

034 Mercedes and Bill de Melo

***Note:** On page 26, it was difficult to determine what the speaker was saying. This was indicated with an **[indiscernible]** marker with the associated time code noted in the bracket.

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: I am at 261 Major Street with Mercedes De Mello and her husband, Bill, will probably join us in a few minutes. And I want to thank you on behalf of the History Committee, which is part of Harbord Village Residents' Association.

Respondent 1: Hello.

Respondent 2: Hi.

Respondent 1: Hi. Will you join us and talk to us too? **[0:00:30]** Sit on the other side.

Interviewer: Why don't you sit here because you'll be closer to my tape machine? Thank you. Thank you very much. So I'd like to start. Just tell me when you moved into this house, and how old you were, because then we'll know about your family. So what year did you move in?

Respondent 1: When? We moved here on July the twentieth, 1960. **[0:01:00]** As a matter of fact, my daughter, Lucy, was six months old when we moved in. So tomorrow as a matter of fact it's her birthday.

Interviewer: Oh my god you've been here a long time.

Respondent 1: Yeah. She's going to be fifty-two. So in July we're going to be fifty-two years in this area.

Interviewer: So that daughter, is she your first child?

Respondent 1: No. My first child is John.

Interviewer: [0:01:30] So how many children did you have at that time and how old were they?

Respondent 1: Oh my god.

Interviewer: 1950.

Respondent 1: We have three. We have John, Anna – she was born a premature baby – and Lucy. And then it was after Lucy, three years apart, from Rita, and then was three years after Rita was Anthony. And when I had my first-born I was twenty. [0:02:00] I was a child.

Interviewer: Yeah. You were. [Laughs] Yeah.

Respondent 1: Because I came to this country, I was nineteen years old.

Interviewer: So you came to this country and you had a child shortly after that.

Respondent 1: Yes. When I came, my husband was already here. He lives in Leamington. So I took – oh my god. I was nineteen, from San Miguel, because I'm from San Miguel...

Respondent 2: Live on the islands. [0:02:30] Not from Portugal, from the islands.

Interviewer: From the islands.

Respondent 1: Yeah. It belongs to Portugal, but from the Islands.

Interviewer: I think a lot of the Portuguese people in Toronto are from the Islands.

Respondent 1: Yes. So we were married by proxy because we are cousins. And my mom and his mom was first cousins. And then after years – we grew up together, but then we [0:03:00] moved to another part of the – it's close...

Interviewer: Yeah. Not beside anyway.

Respondent 1: ...to where we used to live. And then I was sixteen years old when he started to come because not then – years ago, we're not

allowed for our boyfriends to come to the door and let's go for a coffee or tea, whatever. [0:03:30] No.

Interviewer: Not allowed.

Respondent 1: No.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent 1: I was sixteen, and it was in October on the festival, and he started to look at me. And my cousin – his cousin too – my first cousin says, "You know what? I think Bill is looking at you." I said, "Are you crazy? There's lots of people behind us on the festival on the church. Probably has a girlfriend behind us." And she says, "No. He's looking at you." I said, [0:04:00] "Please, quiet. It's not."

Interviewer: Was she right? Were you looking at her?

Respondent 1: Yeah. No, she was right. And then for a while I didn't see anything. And all of a sudden I look, it was because I was in the stairs of the church and he was across from the church, and I look, and he looked at me, and I looked at my cousin and I said, "You know, young lady, you're right." But I didn't say anything. [0:04:30] And this was Tuesday. On the Sunday, he went to the street, he come to my street, and I said, "Oh no." And that day I went to the church and I leave him at the corner of the street. So my mom, "Don't expect anything." Because I'm so afraid of my father. [Laughs] And then when my mother finds out, he comes out and down, and we put on the window. I was in [0:05:00] the verandah. We live at my grandparents' house, my father's side, and I went to church. And then my cousin – because my mom says, "Oh, I'm surprised Bill was coming to this street because probably he has a girlfriend somewhere." I never told my mom the truth. [Laughs] It's like when she finds out, she asked my cousin and she says, "Tina, Bill is there in the [0:05:30] street every week. What's going on?" And she says, "I'm sorry, Aunt, but he's going – he wants Mercedes." "Oh." But my mom never told me anything.

Interviewer: So she didn't interfere.

- Respondent 1:** No. And then one day she was – this was October – and November, the same thing. I never went to the window to speak with him because I'm inside of the house, but he was outside on the street for us to [0:06:00] talk. And my mom...
- Respondent 2:** Strange. Very strange.
- Respondent 1:** And my mom says...
- Interviewer:** Romantic.
- Respondent 1:** My mom says, "When you're going to the window and speak with Bill?" I said, "Are you going to let him?" "What? In that shoes?" I said, "No, I don't care. I'm not telling him anything to go up and down. It's not my problem." But on the Saturday it was my seventeenth birthday, then I went to the window.
- Interviewer:** I see. [0:06:30] Okay.
- Respondent 1:** But you can imagine how nervous I was not because he was my boyfriend or anything, but because we knew each other. And to be a boyfriend and girlfriend it's a different matter.
- Interviewer:** You're serious, eh? [Laughs]
- Respondent 1:** Yes, I was. And we go, we spoke for four months and then he comes to Canada. And then we write each other for two years. Then we married by [0:07:00] a proxy. A stupid marriage, believe me, because I went to church with my father. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Oh my goodness. So you were an ocean apart when you got married.
- Respondent 1:** [Laughs] Yes. Because he was here and I'm back home.
- Respondent 2:** No. I don't want to be there to stay there for a couple of months to get married because I don't like my family, to tell you the truth.
- Respondent 1:** Half-brothers and sisters.

- Respondent 2:** I have half-brothers and sisters and I hate...
- Interviewer:** [0:07:30] Problems. They weren't nice to you.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Since my father died especially because my father passed away, I was nine-and-a-half years. I was a kid.
- Interviewer:** Let me just interrupt for one minute. I think I forgot to say that I'm speaking to Mercedes and Bill Demello. Okay. Mercedes and Bill Demello. [0:08:00] Go ahead. So your father died, you were nine-and-a-half.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Then of course he dies in May, and I think what's almost the end of the year, the government takes to the court because my father has quite a bit.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Lots of assets. You have lots of assets.
- Respondent 2:** And they have to divide it.
- Respondent 1:** Thirteen kids.
- Interviewer:** [0:08:30] Thirteen children?
- Respondent 1:** Isn't it? Thirteen children?
- Respondent 2:** Uh-huh. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** His first marriage, ten. Seven boys, three girls.
- Respondent 1:** He was not a tall boy; he was fairly short.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. [Laughs] Very busy. [Laughs]

- Respondent 2:** And from my mother, we were three boys. Thirteen. Anyway. But like the older brothers – he wants to divide it, and they had went and **[0:09:00]** said, “Oh, no, no, no, no. There are...”
- Respondent 1:** They’re all young kids.
- Respondent 2:** They’re all young kids, eh? The others were all married, all of them. Except one, he didn’t want to get married. He stayed with my mother with us. And anyway, so there was some problems because the land we had, me and the **[0:09:30]** other two brothers, was together, and then they wanted us to get a land, which is beside from us to get that one, and thus go to my sister. It was my sister. And the brother stays with us – you know, the guy who was single. He was so mad because our part was better land. Was all **[0:10:00]** flat and good, and my sister was just...
- Interviewer:** Hilly. Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** We never found out, but he probably went to the court and told him what’s happening. So he went there one time, and we had to go with my mother. Well we said there she’s...
- Interviewer:** I’m just going to turn this off for a minute because we’ll talk about this, and I’ll come back to the interview.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** **[0:10:30]** When you chose to live here on Major Street, do you remember what made you choose this neighbourhood? This location?
- Respondent 2:** No. A matter of fact, we lived there, we had to move. Then on Dundas – somewhere on Dundas and Ossington, around that area.
- Respondent 1:** We lived on Dovercourt.
- Interviewer:** But do you know why you came right here? What made you choose this neighbourhood?
- Respondent 2:** **[0:11:00]** I was looking for a house to rent. Yeah.

- Respondent 1:** Because my parents were living with us, and my sister. That's why we came here.
- Respondent 2:** And I went to that office there on the...
- Respondent 1:** The agency.
- Respondent 2:** ...and he says, "Okay. Come with me. I got something for you." We start to go. [0:11:30] Then we come to this place and he said, "Why not? What do you think? Want to move here?" Because there was a streetcar at that time.
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah. Convenient. Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Streetcar, the dentist, there's a pharmacy right on the corner, and the store. The smoke store on the corner on Sussex and Major.
- Interviewer:** Okay. So you're saying that you saw the location and you saw the transportation, [0:12:00] and the stores...
- Respondent 1:** Not because of that, you know. Because when we moved, because we lived with friends on Dovercourt and they were acting – after they were acting so stupidly because the owner of the house owned Dovercourt. They wanted Bill to buy the house, and the problems we had with Anna – because the older days we don't have insurance. When my oldest daughter was born, she was premature, [0:12:30] and I had John. And it was lots of money. The two months she's in the incubator we have to pay twenty dollars a day.
- Interviewer:** Expensive. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** And you have to pay for the specialist to take care of her. So that moment was impossible for us to buy that house. It was a bigger house, three storey. It's a bigger house. So that's why Bill and my mom came to see the houses [0:13:00] because I was with the children.
- Interviewer:** So and was this less expensive than the other house?

