085 Robert Longworth

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

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: I'm meeting at this moment with Robert Longworth, who didn't live in the neighbourhood of Harbord Village, but he was a teacher and then the Vice-Principal at Central Tech. He taught from 1965 to 1981, teaching physics, and then from '81 to '86 he was the Vice-Principal. So you know the neighbourhood. You've shown me fantastic pictures of – beginning in **[0:00:30]** 1913 when they just had a hole and they were building. So I'm going to open it up – and you started telling me some wonderful stories that I forced you to stop because I want them on the tape.

Respondent: All right.

Interviewer: So thank you for sharing all this with me, because you know the neighbourhood and the school from a point of view of the students who came through your school.

Respondent: Right. Well I – what can I say about Central Tech? **[0:01:00]** It's pretty hard to get it all in there. As I was saying to you, I feel like twenty-two-and-a-half years I spent there, I learned more than all the – at Central Tech from the students and the staff, and all of the other educational institutions that I've been associated with, whether it's public school, high school, University of Toronto, partly because it's a very special school in terms of the people that are there. **[0:01:30]** The staff, they had so many diverse talents. The art department, the auto mechanics, the building construction, the aircraft, and I love to build. So one of our staff alumni, Ron Hill who – he taught me all kinds of stuff about building. Just probably go with my questions and – because my background is engineering **[0:02:00]** anyway, which ties into the physics – the electrical engineering. You know, it's not that I was without technical skills, but the actual doing the carpentry I learned from him. I learned how to do plumbing, and I had a phenomenal experience with the art students. I used to teach all of the arts students their science at one

point, so I taught them in grade nine, grade ten, grade eleven, and they all **[0:02:30]** travelled together as a group rather than a diverse group, so the courses that I taught were always tailored to their artistry.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: So when you taught, say for example, chemistry, and you do things like what's the difference between a physical and a chemical change, I would take them over to the pottery department and we'd show how the clay – I did pottery myself for a bit. It's another thing I learned in Central Tech. But, you know, when you **[0:03:00]** bisque a pot, it's not quite a chemical change. It is a bit of a chemical change, but when you just throw the pot and it becomes a dry piece of mud, it's a physical change. You know, you can put it back in the water and it changes right back. So it was a way of making the science tie in with their first love, which is art.

Interviewer: So every different population that you taught, because you had so many different populations in terms of what each student was studying…

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: …you navigated them **[0:03:30]** in that direction.

Respondent: Right. Yeah. And as I say, it was most rewarding with the arts students because I developed many good friendships over there. I mean I could – you could write a book on some of the interdisciplinary stuff we did. I'd like to give them a project to do on op art, which has to do with how the eye sees colour. You know, the rods and cones and all of that stuff, and colour fatigue. But when it came time to do a project, it was a joint **[0:04:00]** project and the head of the art department was also a graduate of Central Tech. Marsh Bullis. He would give it to them as a design project, and I would give it to them as an op art project, and then we would mark it together, and the mark would count for both classes. So I was very big into interdisciplinary stuff. When I would have student teachers, I had a group of other teachers that I was close with, and **[0:04:30]** I would make sure that I would take my student teacher,

who was obviously wanting to teach science, and he could go and observe an art lesson or an English lesson, and they would bring their student teachers to me as well. So we had that kind of interrelationship. And the kids were special. I mean being staff advisor on the student council meant that I got to know so many of them, and of course they all lived in the district. It's a great district. **[0:05:00]** And you know, I'd been to their weddings, I'm a godfather to a family's child. I mean it's – you know. And we still have these close friendships, these kids still come up to our cottage, and they got their kids growing up there.

Interviewer: You're talking about the kids. Could you think back to what the different groups of – ethnic, racial…

Respondent: Yeah. It was unique. **[0:05:30]** As I told you before, I grew up here, and this was a very homogeneous neighbourhood.

Interviewer: Well and for the tape, the here is Rushton, which is St. Clair. West of…

Respondent: St. Clair. Yes.

Interviewer: …Christie and St. Clair.

Respondent: And the only ethnic group, if you like, when I went through elementary school of any significance was Jewish because of a lot of the immigrants who came over during the '30s and after the war. **[0:06:00]** It started with the odd Italian influx, whereas Oakwood Collegiate became very Italian. I think it was one or two in the whole school. So when I went down to Central Tech, I was a pretty white-bred sort of guy. [Laughter] Okay? And I went down there, and what I found was the first group that struck me was Italian…

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: …because they **[0:06:30]** were – they would have been the most significant group. And they were so vibrant, and they were, you know, virtually all children of immigrants. They had a hard – a good work ethic. You know? I'm not saying nose-to-the-grindstone work ethic, but there was a vibrancy and an energy that – there was – it

sort of blew away any stereotype I might have had about Italians. And then the next group that came through would have been Portuguese. And **[0:07:00]** once again, they brought their own unique sort of flavour to things. I mean Central Tech's always had a smattering of black students. Hanlon Grange was the most illustrious one that we had. There's an Eddie Hebson in that book. You've got to read his stuff, because you may want to talk to him.

