been there a hundred years? It would have been there a long time.
- Interviewer:** So it had served its time.
- Respondent:** It served its time, so yeah, then it's all the [0:32:30] gas furnace now.
- Interviewer:** Any comments about the garbage collection changes that you've lived with?
- Respondent:** Oh. Well I've always found that we had pretty good garbage collection. We have had changes, I mean with all the different groupings.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** I've been anxious where in the neighbourhood that will go on to the privatized – the Mayor's privatized project. [0:33:00] So I don't know because I'm sort of a believer in public services, so.
- Interviewer:** Is that a fiat accompli? Is that decided?

- Respondent:** Well I mean maybe he did it unilaterally. He's discovering that that's not legal, you know? He did the transit system, and he's having to walk back from that. I don't know what the council – I have a feeling the council supported him on this sense [0:33:30] of transition into privatized services, and starting with one area. But it is our area, I think, that is the trial. And I think it went through council, so I think it is a fait accompli.
- Interviewer:** Okay. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** But I'm not – I could be wrong. It's just that was what I thought.
- Interviewer:** I want to talk now about the stores in the neighbourhood.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** I'm talking about College, Harbord, [0:34:00] Bloor.
- Respondent:** And Sussex?
- Interviewer:** Yes, definitely. So please talk to me about the changes.
- Respondent:** Oh he stopped now. Okay, you lie down, Gub. Lie down. [Laughter] There. When I bought Brunswick there was a yoga studio in the house that now I am a part owner of, of the building with the [0:34:30] four apartments. Ester Meyers.
- Interviewer:** Oh yes.
- Respondent:** Remember?
- Interviewer:** I went to some classes there.
- Respondent:** Did you? [Laughter] Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Right.
- Respondent:** And then after that, we rented – the certain moment we bought that building, the three of us, and the first tenant – her main job was to do with films, and maybe she did makeup and hair, but then she

washed [0:35:00] people's hair in that apartment. And I think it was a non-conforming use, and I don't know if we still have it. I wanted to keep it, but it hasn't been used as a financial store for a long time, but it has a – I have a picture of when it was a grocery store. And also across the street, kitty-corner to that corner was [0:35:30] a shoemaker.

Interviewer: So just for this, just tell me exactly what corner you're talking about.

Respondent: Oh right. Esther Meyers was the northwest corner...

Interviewer: Of?

Respondent: ...of Brunswick and Sussex.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: And the southeast corner was a shoemaker shop when I bought my house.

Interviewer: Oh wow. Oh.

Respondent: And the northeast [0:36:00] corner, which had been originally a synagogue, is now Energy Probe, or...

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And different things in there. It was renovated and became office space, but for a long time, it was where the arts school was. And they had storytelling in that – on weekends quite often. [0:36:30] And around – well all along – the sad thing is that Bloor Street was – well, it had the Hungarian butcher, Elizabeth's. It had a very good delicatessen.

Interviewer: Hungarian delicatessen?

Respondent: No, it was Italian, I think.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

- Respondent:** Or the owners were Italian. It had all kinds of olives. It was wonderful. It was further west than Elizabeth's. **[0:37:00]** You really – I remember thinking the only thing that was missing was a fishmonger and a liquor store. It was very Hungarian when I first moved here, and I read the Demeter book about Peter Demeter and the murder of his wife, and I discovered that a lot of the hit-men were hanging out in those cafes, the Hungarian – **[0:37:30]** that was just when I bought the house because I remember being sort of...
- Interviewer:** You didn't know you had bought in such an interesting neighbourhood.
- Respondent:** [Laughs] That's right. Yeah. Somebody...
- Interviewer:** Whoa.
- Respondent:** ...called the Duck was in – so and there is still remnants of the Hungarian, but not very many. There used to be a lot.
- Interviewer:** Country Style is the one that...
- Respondent:** Yes. It's the one that's still there.
- Interviewer:** ...and it's a busy place, but you know, the only one.
- Respondent:** Yeah. But before there were a lot.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** And then there was a very nice **[0:38:00]** Swiss restaurant, Maison Suisse. I thought, oh well when I'm old, I'll go there and they'll have – they used to – I think I'm not imagining this. In the same way that they do in France, if you're a regular in a restaurant, they'll mark your wine bottle and then you'll get it the next time, and the next night when you come. I thought I'll just – that's my old age. I'll go there every night. It was delicious **[0:38:30]** food, and I don't know where it went, but it disappeared. And sushi bars, and cashier check bars, and those sort of reflect the economic times, I guess. And I'm worried about Book City.

- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. That is a nice store for us to have there.
- Respondent:** Oh isn't it? It is.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. So you're saying there was more [0:39:00] variety.
- Respondent:** Oh yes, and more quality.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. A number of people feel that way. And we certainly do have a lot of sushi restaurants, yeah, yeah. But you're saying down on Sussex too there were a lot of...
- Respondent:** Well all of these corner houses had the possibility. I think that they were storefronts at some point in their history.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. You can see some of them.
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** Some of them it's quite clear that...
- Respondent:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And they [0:39:30] just stopped being used that way, but when I first lived here, it didn't last so long after I moved in, but.
- Interviewer:** Anything about Harbord or College? Stores?
- Respondent:** Well Harbord certainly changed with all these very good restaurants.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** So now I pay more attention to Harbord than I used to. There always was the Harbord Bakery.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: So I would go there. And then there was the – [0:40:00] oh there's now a very good corner store, I think, with all the flowers at the corner of Robert and Harbord on the south side.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: They have wonderful flowers.

Interviewer: And they have – it's changed ownership I think maybe ten years ago, but that's consistent. They've kept the beautiful flowers, yeah.

Respondent: Yes. And I think these people are even better than the ones before, yeah. They've given me flowers to put in my garden.

Interviewer: Oh nice.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: [0:40:30] So Harbord's fine, though – yeah. I like having all those restaurants. I guess I'd like more of a mix than there is, but...

Interviewer: Of variety. Yeah.

Respondent: ...of other kinds of shops, yeah. And there was a very good grocer when I first lived here at the corner, where Dooney's is, I guess, was a grocery store.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh. [0:41:00] And now it's Menchie's, I think.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. It's a busy place right now.

Respondent: Yes.

- Interviewer:** So you talked about the University of Toronto.
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Anything about the JCC, of its influence?
- Respondent:** Oh well I don't know about its influence, but it's a big selling point for this neighbourhood, I think. I feel – I go swimming [0:41:30] there every day.
- Interviewer:** Oh really?
- Respondent:** Yeah. Just about.
- Interviewer:** Okay.
- Respondent:** Because it's so convenient. I'd never do that, you know, if it was difficult.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. I agree with you that a lot of us live in the neighbourhood and we like that spot at Bloor and Spadina and go there. I go there often too.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And I think I was – because now Harvey...
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent:** ...he likes to play Scrabble, so sometimes, you know, we play Scrabble there, and I see [0:42:00] people playing it, you know? I just think it's a nice neighbourhood spot.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** Plus offering all those facilities.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Talking about neighbourhood attractions or detractions or whatever, any comments about Kensington Market in the neighbourhood?

Respondent: Oh I like – yes.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: I'm always worried that it's going to get gentrified, but I walk down there maybe – I either **[0:42:30]** walk or I drive down once a week, I think. Very good cheese store, and there's that coffee store, and you can get eggs from a farm. No, no. That's a bonus.

Interviewer: I was just saying to my husband last night that some of the stores are changing, but it's not like Yorkville, which seemed to just be – overnight it seemed to be Yorkville became this...

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: ...more shi-shi place.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: And the Market still maintains its character.

Respondent: I think it does.

Interviewer: Yeah. **[0:43:00]** And I don't want it to change.

Respondent: No, no.

Interviewer: Or not too quickly.

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. So that's a plus for you, the Market.

Respondent: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. What do you...

Respondent: And the nursing. I guess the old age home is a plus too. It's relatively new, and would that be about fifteen years ago?

Interviewer: Yeah, not more than that.

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: I think it's a nice-looking building, and well, if you have a community **[0:43:30]** or a neighbourhood, I've always felt because I've worked and lived in this same spot that this was like a village. Well, in the village you might have that, you know?

Interviewer: I feel the same way. I mean I hope I never need it...

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: ...but if I do, that's where I want to be so I can hopefully walk on College and [laughs]...

Respondent: Yeah, I agree. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. What do you feel about the safety and security of our neighbourhood?

Respondent: I – maybe I've been – well my mother had **[0:44:00]** one break-in, but it was minor, but it was a break-in. And then we put protective, you know, some kind of device over the windows. I hate that, but for her I thought it was – she was old and we didn't ever want that to happen again. But I never. I always have a dog. I think that makes a difference to your state of mind maybe.

Interviewer: **[0:44:30]** Yeah.

Respondent: But you can...

Interviewer: They don't know what a sweet dog you have. [Laughter]

Respondent: You could see that I don't think she'd be very effective, but people don't like – and I am a believer in not – in being able to see, and so I want that trellis, the open trellis in the garden so I know what's going on in the lane.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Rather than, you know, barricading myself in. So, no [0:45:00] it hasn't been an issue with me, and I've never had an unpleasant – I was a bit shaken that that man was killed behind the Brunswick House, but you know.

Interviewer: I feel the same way. Yeah. I'm on Borden south of Harbord...

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: ...and if I get off, if I have a meal with a friend, I just always walk home very comfortably at ten o'clock at night. I have no difficulty.

Respondent: Yeah, no.

Interviewer: That's my impression.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: [0:45:30] I guess you weren't here when the Expressway was an issue.

Respondent: Well I didn't live here, but I had friends who were involved, and I remember going up Spadina and we were supposed to describe those houses in glowing terms to protect them, and I just got to draw – I did not think those houses were – I know I put Victorian or whatever, but so I do remember, and I was glad, oh, so [0:46:00] very glad.