- Respondent 1:** It was.
- Respondent 2:** No. Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Because the other one was asking for was sixteen-something.
- Respondent 2:** Because if I had to buy the other one...
- Respondent 1:** It was too big. It was too big.
- Respondent 2:** I have to...
- Respondent 1:** Rent. Yeah. Yeah. You have to rent.
- Respondent 2:** The house was too big, you know? I don't like it too much anyway. And especially that area, I don't like it.
- Interviewer:** So you liked this area better, the house was the right size, the previous was a better price.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. [0:13:30] To add five.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Oh my god.
- Respondent 2:** That time.
- Interviewer:** Amazing. So when you moved in here, how many of you were living here? Who was living here?
- Respondent 2:** Two brothers...
- Respondent 1:** Oh about six. Six. Six people. No.
- Respondent 2:** Two brothers. One was moved already.
- Respondent 1:** No, no, no. Before we bought the house it was two brothers. I think it was Italian, but they didn't get along very well. They started fighting and [0:14:00] punching everyone, so they sold the house.

So the agent guy said, "This is a nice house for you guys." It was old. My god, was so dirty. Takes me two weeks to clean. And then I said, "That's a good area," because the neighbourhood was so nice. It was so many Jews, so many Italians. I was the first Portuguese to come here to this street.

Interviewer: Ah. So when you first came here, there were Jewish people...

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: [0:14:30] Jewish people next door, Hungarian next door...

Interviewer: So Jewish, Hungarian...

Respondent 1: ...and Polish, Italian. And what else? It was another. Because most of the street on top of this street, both sides, it was Italian, and Jews, and Hungarians, and Polish, and then after next door, it was Jewish people. And then they sold to Greek people, to a family.

Interviewer: [0:15:00] Oh my.

Respondent 1: So afterwards they were so – because the older days they rented to families and couples, but now it's more young generations, the kids – students from university. They rent the houses. One lady, especially one lady – it's Santini – she lives across the street from Anna Barnett.

Interviewer: Okay. I know Anna.

Respondent 1: Yeah. [0:15:30] That's one. She already lived here when we moved, but we started to look at the area and the neighbourhood was so friendly. And everyone at night, especially in the summer, they're sitting in the verandahs. All the neighbourhood. And the children – there were so many children – they played hockey, they played soccer ball, they go to one verandah to the other. It was so like a community. We still said, [0:16:00] "Hi, how are you? How are you doing?" Today it's a little bit different.

Interviewer: In what way?

- Respondent 1:** The young generations, they're not polite anymore like they used to – because the generation with my children, "Hi, how are you. Good morning, Mrs. This. Yes, Ma'am. No, Ma'am." Today, no. Everything is different. The cultures is different.
- Interviewer:** So you find it less friendly.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** **[0:16:30]** So people aren't on the verandahs as much.
- Respondent 1:** No, no.
- Interviewer:** The kids aren't playing on the street.
- Respondent 1:** No, no, no. The only people who go to the verandah – it was us and Jean. That's the only one too.
- Interviewer:** So that's a big change in the neighbourhood.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. The other ones, everybody goes to the backyards. I said, "What did they see in the backyard?" I like to come to the verandah to see my neighbours go by, and if I see something like Esmond or Elran, "Hi."
- Interviewer:** **[0:17:00]** I feel the same way as you do. I like the street and the people on the street.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. And before it was the pharmacy on the corner – the Kinko's. It was a pharmacy there. And on top it was an office – eye doctor, doctors, family doctors. Especially on Bloor there were so many doctors and dentists.
- Interviewer:** Okay. We're talking about so much. Okay. Since you're talking **[0:17:30]** a lot about Bloor right now, talk to me. So you're saying on the corner of your street there was a pharmacy where Kinko's is, and there was a family doctor.
- Respondent 1:** Family doctor.

Interviewer: Okay. So talk to me about Bloor street and what kinds of – tell me.

Respondent 1: Oh my gosh. And shoe stores.

Interviewer: What was then? And how does it...

Respondent 1: Yeah. Shoe stores, clothing stores, Jewish people living there. A matter of fact it was on Robert, Robert Street. No. [0:18:00] Borden. There was a store on Bloor. It was a Jewish couple. They had two daughters. Matter of fact, one of the daughters, she's a doctor. It was years ago, as soon as we moved in. You can make – it was a seamstress making clothes right there on the store. They have a beautiful store.

Interviewer: And the store was on Bloor?

Respondent 1: It was on Bloor. It was a shoe store, and there was [0:18:30] Woolworth's.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 1: It was close to the theatre. Now it's demolished. They're doing something. Probably it's – it was around for sure. And it was Woolworth's. And on the corner of Lippincott and Bloor, it was the bank – CIBC. They moved to Bathurst and Bloor, the bank, and then it was a store. Another store. It was Italian [0:19:00] Sylvania store.

Interviewer: And what was that?

Respondent 1: Borden and Bloor.

Interviewer: But what was Sylvania store?

Respondent 1: It was clothing. Ladies. Beautiful clothes. And books. And the other stores, books and things like that. Now everything is restaurants. At night if I go I say, "My goodness. Looks like I'm in Las Vegas." It's changed so much. But Metro was [0:19:30] Dominion, and there was buildings on the other side renting. It was so different from now. And the streetcar passed by every time. When I went to work,

I'd go to Bloor, close to Spadina. I did the streetcar to go to Avenue Road because I work at night.

Interviewer: What kind of work were you doing?

Respondent 1: Cleaning lady. Yeah. That's the best job I had [0:20:00] because I love to clean. Everyday it's the same thing. So it was different. And now it was Jewish – that YMCA down at Spadina and Bloor.

Interviewer: That was the YMHA.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Now everything is different.

Respondent 2: No, it's the same building, it's the same...

Respondent 1: But again they renovated. It's a bit different. And the corner of the Spadina [0:20:30] was the bank. My father used to go there.

Respondent 2: Still there. Nova Scotia.

Respondent 1: Still there. Yes.

Interviewer: But you're saying now where we have lots and lots of restaurants. There was a large variety of stores before.

Respondent 1: Yes. Lots of hairdressers, Greeks, and Polish, and Italians. Barbers. Everything was here on this area.

Interviewer: So you're saying there was a big ethnic mix of people living here, and the stores...

Respondent 1: The stores and everything.

Interviewer: ...reflected that.

Respondent 1: Yes. Yes. [0:21:00] It was beautiful. And so many people lived close. Sometimes I took care of their children. The Italians – then the Italians started to move out, and the other generations. And then it was so many Portuguese here in this piece of the street.

- Interviewer:** So you moved here in 1960, and you were the first Portuguese.
- Respondent 1:** Yes, I was the first Portuguese. Yes.
- Interviewer:** And the other groups...
- Respondent 1:** Then the other groups started – the Italians started to move to suburbs, [0:21:30] to Scarborough, Mississauga, and Vaughan.
- Interviewer:** North and far.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. Yes. And it was so beautiful. The Jewish – they lived next door. It was an old couple. They have a breakfast and bed for the old people, and they used to go to synagogue on Brunswick and Sussex. There was the corner on Brunswick...
- Interviewer:** Right. Now there's a synagogue on Brunswick near [0:22:00] Harbord, but I know there was another one also.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. This one here...
- Interviewer:** Yeah. That was the other one, right.
- Respondent 1:** ...on the end of Sussex, before you go to Central Tech, there's a synagogue there and sometimes the old man – I forgot his name – his wife was Anna, and they had a daughter with two – who had children. Every Friday they come to have dinner and everything.
- Interviewer:** Ah. A Shabbat dinner.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. So they come here. We [0:22:30] see each other. And then they sold the house, they go to a...
- Interviewer:** Retirement home?
- Respondent 1:** ...retirement home. And it was so sad because they were so beautiful people. Because when I started, I came here, I sing a lot and sometimes he said, "Mercedes." Sometimes I was in my backyard, he was in his backyard, and he sang, "Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh." I sang. And he said, "Mercedes, you have to come here."

Respondent 2: He likes to sing. [Laughs]

Respondent 1: “You have to come to synagogue.”

Interviewer: So [0:23:00] you would sing and he wanted you to come to synagogue?

Respondent 1: Yeah. But he started to sing there too. So he says, “Mercedes, you have to come to me to synagogue.” I said, “But I’m not Jewish.” He said, “It doesn’t make any difference. You sing your songs. You have a beautiful voice and you sing.” As a matter of fact I have so many requests to go to do CDs. Those days it was not CDs, it was records.

Interviewer: Records. Yes.

Respondent 1: And I said, “I’m sorry. I was married.” [0:23:30] And they said, “Oh, Mercedes. I understand you have a beautiful voice.” And I said, “Thank you, but how do you know?” “Because I hear you sing in the backyard.” And I said, “Yeah?” And then I said, “Well I thank you.” It was my ideal to be a singer, but I start to sing when I was five years old, but my mom never let me do it back home because my [0:24:00] father and my uncles, they were field...

Interviewer: They were what?

Respondent 1: They worked on the field. And the soaps and things like that. And the people – when I have requests to go places, my mom says, “No, your father was this and that, and now you want to be – oh, now you not want to be.” And my father, bless his soul, he says, “I’m going to be there.” “I don’t care.” I sing in the church. I was six years old [0:24:30] when on Easter, Good Friday, we did the procession of the dying Jesus, and they go to the streets. And I sing on the verandahs, but my mom never let me go anywhere. But I had this request here and I said, “Well, I’d love to do it, but I’m a mother and a wife. I have the children. And if I tell my husband that I’m going to do that and probably – you know what he’s going to say?” [0:25:00] And he says, “What?” I said, “Probably my husband was going to say, ‘You can go, but don’t come back.’” No. He said,

“You can go.” “No. You want me to go because I’m old. What’s the matter with you?”

Interviewer: So did you sing for other people?

Respondent 1: Yes. I used to sing for other people. Yes.

Interviewer: In your church or other places?

Respondent 1: In the church, and my aunts’ houses and other families, and friends.

Interviewer: [0:25:30] Oh. So people would really love your beautiful voice.

Respondent 1: And everybody thought – the olden days that I sing, there was the radio. When I moved to Toronto, because I went to Leamington, and one day we lived together with our friend. And he was in his room, and I was – he was expecting his wife soon because he was from San Miguel also. [0:26:00] And then I went to the kitchen to have a drink of water and I started to sing Maria Rodriguez songs because she was my idol. Portuguese singer from continent. She had a beautiful voice. She had beautiful songs. She sings beautifully. And I start to sing. Then I was so thirsty I went to the kitchen, and Carlos [0:26:30] opened the door. As a matter of fact he was with my husband, and my husband’s niece’s husband in her room. And when I passed the door he said, “Why did you turn off the radio?” I said, “Which radio?”

Interviewer: [Laughs] That was you.

Respondent 1: And he said, “Because Maria Rodriguez is singing.” I said, “No. The radio was not on.” And he said, “Yes, because I heard her [0:27:00] sing.” I said, “Carlos, you’re looking at her.” And he said, “What? Are you crazy?” I said, “No, I’m not.” “Oh my god, you sound like Maria Rodriguez.” Even my neighbours.

Interviewer: Yeah. So everybody’s enjoyed your music.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Everybody when they come here. I was in backyard and sings. And they say, “Robert, Glenn, what a beautiful music. So

many different music. **[0:27:30]** The radio?" He said, "No, that's not Radio. That's Mercedes." "What?"

Interviewer: So you've given a lot of people pleasure with your beautiful voice.

Respondent 1: Yeah. "Didn't they tell you?"

Interviewer: Harriet?

Respondent 1: Helen.

Interviewer: Helen.

Respondent 1: And we do every year a party for the neighbourhood and Christmas, before Christmas.

Interviewer: Right. So the neighbourhood meaning your street? Major Street?

Respondent 1: **[0:28:00]** No. Sometimes they come from Robert and other places. And each one is just like potluck. They have to bring something.

Interviewer: So that's just before Christmas?

Respondent 1: Yeah. And as a matter of fact this year it was on the tenth.

Interviewer: Okay. Yeah.

Respondent 1: Sometimes it goes to on my birthday on the fifth, but this year it was on the tenth. And Jean, she says, "Mercedes, I have a request." I said, "What request?" "I want you to **[0:28:30]** sing at Christmas party." I said, "What? Are you kidding? Jean, I know – I used to know so many songs in English, but I know the music but I forgot the lyrics." She says, "Oh, it doesn't matter. You can sing Portuguese." When we went to across the street, Jean says, "Mercedes, when are you going to start to sing?" I said, "Okay, give me time. Look, my voice is not the same. I'm an old lady, and **[0:29:00]** I'm going to try. Please." I thought it was so many people there, man and woman. And I said, "Please, you guys have to give me a break. My voice is not the same like it used to – but don't boo after I finished." [Laughs]

- Interviewer:** So you're seventy-five now.
- Respondent 1:** Seventy-five.
- Interviewer:** And you did sing at the party.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. And I sing.
- Interviewer:** And did they boo?
- Respondent 1:** No. And then I sang and I started a standing ovation.
- Interviewer:** Oh lovely.
- Respondent 1:** Even the [0:29:30] young man, I don't know his name, he came to kiss my hand. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Oh lovely.
- Respondent 1:** "You're the star of the party," and this and this. I said, "It's not very good. It's just slight because I know." When I heard kids singing today I say, "My god."
- Interviewer:** Okay. So you obviously have a beautiful voice, but you're talking about – right now, when you talk about this party on Major...
- Respondent 1:** Yes. Every year.
- Interviewer:** ...on Christmastime, and people from some other streets come.
- Respondent 1:** [0:30:00] Yes.
- Interviewer:** When you first started talking about coming here, I mean living here originally, you talked about the kids playing on the street, people...
- Respondent 1:** Even in the backyard, everything.
- Interviewer:** ...and this is decades later, and so you're not doing it in the same way but you have this Christmas party where the people...

Respondent 1: Yes. For eleven years. Eleven years.

Interviewer: That's lovely. So it's not the same but it's not as much, but there's still a sense of this is our street and this is our community.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Yeah. So many people don't go **[0:30:30]** because Jean is the coordinator and the person in the house. Sometimes they say, "Mercedes is going to be at her house." Oh no, no, no, no, no. I make the food, but on the other side. So – because it's a big thing to do it, but it's beautiful. But because Jean put the flyers and the invitations **[0:31:00]** on the mailbox for everyone, but not everyone – sometimes they have other things to go.

Interviewer: Some people are more interested, and some are less interested.

Respondent 1: Yeah. But most of our neighbours, they go. I think we had this year thirty-some people.

Interviewer: So that's a nice feeling that you care about each other and you share food.

Respondent 1: Yeah. We share with each other, they share food, and every time I said, "What am I going to do, Jean? Your cod, Jean."

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent 1: **[0:31:30]** "Do I have to make cod all the time?" And the others, "Mercedes, I want your lasagna." Okay, okay. So have fun. Okay.

Interviewer: So you're not only a good singer, but you cook well. I guess so.

Respondent 1: I do. [Laughs] All those years. Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah. Can we come back to the stores? So you're saying – you talked about the stores on Bloor Street. What else besides stores? I mean I heard that there were theatres, movie theatres.

- Respondent 1:** Yes. [0:32:00] There was one. As a matter of fact it's still – last year, not the theatre anymore, but they're doing a lot of things there for...
- Respondent 2:** I don't know what they're doing with it.
- Respondent 1:** ...comedies, and from the schools, or universities, whatever. They go there. But now I think they're fixing everything inside because they're doing construction.
- Interviewer:** Are you talking about – where the Bloor Cinema?
- Respondent 1:** Yes.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. But that's before that.
- Interviewer:** But it's opening as a [0:32:30] movie theatre again. They're going to have documentaries.
- Respondent 1:** Oh. That's what they were doing before. But years ago it was a theatre to show movies. And there was another one after Bathurst – Bathurst close to Christie there was another one there.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So what else was there on your part of Bloor – our part of Bloor between Bathurst...
- Respondent 1:** Then there was a laundry. It's still here, the Laundromat. And the bakery – [0:33:00] when today is the one restaurant next door to the Laundromat. There was a bakery, a Polish bakery or a Greek bakery – something like that. It was beautiful things they made there. We used to go there every week, and then it was the beer house on Brunswick and Bloor. It's still there.
- Interviewer:** Oh that's the Brunswick. [0:33:30] Right. Right.
- Respondent 1:** So there were so many things. The barbers, and the dresses, and the people who live here. Lots of stores. So we had everything around us, and then Central Tech, St. Peter's on Bathurst, Loretto College on Brunswick. My daughter, Rita, was there.

- Interviewer:** So those were the schools you're talking about now.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. She has a beautiful voice also, my youngest daughter. She does so many things on the schools. **[0:34:00]** And when she was in Portugal, she goes to those clubs and she's singing there. And her friends, the teachers, and everybody – they said, "Rita, you're in the wrong business. You should be a singer, not a teacher." She said, "Please." If she wants to be a singer, I would approve her one hundred percent.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. But your family didn't feel that way for you to be a singer.
- Respondent 1:** No. Not for me. No.
- Interviewer:** **[0:34:30]** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Respondent 1:** And I wish I was. Probably I wouldn't marry him. Who knows.
- Interviewer:** [Laughs] He's sitting there smiling. [Laughter]
- Respondent 1:** So after three kids my parents lived upstairs with my sister.
- Interviewer:** Okay. I'm glad you're coming back to that. At which point did you have the most **[0:35:00]** people in your house?
- Respondent 1:** The five of us...
- Interviewer:** The five of you.
- Respondent 1:** ...my three kids, my parents, and my sister, and her husband.
- Interviewer:** They lived here?
- Respondent 1:** Yes.
- Respondent 2:** No.
- Respondent 1:** Yes.
- Respondent 2:** We don't have the five when they live here. You had Peter.

- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Bill, my sister – we come from Dovercourt and they live upstairs. They don't have the kitchen. We have the kitchen after my mom – we cooked everything. **[0:35:30]** Everything was together. But my sister in one room, my parents in the other room, and then there was the kitchen, but they don't have fridge or stove.
- Interviewer:** You have another kitchen upstairs.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. I don't have it now. After my parents lived with my sister because she had only two daughters, and I have five kids.
- Interviewer:** Five kids?
- Respondent 1:** Yes. I have five kids. And my sister has only two. So that moment Bill says, "We have five kids. **[0:36:00]** The house is starting to get small."
- Interviewer:** Okay. So you and Bill – you're seven people. Your family is seven people.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. That's right.
- Interviewer:** The two of you and five children.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Okay. And your parents are living here, and your sister.
- Respondent 1:** And the sister. And after a year-and-a-half, my sister moved. She already had Louisa, the oldest one. She's a year younger than Lucy.
- Interviewer:** Okay. So let me stop you. So it was you and all your children, and your parents, and **[0:36:30]** your sister, and one child.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. At that moment I had Rita. No, I have Lucy. I'm sorry. I have Lucy. The three kids. After my sister moved to next door – she bought the house next door because the Hungarian couple sold the house and she bought it. She moved with Louisa, her first-born,

and my parents stayed with us. One of the rooms [0:37:00] it was my Lucy and Anna, and my mom and my father the front room, and the kitchen. So – and the older days it was sixty dollars of rent. The golden days. And after Rita was born, my parents were still with me. And then three years – because Rita’s older than Anthony – three-and-a-half years. [0:37:30] After three-and-a-half years, Anthony was born. Then the kids are starting to grow, and that was a summer kitchen. Very cold, the olden days. Then the kids went upstairs, and from the kitchen my daughter, the third one – Lucy says, “Mom, I want that. It’s going to be my room, but I don’t want those cupboards.”

Interviewer: She didn’t want the kitchen cupboards in her bedroom.

Respondent 1: She [0:38:00] says, “I want my room, but I don’t want that.” I said, “Okay. We’re going to fix it.” So it’s three bedrooms upstairs.

Interviewer: Okay. So at that point did your parents move in with your sister?

Respondent 1: With my sister, yes.

Interviewer: Okay. But you were a lot of people living under this roof for a while.

Respondent 1: Yeah. Even though after my brother-in-law comes, my parents are still with me, my brother-in-law comes. His brother, half-brother. Yeah. Louie. Stayed with us for three months.

Interviewer: [0:38:30] Oh my god.

Respondent 1: My mom gave their room to my brother-in-law to sleep on her bed, and she slept with my daughters.

Interviewer: Oh my god.

Respondent 1: To the fact, my parents – they were the godparents of my children. And John slept in the front living room on the sofa. Do you remember those sofas?

Interviewer: Yeah.

- Respondent 1:** And John slept there.
- Interviewer:** Wow.
- Respondent 1:** And then it was my other brother, [0:39:00] his brother. My brother and my cousin came here for three months.
- Respondent 2:** Oh, the one from Quebec.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Frank. Then he's here. Then he went to tobacco – to work on tobacco? Delhi? They went there. Then he came back. Then he stayed just for a month or so.
- Interviewer:** So you've absorbed people, and even if you had a [0:39:30] child sleeping on the sofa, or your parents slept with your children – if people wanted to be here you said yes.
- Respondent 1:** Every time we were welcome.
- Interviewer:** How many bathrooms?
- Respondent 1:** Only two. One upstairs, one downstairs. And then my brother-in-law went to Winnipeg, and then my uncle – the wife, his wife was my aunt. My brother, my father's sister. He came to visit. He [0:40:00] stayed here for six months.
- Interviewer:** Oh my gosh.
- Respondent 2:** They all stayed here.
- Respondent 1:** They all stayed here. They never go to my sister's.
- Interviewer:** She didn't want them.
- Respondent 1:** No.
- Interviewer:** So she's very different from you.

- Respondent 1:** Yes. Very. And she had to rent it on the top. And he stayed for six months. And that moment, my father – God bless his soul, I love him. But...
- Respondent 2:** But he did it wrong.
- Respondent 1:** [0:40:30] ...he didn't say, "Okay. This is one more person. I'm going to give you ten more dollars to help for the bills." Okay. No. It's sixty dollars, sixty dollars. Okay. But I never said anything because like they all say, "If you don't cry, you don't suck."
- Interviewer:** I don't understand.
- Respondent 1:** If you don't cry, you don't have anything – you don't suck. My sister has that thing. [0:41:00] She cries all the time. She has everything from my parents. But like the old saying back home, "If you don't cry, you don't suck." So after my uncle went back, my father – but those years you can't tell some family to come here, a sister or a nephew, or whatever. My cousin – my father's nephew with his wife and the young [0:41:30] baby, two-and-a-half years – they come here. They stay here three months.
- Interviewer:** Oh my god. They stayed in your house?
- Respondent 1:** Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** Oh my god.
- Respondent 1:** Then they moved to Brunswick. Rent it. Okay. They left. And then my cousin, my mother's niece came with three daughters from Kitimat. Three daughters and her...
- Respondent 2:** [0:42:00] From British Columbia.
- Respondent 1:** ...husband. Everybody came here. She sleeps in the front room with her husband. The girls upstairs, and my sons – Anthony and John, because Bill fixed this – fixed that room, and John and Anthony slept there.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.

- Interviewer:** So how many people were you then?
- Respondent 2:** All together?
- Interviewer:** Twelve, fourteen people.
- Respondent 2:** And they come here.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** And they come here.
- Respondent 1:** No, everything is okay.
- Respondent 2:** Nobody pays me [0:42:30] anything. I never asked. [Laughs]
- Respondent 1:** No. Only my husband works at that time.
- Interviewer:** Wow.
- Respondent 1:** Because my parents, especially my mom – God bless her soul, mom. I loved you, but...
- Interviewer:** [Laughs] But – okay.
- Respondent 1:** I hope God didn't ask you for your sins. So [laughs] forgive you. But she never said, "Okay. Only your husband's working. Why don't you go to work? I take care of the kids." She never said that. But my [0:43:00] sister, "Oh no. She has to go to work, she has to have her husband.
- Interviewer:** Did your mother take care of her children?
- Respondent 1:** I was taking care of her children.
- Respondent 2:** She did it.
- Respondent 1:** So the kids come here, my mom takes them to the school, St. Peter's school. My children and my sister, Louisa and Bernie –

because Bernie is younger than Anthony, seven months. And once – [0:43:30] sometimes we have family here and visit, and my mom sits there and she says, “Oh, I take care of my children.” I said, “Excuse me, mom. You help to take care of my children. I take care of my children. Don’t say...”

Interviewer: So you take care of your children, and you took care of your sister’s children, and everybody who came from Canada or Portugal, they all came and stayed with you.

Respondent 1: Oh yeah. This is open house.

Interviewer: I can see that.

Respondent 1: This is the charity house.

Interviewer: You’ve fed a lot of people [0:44:00] at this table that we’re sitting at right now.

Respondent 1: They were sleeping upstairs.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. So Bill, what kind of work were you doing?

Respondent 2: I was working for Consumers Gas. That’s a gas company. At the time it was the name of Consumers Gas. It was...

Interviewer: Yeah. But you did that room. Who did that room?

Respondent 1: He did.

Interviewer: So you’re very handy.

Respondent 1: No, because it was that room. It was that room right there.

Respondent 2: It was small.

Interviewer: It was freezing.

- Respondent 1:** Yeah. [0:44:30] It was freezing. No, that moment before the kids went there he put the [indiscernible 00:44:29] and we fixed everything.
- Interviewer:** But most people don't know how to do that. [Laughs]
- Respondent 1:** Yeah, but he did. Now he doesn't – don't know anything, but in the olden days he'd do it.
- Respondent 2:** I can do it.
- Respondent 1:** He did so many things.
- Respondent 2:** I can do nothing anymore because it's gone. I had a stroke.
- Respondent 1:** He had a mild stroke years ago.
- Respondent 2:** I had a mild stroke.
- Interviewer:** So you don't have as much use of that, as much strength.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** In my head, [0:45:00] I got no problem.
- Respondent 1:** He has high blood pressure, so he takes his medication every day. The one for the seizures you have to take three times a day.
- Interviewer:** Does that control the seizures?
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** It's not that much because if he forgot, or I forget to give him the medication he has a seizure.
- Interviewer:** So it's important to take. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** After he had the pacemaker.
- Interviewer:** Oh you have a pacemaker. Oh my goodness.