Interviewer: Oh I think it would have been...

Respondent: Oh, it would have ruined it.

Interviewer: It would have changed our neighbourhood.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Very much.

- Respondent:** Yeah. And it was fun to have Jane Jacobs in our neighbourhood.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Well her expression about sidewalk living...
- Respondent:** Mm-hm.
- Interviewer:** ...and we do. I mean just the fact that I pass your house, you know, I know you, I've seen you, you're a familiar face from the JCC, generally the neighbourhood, but we do hang out here, and there is a lot of [0:46:30] sharing of experiences and knowing we're part of a community, and that is her sidewalk living. It's not back garden living...
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** ...where you have cold privacy.
- Respondent:** Yeah, no. It's true.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. I'm wondering if there's anything that we haven't talked about that you thought, well Eleanor's coming, we're talking about my experiences and perceptions of changes...
- Respondent:** Yes. And that was what I hadn't done for [0:47:00] you. I mean [laughs] I'm curious to know what's going to happen on Bloor Street with the plan that we had and we were all involved with. You know those hearings we had to see what people wanted from Bloor Street? And I gather it's going to be narrower. Is that right? In our section? I just wondered when that was happening and what...
- Interviewer:** You know, I don't know [0:47:30] what's happening with that.
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** I mean there was talk of – there were a variety of different things, but I know that there was talk of making the sidewalks bigger...
- Respondent:** Yes.

- Interviewer:** ...and being able to have planters. Of course, I'm somebody who fights for bike lanes, so I have my own issues. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So I don't know what the plan is.
- Respondent:** But they were going to get rid of, I think, the parking had probably become more difficult.
- Interviewer:** Yes, yes it would have.
- Respondent:** But that would have helped your bike lanes. Joan Doiron – did you know her [0:48:00] in the old days?
- Interviewer:** Yes. Yeah.
- Respondent:** She was there, she was in the winter, and she had that game leg because of having had infantile paralysis, but she would be on her bicycle going – she lived right across the street from me.
- Interviewer:** Well I'm not a winter biker.
- Respondent:** No.
- Interviewer:** But I still bike as long – like this winter I am biking because of not winter conditions.
- Respondent:** Yeah, you can't.
- Interviewer:** So I don't mind if it's cold; I just want...
- Respondent:** [0:48:30] The roads not to be slippery.
- Interviewer:** Exactly. Yeah. So anything else that you might want to talk about before we just turn off the machine? [Laughter]
- Respondent:** You know, I can't think of it. Oh, I'd like the – I mean if you're going to get grievances, the Metro, I wish we had a good store...

- Interviewer:** Supermarket.
- Respondent:** ...supermarket [0:49:00] there. I wish it was Loblaws or – I wish – I think Metro has different levels, but I don't think we're at the higher level.
- Interviewer:** You know, I hoped when Metro was buying it from Dominion that they would make it a better store.
- Respondent:** Yes, so did I. They haven't.
- Interviewer:** And they didn't. No, no, no. They didn't. Yeah. In fact, often when I'm in the store I'm having discussions with people and we're all complaining about the store. [Laughs] But we're there because it's convenient.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And because nice people work there.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, they are pleasant.
- Respondent:** [0:49:30] I plan that because I'm such a regular.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** But I go to Fiesta Farms, and it's ridiculous. They don't...
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** Loblaws has to own where they have their stores, I was told, and I don't – there's something that prevents you from owning there. I don't know what it is. But all they have to do is [0:50:00] just show some imagination, and look at the constituency that they're dealing with. And it's varied.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. I'm very much with you. [Laughter] I can give you a long list of reasons. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Yeah, yeah.
- Interviewer:** Okay. I just want to say thank you very, very much.

- Respondent:** Oh, you're very welcome.
- Interviewer:** It's been a pleasure. You've had...
- Respondent:** No, it's nice to talk to you.
- Interviewer:** You've been open, and candid, and I've enjoyed having this with you.
- Respondent:** Well thank you. I enjoyed it took.
- Interviewer:** And we both share **[0:50:30]** the love of our neighbourhood. Yeah.
- Respondent:** I guess one thing we didn't think about was the changes on Spadina, not just the renovation of the JCC, but also those – the density, the concentration of density on that street, and I think that's probably a good thing if you're looking for the city. But that has been – you know the big apartment building just south of it?
- Interviewer:** **[0:51:00]** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And then the other one, which I don't like the look of, but anyway I think...
- Interviewer:** There's the new one with the Mosaic, which just went up a few years ago.
- Respondent:** Yes. And before that it was the one that Mr. Frum built.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Right.
- Respondent:** Which is the one I don't think is a very handsome building, but if we're going to have density it should – I'm a subscriber to that feeling that those main streets are a good place to put it.
- Interviewer:** **[0:51:30]** And not bring it inside the neighbourhood.
- Respondent:** Yes.

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Good. So we're ending on a positive note.

Respondent: [Laughs] Yes.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Respondent: You're welcome.

[00:51:39]

[End of recording]