- Respondent 1:** [0:45:30] Then that stopped. It stopped the seizures.
- Interviewer:** Oh really?
- Respondent 1:** He controls more...
- Interviewer:** The pacemaker. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** The pacemaker controls more, but he has to take the medication. As a matter of fact, two weeks ago he went to General Hospital, and my daughter went with him to see the specialist about the pacemaker because once the valve – the doctor says probably if everything's okay we'll shut it out. [0:46:00] If it's not, we have to do something about it. You have to have the operation again and...
- Interviewer:** And get a new pacemaker. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** But his pacemaker, it's different from the others.
- Respondent 2:** I am the second one.
- Interviewer:** Second one. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** It's the best one that he has. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Okay. So we've talked about the stores on Bloor Street. Did you use stores on College and Harbord?
- Respondent 1:** Yes. We went to College.
- Interviewer:** What kind of stores?
- Respondent 1:** Oh, children's stores. And Kensington Market.
- Interviewer:** Okay. Tell me.
- Respondent 1:** The Kensington Market is beautiful. [0:46:30] Years ago it's so many Portuguese there. The fish markets, the meats, and bakeries. Everything. And I love it. And Honest Ed's my kind of store.

Interviewer: [Laughs] Okay.

Respondent 1: I love Honest Ed's.

Interviewer: So you use the market and Honest Ed's a lot.

Respondent 1: Yes. And Honest Ed's. Everything. But Dundas, we go to Dundas too because there's so many Portuguese stores there. **[0:47:00]** The butcher store they call Nosso Talho, Dundas. They have one on Dundas, they have one on Bloor. But most of the time we go to Dundas. They have everything – all the meats and everything. And the sausage, Portuguese sausage, especially on the Kensington Market. And across they have the Portuguese store. As a matter of fact, the young guy passed away last year. He was at the stores. But the Portuguese stores they're starting to close. **[0:47:30]** But years ago it was all Jewish.

Interviewer: In the market you mean?

Respondent 1: Yeah. The Kensington Market. It's all Jewish.

Interviewer: Right. And you're saying there were also some Portuguese?

Respondent 1: Then it started. The Portuguese started to come, and they started to – the stores, the meat stores, and sausage, and other things. Varieties of the beans, and peanuts, and things like that. And lots of clothing. **[0:48:00]** And the Portuguese bakeries – as a matter of fact it was three bakeries on Augusta. It was one just a few places from College. It was one bakery. Then it was the other one on...

Respondent 2: By the little park.

Respondent 1: No. There's one on the – across the street from Sasmart on Augusta. **[0:48:30]** And there was another one, Oxford. There was another bakery.

Interviewer: So what you're saying is...

- Respondent 1:** Portuguese. And then they started to move people – die, and move to other places.
- Interviewer:** So you remember when it was largely Jewish.
- Respondent 1:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** And then when more and more Portuguese...
- Respondent 1:** Portuguese came and they started the first round. Now it's more Chinese and Koreans.
- Interviewer:** In Kensington Market?
- Respondent 1:** Kensington Market. It's not that much.
- Interviewer:** But you've watched a lot of changes over the last few years in the market.
- Respondent 1:** [0:49:00] Yes. Lots of changes. Lots of change. Lots of changes in these areas.
- Interviewer:** And I just want to come to Harbord Street.
- Respondent 1:** Harbord Street.
- Interviewer:** The stores.
- Respondent 1:** There was stores. So many stores, and so many Portuguese lived on Harbord Street. So many Portuguese lived there. And there was a bakery there. They used to make beautiful bread.
- Interviewer:** Portuguese bakery?
- Respondent 1:** No.
- Respondent 2:** No.
- Interviewer:** No?

- Respondent 1:** It was...
- Respondent 2:** Jewish.
- Respondent 1:** ...Jewish.
- Interviewer:** [0:49:30] Harbord bakery? Harbord? Yeah. That's still there.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** But it's different.
- Interviewer:** Ah. It's different then.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. It was different.
- Interviewer:** So can you describe that?
- Respondent 1:** It was so – it was big. Now I think I went there only once, and the more the houses, it's more family houses. Not like now. Now they have too many restaurants on the corners, [0:50:00] and this, and that. But Robert Street, a lot of Portuguese used to live there, and Italians, and everything. Now everything's changed. There's still some Portuguese on Robert Street. Now everybody – our friend there who lives there down from Harbord, but it was so – everything's so different.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. It has changed.
- Respondent 1:** We used to go to – what's that street's name between Spadina? There's a [0:50:30] side street, and we go there. There was an immigration building there who used to give lots of clothes for the poor, and shoes, and everything. I went there once when I moved here with my – his niece and so many people, Portuguese people – went there. We bring so many – so beautiful clothing. I said, "Why could this country be so good to be so many things [0:51:00] that's so beautiful?" But then everything's changed.

- Interviewer:** Yeah. So it was Jewish, it was Portuguese. There were...
- Respondent 1:** Polish. Everything.
- Interviewer:** Okay. So all those other Portuguese people have moved away. What kept you here?
- Respondent 1:** Because I'm close to everything. Because when the children were small, Bill works in Scarborough, [0:51:30] that side. East side. And every time he says, "Oh, I'm going to sell this house."
- Interviewer:** You worked in Scarborough?
- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Well I used to work around Toronto because I could work one place for a week or two, then I had to move to the west.
- Interviewer:** Oh I see. Okay. Okay.
- Respondent 1:** So and he said...
- Respondent 2:** But most of the time I worked in the east. East and north.
- Respondent 1:** To tell you the truth he was fed up with my parents to put their noses where they [0:52:00] don't belong.
- Interviewer:** Oh. So you didn't like having them live with you.
- Respondent 1:** No. He didn't mind. He didn't mind...
- Respondent 2:** I didn't mind.
- Respondent 1:** ...my parents live with me. The problem was my parents – they had the decency to – they want to control everything.
- Respondent 2:** They want to be bosses.
- Interviewer:** And this is your home and your family.

- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Yeah. They want to control everything. And my husband started to drink.
- Respondent 2:** Now we're getting crazy, you know?
- Respondent 1:** It was a big conflict [0:52:30] in that time.
- Interviewer:** So you felt your in-laws were giving their opinion too much and they wanted to be the bosses.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. It was. Yeah. Because – but they didn't do it with my sister and my brother-in-law, God bless his soul too. He passed away four years ago almost. So it was everything different. What Anna did, or does, or she has to do – everything is fine. She was poor. And my husband, because he [0:53:00] works in a construction company, we were rich in my parents' eyes, especially my mom's eyes. Because when my sister moved to her house, my mom's starting to come and bring her clothes to wash here.
- Interviewer:** Oh my gosh.
- Respondent 1:** And iron, and cook, and everything. And I said one day – and Bill said, "Your sister's moved [0:53:30] three months ago. How come the bills are the same?"
- Interviewer:** So your electricity, your water.
- Respondent 1:** Lights. Like her she had – she paid the mortgage too because the olden days when we bought the house it was only a thousand dollars then. But it was hard because he was the only one who's working.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. And you had your own big family, and your parents.
- Respondent 1:** And three children. And my parents, they take care of themselves because my father works. So [0:54:00] my father passed away eleven years ago, but he passed away ninety-two. And my mom, five, six years, ninety-five when she passed away.
- Interviewer:** Long life, your parents.

Respondent 1: And I didn't think about anything. I said, "I don't know. We do the same thing. We don't cook every day because in the olden days we made a dinner for today and tomorrow. [0:54:30] Now today, even with the kids sometimes, 'I don't like this.' Okay. Fine. You have to do a sausage, whatever." So one night I was in bed. I said, "My god, he's right. Probably it's the clothing my mom brings, and she has to cook upstairs. And she ironed her clothes." And then my sister, when she comes from work, and my brother-in-law, they come here with the kid [0:55:00] and eat. And I give lunch and everything. And one day my mom says, "Oh, I'm going to – I'm finished washing our clothes," because the olden days we don't have driers. We have to hang everything in the basement. And my mom says, "I'm going to get Anna's clothes." I said, "No." Then my mom says, "Why?" I said, "No, mom. I'm sorry. I don't mind you helping her, [0:55:30] but only my husband's working, and when the bill comes, the bill comes – he has to pay. I don't mind if you're helping her in her house. You can wash, you do everything you want. I'm not." But not saying anything, but in her house. "Oh, I paid the rent." "Mom, you pay the rent just for you and dad. She has a renter too." My mom takes a week. [0:56:00] She stopped talking with me.

Interviewer: Oh my god. So she was angry at you.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you set some boundaries.

Respondent 1: Yes. And at the end of the week I said, "Mom, do you think you're right? Do you think that's right? My husband's worked so much."

Interviewer: And you have your own five children.

Respondent 1: And I have five kids. No, that time it was three. I have – it was five people. I'm not working, Anna's working, her husband's working. [0:56:30] She has a rent. She had the sixty dollars, the same thing. You pay me.

Respondent 2: And for months I feed all of them.

- Interviewer:** Oh my god. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** Oh I'm not...
- Respondent 1:** Oh, it was so...
- Respondent 2:** But when they come here, at that time there was much work. Just worse than it is today. Years ago they was – I don't know if they have it. And everything went down, okay?
- Respondent 1:** And even back home my mom – it's because she was the baby.
- Respondent 2:** And I had to feed every one of them.
- Interviewer:** So she's **[0:57:00]** always the baby.
- Respondent 1:** She's not my twin. My twin passed away nine-and-a-half months – when she was nine-and-a-half months. So she's the second one.
- Interviewer:** So she's the baby.
- Respondent 1:** So probably that's why we never get along that much, especially her. She's the best. I say, "Okay, fine."
- Interviewer:** Yeah. It's not fair. Okay. We're going to come back. [Laughs] So you talked about the stores on Harbord.
- Respondent 1:** Harbord and everything. Everything is so different. Even the florist **[0:57:30]** stores, they don't have their florists stores in the olden days.
- Interviewer:** So you had some lovely florist stores, you're saying, at that time.
- Respondent 1:** That's the olden days. We had all the garden in the front of the houses. They had beautiful flowers. My father – my sisters and I, the middle, the entry of the house – everything was bush.
- Interviewer:** Whoa.

- Respondent 1:** [0:58:00] Oh, beautiful rose bush.
- Interviewer:** Red roses?
- Respondent 1:** Red. Every colour – because my father, everybody thinks – the olden days, my father was the owner of the houses because he took care of everything.
- Interviewer:** So he did your garden and Anna's garden?
- Respondent 1:** Everything. Even the backyard. Sometimes he went to Jean's backyard, and Jean had her father. Because she had a grapevine, and my father says, "You don't know anything. Where did you come from?" [Laughs] And he says, [0:58:30] "You don't know anything. You people don't know anything." And he starts to argue, and he says, "Please, please. Mr. Cristodio, please stop."
- Interviewer:** Tell me about the backyards. What did you have there?
- Respondent 1:** My backyard?
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** My backyard, when we moved it was only dirt. Then we had to put concrete. But every time in the summer, I have my veggies.
- Interviewer:** So what [0:59:00] vegetables did you get? Tell me.
- Respondent 1:** [Laughs] I put pots with the cherry tomatoes, parsley, my herbs. What else? Green beans, green onions, and corn to make soup. I have every kind. Once Helen came she says, "Missus, I have to see your garden." [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** So what you [0:59:30] did is you put concrete then and then you had big baskets.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** So they were big.

- Respondent 1:** No, so you can see from the window. Because the door was – because it was my neighbour, I used to have another door.
- Respondent 2:** We had to put a new door in.
- Respondent 1:** We had to put another one. And my neighbour, because I had that door in the garage – and my neighbour, Chinese, he says, “I’m going to put – because I want to put this door in the garage.” And he says, “Oh, this door is going to [1:00:00] come here.” And I put one here in the garage and I said, “Okay, fine.” But he cut too much. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Oh.
- Respondent 2:** Now it’s a big opening.
- Respondent 1:** It’s a big gap. I said, “Okay, but we have to put a new door there.”
- Interviewer:** But you had a lot – you grew a lot in the back.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. Yes. Even my sister. All the neighbours. Even my next-door neighbours used to be my older son’s parents-in-law. They used to live here.
- Interviewer:** Boy, you had family on both sides.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. [1:00:30] But it’s no good. [Laughs] It’s too much. Too much conspiracy. So they put everything. In one piece of the backyard, they have lots of dirt and they put lots of veggies there. All the houses had that.
- Interviewer:** So a lot of them had vegetables. A lot of vegetables. And now is it the same, or has it changed?
- Respondent 1:** No.
- Interviewer:** What’s happening now?
- Respondent 1:** Now it’s two young kids who live next-door, [1:01:00] and now they put ...

- Interviewer:** Barbecues?
- Respondent 1:** No. They have barbecues. Yeah. They did, but I didn't see it. But they have to put interlock. Now they fixed the backyard, it's beautiful. On my expense [Laughs] because the fence was supposed to be for the two of us, but Bill is the one who paid for everything. **[1:01:30]** That's my luck [Laughs] with everyone. So now they don't have anything. But next-door, the kids – they're all Chinese, the people who bought my sister's house. Chinese. They're very good kids. They don't bother me anyway, even next-door.
- Interviewer:** So all your years – as you said, a lot of the people who were here have moved away. How did people get along at that time? Because there were so many people from so many different countries.
- Respondent 1:** **[1:02:00]** They get along beautifully.
- Interviewer:** Okay. Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Both sides on the street.
- Interviewer:** And now is it the same? Or has that changed?
- Respondent 1:** Now? No. I have some. Jean who now, God bless her soul, Mona Colicos?
- Interviewer:** I didn't know Mona.
- Respondent 1:** Oh. She used to live there. Her husband was an actor. John Colicos? He did movies. Oh my god. "Star Wars," something like that.
- Interviewer:** You know, there's somebody **[1:02:30]** who used to come to the JCC. It might be him. Anyway...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. And Jean, we were close. We talked every time. Jean and Chris. And Annette. Annette lives up from Jean. Tiffany – she passed her house to Mona.

- Interviewer:** So you certainly know the people who are on your side of the street and some on the other side.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. Even on my side and on the other side. I talk with everybody. "Hi, how are you?"
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So listen, [1:03:00] are you saying it's a little bit the same? Or it's quite different?
- Respondent 1:** It's not the same like it used to because the olden days we were all sitting on the verandahs.
- Respondent 2:** Talking with each other.
- Respondent 1:** With everybody, with each other – my neighbours, Portuguese neighbours come to my verandah and we start talking. And they play cards in the verandah. That atmosphere is a big difference now. But now we see the kids, and so many students, and [1:03:30] sometimes they say hi. Sometimes I say okay fine. And down here a little bit further it's John. He's an actor also – and his wife, Melanie. There's Carol. There's so many people who still live here. When I had my five kids, they started moving. Like Jean moved, and Annette, and Anne Barnett, and so many people started to move. [1:04:00] The Italians and the Greeks, they started to move. Their parents passed away and they had to move.
- Interviewer:** But you stayed here, so you're different.
- Respondent 1:** I stayed here, but Bill wants to move east. I said, "Look, I don't like Mississauga. I hate Mississauga." My daughters – my son and daughter lives there, and my sister. My sister moved to Mississauga too because I said, "What is this? If you don't live in Mississauga [1:04:30] you're not rich." She moved to a condominium. And Duke something. Duke Mississauga company. But it was like the tower of Babylon. She lives on ninth floor and I said, "My god."
- Interviewer:** Okay. So Bill, you want to move, and you want to say.

- Respondent 1:** Yeah. No. I said, “Look, we have a nice location. We’re close to [1:05:00] St. Peter’s church. The kids, Central Tech and St. Peter’s, Loretto College. Everything is around us. We have Dominion, we have Honest Ed’s. We go almost – most of the time my mom goes almost every day to buy a fresh fish to Kensington Market. Why do you want to go?” And I said, “You want to move? Okay. Fine. Go. But I’m staying. But you have to pay the mortgage.”
- Interviewer:** [1:05:30] Boy she’s tough. Strong. Strong.
- Respondent 1:** He says, “Okay.” That’s why I moved, because of my children. Because if you move to another place we don’t know where are the schools.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So you found this location was convenient. The stores, the schools.
- Respondent 1:** It’s a diamond for me. It was a diamond.
- Interviewer:** Oh, what a lovely way.
- Respondent 1:** I love my house. When I go to my children’s house, sometimes I go to Rita’s house to Trenton for [1:06:00] three weeks. When I come to Toronto, we come home by bus and I said, “Oh my god. Toronto. I love my Toronto.” And then she at first says, “I love my Toronto too.” [Laughs] But when I come to my house I said, “It’s an old house, but I love my house.”
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So you love your house, and you love Major Street.
- Respondent 1:** I love Major Street. I love my neighbours. No problem.
- Interviewer:** Okay. So you said, Bill, you wanted to move a lot of years ago. [1:06:30] But now we’re in 2012, and you’re still here, so what’s keeping you here now?
- Respondent 1:** Now?
- Interviewer:** Yeah.

- Respondent 1:** I'm close to everything.
- Interviewer:** Still the same thing.
- Respondent 1:** I want to go up to Metro, it's right there because Bill can't go far. I don't drive. He doesn't drive. Not even a bike. Years ago after he had the seizures, he cannot drive anymore.
- Interviewer:** So you're saying thirty years ago you didn't want to move. Your children were in school. Everything worked well, [1:07:00] and now it's the same thing. You don't want to move. It's still a great home, a great location.
- Respondent 1:** No, no, no, no, no. It's the same thing. And as a matter of fact, Carol lives up from Anne. She's an old lady. She's older than I and she says, "Mercedes, I can't stay alone." She has two daughters. "But I love my house." And I told her, I said, "Carol, why did you have to go to a retirement home?" She says, "I love [1:07:30] my neighbours, I love my street." I said, "Yeah. Why don't you ask a Philippine girl to stay with you? It's less money, it's convenient."
- Interviewer:** So is that what she did?
- Respondent 1:** No.
- Interviewer:** Oh. She moved.
- Respondent 1:** But she fell and she hurt herself. Her daughters took her to the hospital and she went to a retirement home here on St. George.
- Respondent 2:** Christie.
- Respondent 1:** No. She went to St. George somewhere. And then she [1:08:00] didn't like it there, so they moved her to Christie and Bloor.
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah. That's a nice place. That's a good place, I think. Yeah, yeah. And it's still not very far away.

- Respondent 1:** Believe me, everything is a nice place, but nothing like home. I told my children, I said, “Mom, you’re—” I said, “Over my dead body. When I die, you guys wrap me in a sheet, put me in a shape, let it go.” But [1:08:30] move? As long as I take care of myself and my husband, thank god. Because when I go to the hospitals, the doctors most of the time said, “Mrs. Mann, do you have help?”
- Interviewer:** Do you what?
- Respondent 1:** Do you have help.
- Interviewer:** Oh, do you have help.
- Respondent 1:** I said, “What kind of help?” And he said, “Oh, around the house, do your chores.” I said, “Look, my dear. I’m fifty-six.” No. That [1:09:00] time I was seventy-three and I said, “You know what, sweetie? If I have a cleaning lady in my house, probably she stays there five minutes. Not even. I don’t ask my husband or my children to do my chores. I even go to the top of my roof on the verandah to clean my windows.”
- Interviewer:** So you like to do it yourself. You do the best job.
- Respondent 1:** Because I know. When I do it, I know what I’m doing.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. But you also said that [1:09:30] for some years you went and you cleaned at night at other places.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. I take care of my children at daytime. I cook, I wash, I iron. Sometimes I have more clothing, but when my children were growing up – because my oldest son went to the armories, he was a soldier in the armory on the...
- Respondent 2:** Oh down there, before they burned it down. Fort York.
- Respondent 1:** Fort York.
- Respondent 2:** By the Exhibition.

Respondent 1: [1:10:00] And he was a Master Corporal. And then my youngest son went. He stayed there for one year because he thought it was fine. He wanted to be an architect engineer for the airplanes. He wants to go to Kingston and I said, "Okay. Fine." Because I love uniforms. I love men in uniforms. I don't know why. And I was so proud of them. [1:10:30] John, as a matter of fact, he stayed for ten, eleven years there. After he got married, the parents-in-law, they put their noses. "Oh, it's not life for a new couple," because he had to go to Petawawa and Trenton for a week.

Interviewer: Oh so they said he was away too much from their daughter.

Respondent 1: Yeah. And I was starting to be fed up with them and I said, "John, [1:11:00] I love you love this job," because he's very good. Sometimes when he was home and he started talking with the kids from the armories and I said, "Who are you talking to?" He was so tough. I said, "Well excuse me, Captain. My goodness." And he says, "Mom, I have to do that. I have to let them see that it was too much discipline." And he said, "Mom, I'm going to quit." I said, "Why?" [1:11:30] "It's not for me." I said, "Yeah. I know why." Then he went to University of Waterloo to be an actor. He was ready to go to New York.

Interviewer: We're going to have to come back to this. Do you have air conditioning in your home?

Respondent 1: Yes.

Interviewer: You do. And when did you put that in?

Respondent 2: Oh.

Respondent 1: Oh my god. Oh five, [1:12:00] more than five years ago. Oh my. The olden days sometimes – we could sleep on the verandah, but not those days. Sometimes John, my son, sleeps in the verandah.

Interviewer: Because it was hot in the house?

Respondent 1: It was hot in the house. The golden days we're not afraid of anything, but it's more than ten years.

- Interviewer:** Yeah. So you've had it for then.
- Respondent 1:** More than ten years.
- Interviewer:** You must have had changes in your heating system. When you first [1:12:30] came...
- Respondent 1:** Oh my god it was like the octopus.
- Interviewer:** What do you mean?
- Respondent 1:** The furnace. It was in the middle of the basement with those big pipes.
- Interviewer:** So it was huge.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. It looks like the octopus.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. And what was it? How were you heating the house at that time?
- Respondent 1:** Oh. It was okay, but then it was old. We have a tank with oil.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. And it would stink a little bit in the basement.
- Respondent 1:** [1:13:00] Then we changed to gas, and then we changed to the furnace and we put the furnace in the back. So oh my god.
- Interviewer:** A lot of changes in that way.
- Respondent 1:** So many years ago this kitchen – it was terrible. I have beans that tall. They started to grow in the cupboards when we moved. I said, "My god." And I used, I [1:13:30] think, three kinds of each [laughs] because it was so dirty. Because the verandah was a small verandah, and it was a wall between my sister and I. Then my sister – when we made the verandah, we took the wall.
- Interviewer:** So you had one verandah that you shared with your sister?

- Respondent 1:** Yeah. After. Then we have to put the new railing because of Bill, [1:14:00] because he has to have something to hang on.
- Interviewer:** Something to lean on. Right. Right.
- Respondent 1:** So it's a lot of things. Even in the backyard we opened the door from the basement to the backyard because it was so much to come down, and we hang the clothes up also. It's a big mess. We do so many things on the upstairs. But if you have a house you have so many things to do anyway.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Especially after you've been here for fifty years. [Laughs]
- Respondent 1:** [1:14:30] Now we have to fix the bedroom upstairs because Anthony's coming with the babies for a month. They're going to stay here for two weeks, then they go to Milton because my daughter's parents live in Milton. They're going to stay there for two months.
- Respondent 2:** Two weeks.
- Respondent 1:** Two weeks. Oh my god. And then they have to go back because he lives in England.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. You know, [1:15:00] you've talked a lot about the market. What about the university – does that affect you in any way?
- Respondent 1:** No.
- Interviewer:** It doesn't.
- Respondent 1:** The olden days – you know why? The olden days it was the kids. It was so – there were so many kids, but not like now. The only problem, because between me and my next-door neighbour it was just a little bit – it's not close, the houses.
- Respondent 2:** [1:15:30] The house with the other one.
- Interviewer:** It's not big enough to walk through.

- Respondent 1:** No, no, no. I wish.
- Respondent 2:** Close.
- Interviewer:** But you're not attached.
- Respondent 1:** I wish. I wish.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Not attached, but it's only that one.
- Respondent 1:** It's not enough.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. So that's why I close on the front and they close on the back.
- Respondent 1:** We closed both sides because the racoons, and the skunks, and the kids from university on the Friday, they go there and pee. So I said, "We're going to close that. Forget it."
- Interviewer:** [1:16:00] Oh that's disgusting.
- Respondent 1:** So when we fixed it, we put the siding on the back, we closed that too because the racoons go over there. I have the racoons two years ago in my garage. A year ago in my garage.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. They can do a lot of damage.
- Respondent 1:** Oh my god. I had to go to the hospital because of the pneumonia because my daughter called to the company [1:16:30] and they said, "Yes, I can take it out, but it costs five hundred dollars each."
- Interviewer:** Oh my god.
- Respondent 1:** I said, "What? Five hundred dollars each? Forget it."
- Interviewer:** So what did you do?
- Respondent 1:** So she called another company and he said, "Oh, to go it's fifteen hundred dollars or more," and he said, "You know what? But we're not going to take them." And Lucy says, "Why?" "Oh, we just put ammonia." [1:17:00] Anthony used to call me back. "Mom, you

know what? They want so much money, and they don't take the racoons because there was a family with three."

Respondent 2: Yeah. It was a mother and three little ones.

Respondent 1: So I said, "Okay." Then she says, "Mom, Paul's going to put—" that's my son-in-law. "Paul's going to put ammonia and the waste of the racoons." Oh my god.

Interviewer: Oh that's disgusting. [1:17:30] So that was right in your garage?

Respondent 1: Yes. Because I have two roofs. They stayed between the two. It's a mess. It was a mess.

Interviewer: Oh yeah. And unhealthy too.

Respondent 1: They were terrible. I said, "I feel sorry for the two babies but they have to get out of here."

Interviewer: For sure.

Respondent 1: And my next-door neighbour, Andy – she's fixing the things in the garage and she says, "Mercedes, I'm going to do this for you." And they put there the ammonia, but without the [1:18:00] ammonia and that smell of the pee and everything – because they say it's poisonous. And I have to go to the hospital in emergency because I can't breathe. My lungs are starting to close on me. So then we put and they disappeared. As soon as they have the ammonia...

Interviewer: I didn't like the ammonia. So you didn't spend fifteen hundred dollars.

Respondent 1: No, no. But it was so funny...

Respondent 2: They tried to come back.

Respondent 1: ...because the mother, [1:18:30] they get out of there, but they want to come back. But before they left, the smallest one, the mother was on top of the garage next door. And the two big ones, they went to the garage on top of the roof. But the smallest one,

they have a gap and they started to – with the hands like this, and it was up. And then I said, “Bill, go to there and see what he’s doing.” And he [1:19:00] cannot understand, the poor thing, to go and stay there so the mother can take him. They have to go on to the next-door backyard. And then the mother was so upset. Oh my god she was so upset. And then they climbed up and said, “There we go.” Then they went to Annette’s house because she’s building another part of her house on the back.

Interviewer: So they found a spot there.

Respondent 1: [Laughs] Yes. And Annette says, “We’re serious. [1:19:30] I’m so mad.” I said, “What’s wrong?” “The racoons.” I said, “Yeah? They were in my garage.” “Missus, what did you do?” [Laughs] I said, “I sent them to your hotel because I don’t want them anymore.” It was so funny.

Interviewer: Do you feel in this neighbourhood now, and the last thirty years, forty years, fifty years – does it feel safe? Is it secure? Or has it changed?

Respondent 1: Well it used to be. [1:20:00] Now the kids from Central Tech – for a few years, not now, but a few years they come to the laneway.

Interviewer: They come to the laneway.

Respondent 1: To the laneway to smoke pot. And they do damage sometimes to the garage doors. But I never said anything. They go to the top because years ago, the church – they don’t have the gate. It was the laneway, [1:20:30] and you can go straight up and go to Bloor. But then the church bought probably that piece of land, and they built the gate.

Respondent 2: They closed.

Respondent 1: They closed everything.

Respondent 2: So this is divided.

- Respondent 1:** They divided that because it was not probably the garbage truck can go and – it was much easier because I hate the cans on the verandah. I hate that.
- Interviewer:** You hate the what?
- Respondent 1:** The green bin and those...
- Interviewer:** [1:21:00] Oh. The big bins. All the bins. Right. Right.
- Respondent 1:** That's so disgusting. That's so disgusting. I tell Bill so many times.
- Interviewer:** What do you not like about them?
- Respondent 1:** It's disgusting. I want to sit in my verandah, not to smell the stupid garbage.
- Interviewer:** Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. And the smell of that, and also the look? Or just the smell of it?
- Respondent 1:** The look and the smell.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. Because so many people have them in front.
- Respondent 1:** [1:21:30] Yes. Yeah. I have it. Years ago when they started, in the summer I put them in the garage, but now because Bill had that problem, and it's too heavy to come here. When my sister lives here, we took the bins to the pantry because I can't...
- Interviewer:** It's too far to do it.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. But years ago, my sister – we have a gate. Even next-door there was a railing, [1:22:00] and we have a gate. I have a gate because my grandchildren – my son married next-door girl. And my grandchildren come back and forth, and he put a gate there, and so has my sister. We put a gate on her side. A gate. So we take the bins and go to her backyard.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So you're saying that...

- Respondent 1:** It was convenient.
- Interviewer:** That was convenient, and also to walk outside on the street and see all these bins, it's ugly.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. It upsets [1:22:30] me sometimes. It's not only that. Because of racoons now, we have to be careful with the garbage. And sometimes it pissed me when the people don't was the green bins. It's so disgusting.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Sure. It's decompensating, it's rotting, it's stinking.
- Respondent 1:** It's not only that. And I said, "Why don't you put your garbage in the back and put it inside the green bin? It's much easier, much cleaner." It's not that dirty because [1:23:00] sometimes when I pass some houses I have to close my – put my – it's so disgusting. I said, "I should be the mayor of Toronto." Sometimes the neighbour says, "Why don't you?" Oh, I tell everybody to clean.
- Interviewer:** You're right.
- Respondent 1:** No, because if everybody cleans their houses, sometimes they say, "Mercedes, I can clean in your sidewalk." I say, "Okay. You have to eat in my sidewalk. Please come inside and [1:23:30] eat my table." And even my neighbours, when I sweep the street and the sidewalk, "Mercedes, can you come here?" I said, "Tell Miller if he pays me, I will do it," but now it's old, unfortunately.
- Interviewer:** Were you around when they were trying to put the Spadina Expressway in?
- Respondent 1:** Yes.
- Interviewer:** And did you have any thoughts about that? Did you care?
- Respondent 1:** Not really. No. Not really. [1:24:00] No.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. Well no. The meeting. I went...
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Bill went to some meetings.

- Respondent 2:** Was for a company builder. He wants to buy from Spadina to Bathurst from Bloor to Harbord. Everything.
- Interviewer:** To buy the houses?
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. To buy [1:24:30] the houses here.
- Respondent 2:** But no builder at that time. And so the school – they send a letter, like the new school.
- Respondent 1:** The universities.
- Respondent 2:** The City Hall sent the day they have a meeting there. And [1:25:00] so the board, the school – they were against it.
- Respondent 1:** The board. Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** They were the number one against it because of Central Tech, okay? And St. Peter's is another one, so I had to go to Bloor on Bathurst. So they wanted to build townhouses.
- Interviewer:** Oh boy.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. They wanted to build a lot of things.
- Interviewer:** Really change it.
- Respondent 2:** Yeah.
- Respondent 1:** Made so many changes, my goodness.
- Respondent 2:** And fine. [1:25:30] Okay. Then we went there. Okay.
- Respondent 1:** I was working at that time.
- Respondent 2:** They showed what they were going to do. A little park down here by Harbord. It was nice what they were going to do with it anyway. But

what they tell me, or you have a house whatever, it was not enough money to buy another house.

Respondent 1: It was peanuts.

Respondent 2: [1:26:00] They want, like, everything for nothing.

Interviewer: So they want to buy it cheap.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Everyone was against it. Everyone was against.

Respondent 2: I just stand up.

Interviewer: I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Respondent 2: I just stand up. I said, "That's bullshit."

Respondent 1: Yeah. And they left. Yeah. He was working that time.

Respondent 2: And the guy said to me, beside me, he said, "Where you going?" I said, "It doesn't make no sense to me. It's just stupid."

Interviewer: So was that the Spadina [1:26:30] Expressway? Or was that something else?

Respondent 2: No, no, no.

Interviewer: So that was something else they wanted to do?

Respondent 1: No, that was something different.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent 1: Those days it's condominiums, townhouses, and everything.

- Interviewer:** Okay. So somebody would have bought cheap and put up fancier places and charged more? And you would have been out of the neighbourhood which you love so much.
- Respondent 2:** Then one guy was on that side, or on the front, he says, "Hey, stay here just a minute." [1:27:00] He gets up. He says, "Come on. Everybody wants it, or who are against it stand up." Oh my god, everybody stands up.
- Interviewer:** That they wanted what?
- Respondent 2:** Against it.
- Respondent 1:** They don't want it.
- Interviewer:** Against it.
- Respondent 1:** Against it.
- Interviewer:** Oh got it. Okay. Oh wow.
- Respondent 2:** Then one guy says – one guy with the builders was there with a couple from City Hall, and he says, "Okay. You want my house? You've got to pay so much. [1:27:30] We don't want to get cheap." But he never said a word, so we started to walk out.
- Respondent 1:** I was nervous that time.
- Interviewer:** This was some big developer.
- Respondent 1:** Yes. I was very nervous at that time. I said, "What are we going to do with the kids? They're close to everything."
- Respondent 2:** And the City Hall scrapped.
- Interviewer:** Great.
- Respondent 1:** Yeah. Thank god.

- Interviewer:** Okay. You know what? We have to stop for now. You know, I just want to ask a general question. Is there anything that we haven't talked about? Because [1:28:00] the whole theme of this was I'm meeting people who have been here for many years. I want to learn about the changes that have happened in our neighbourhood. So are there any changes that I have not asked you about that you can think about?
- Respondent 2:** No.
- Respondent 1:** No, I don't think so.
- Respondent 2:** No.
- Respondent 1:** Because this area, it's – I think we talk about everything. The only thing is it's...
- Respondent 2:** Changes since I've been here is the subway.
- Respondent 1:** [1:28:30] Yeah. Yeah, that's right.
- Respondent 2:** Went underground. That's a change. Spadina...
- Respondent 1:** And Spadina...
- Respondent 2:** ...was supposed to come down and it never did it.
- Interviewer:** What do you mean it was supposed to come down?
- Respondent 2:** The Spadina.
- Interviewer:** You mean the Expressway?
- Respondent 2:** Yeah. The Expressway. And now they don't come anyway.
- Interviewer:** Right. Right.
- Respondent 1:** So many things.
- Interviewer:** So the transportation, you said. The subway has come in.

- Respondent 1:** Yeah.
- Respondent 2:** That's the only thing.
- Respondent 1:** But [1:29:00] the only thing is I'm old is the problem. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** You're seventy-five and you are a very, very, very young seventy-five.
- Respondent 1:** [Laughs] Oh yeah, sure.
- Interviewer:** You certainly are.
- Respondent 1:** I wish I'm fifty-seven. [Laughs] That's what everybody says. "How old are you?" I say, "Look, I'm fifty-seven." And they look at me say, "This lady is stupid or what?" I said, "I was born in 1936."
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Do the math.
- Respondent 1:** Do the math. And they said, "What?" I said, "Yeah."
- Interviewer:** Yeah. You're more like [1:29:30] fifty-seven than seventy-five.
- Respondent 1:** They say, "Mercedes." And they said, "How old are you?" I said, "How old do you think I am?" And they start to say, "Oh, fifty-five, sixty." I said, "Yes. My son is older than I then because my oldest son is going to be fifty-five."
- Interviewer:** Yeah. And of course...
- Respondent 1:** Twenty-eighth of this month, and Lisa is tomorrow. And my mom, God bless her soul, if she was alive she would be a hundred and one on [1:30:00] the eighteenth of this month. Did you see the news today? A lady from Cuba, a hundred and twenty-seven years old. I said, "God bless her." And she looks so good. I said, "I wish to be a hundred." Then he said, "Make an application [Laughs] so you can be a hundred." [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Okay. I want to say thank you to Bill. Thank you to Mercedes.

Respondent 1: Why don't you have a cup of tea?

Interviewer: Well let me just say thank you. **[1:30:30]** I'm going to turn this off, but both of you told a lot of wonderful stories and described the changes very, very clearly. And I've enjoyed meeting you, and I thank you very, very much, both of you.

[01:30:43]

[End of recording]