Interviewer: Okay. We'll come back to that.

Respondent: Yeah, we'll get back to that. **[0:07:30]** And I don't know. It was just very special. Maybe I was just lucky because I was staff advisor of the student council, but you know, when Hanlon Grange was elected president in 1973, he may well have been the first black student council president anywhere in Toronto because they had that kind of tolerance of each other.

Interviewer: So you're saying that's one of the reasons the school was so special.

Respondent: Yeah. They respected each **[0:08:00]** other. They didn't have any use for clubs. I remember back when it was race relation issues going on, and the people from the board came around and got all the kids together, and representatives, and wanted to ask them about what we could do to improve race relations. One of the board officials said, "Well maybe you should have clubs. You know, Portuguese clubs." And the kids all – their common sense was, "Aw sir, that's stupid. You start doing that, we'll start fighting with each other." You know?

Interviewer: **[0:08:30]** [Laughs] I love the way you…

Respondent: You know, they were just so down-to-earth, and at the time there was – this Jonathan Graham they took a picture of, he was – I remember him being at that meeting, and the things they said were so common sense, and the board people just didn't really want to hear it. You know? But they already knew that they got along. They already knew that they respected each other. Not in a politically correct way and all this sort of stuff, it was **[0:09:00]** just long-time friendships. And that's why I say when I would go to somebody's

wedding, you know, there would be kids from every different background there because that's the kind of friends they had.

Interviewer: So they did not want to be segregated into their own groups.

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: …at their homes or at their churches or something.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: But at school they really wanted to be…

Respondent: They understood instinctively that, hey, we treat everybody the same. Not the same. There wasn't issues, you know? I mean **[0:09:30]** kids – you know, especially when it's more boys than girls, there's a little too much testosterone, and they would get into some pretty, pretty wild stuff and you know, you'd have to straighten them out a bit.

Interviewer: And what are you referring to when you're talking about? Pretty wild stuff.

Respondent: Well I mean I've seen some pretty beat up kids where they – you know, they would get serious about.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: But once you sat them down, **[0:10:00]** there was a – it wasn't very hard to get them to sort of say, "Hey, man. I shouldn't have done that. I'm sorry." You know? They had an honesty about them that I've never experienced in any other school. A kid would get into a blow-up with a teacher, and the teacher would sent them to the office and, you know, they wouldn't weasel.

Interviewer: Take responsibility?

Respondent: They took responsibility.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And I **[0:10:30]** didn't realize how lucky I was until I went to other schools and found that kids would come in and they would just lie through their teeth about what happened. Yeah. You know, grow up, take some responsibility. Another example of the diversity was in spite of the fact that it was a, I would say, seventy-five percent male…

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: …and I'm really guessing there, in the art department it was fifty-fifty, but **[0:11:00]** we elected a female president, which was in '76, I believe.

Interviewer: That's the student council?

Respondent: Yeah. The first student council president. And I remember one particular executive, the secretary was a male, the editor of the newspaper was a female. They were very modern people in spite of the fact that this was – we're talking about '60s, '70s, and so on. **[0:11:30]** So I learned a lot from the kids, and as I say, I learned an immense amount from the teachers. So it was…

Interviewer: I know that a number of the children in the neighbourhood, as I've been doing the interviews, went to Harbord Collegiate.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: So who went to Central Tech?

Respondent: Well see, that's another thing. I went on over to West Toronto, and basically it represents the similar kind of downtown area. **[0:12:00]** And I think the reason I – the kids who went to Central Tech were special is because Central Tech had this crummy reputation, and you did – I would sit in front of a class and I would say, "You guys came to Central Tech. Were you a little afraid that, you know, it was a tough school and so on and so forth?" And they'd say, "Oh yeah." "And so what do you find now?" "No problem." Right? In other words, so what you have to think of, what kind of kid who in grade eight says, "I'm going to go to Central Tech because I'm **[0:12:30]**

interested in maybe electricity or whatever, working with my hands as well as my head"? So it takes a certain gumption or initiative to make the choice to go to Central Tech. That same student could have gone to, say, West Toronto, which is where I was, and they would have got a lot better education at Central Tech, I'm afraid. But they opt not to, so they're insecure to begin with. So I **[0:13:00]** think that the thing that made the students at Tech special was that they felt secure with themselves.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: My daughter's at King Eddie.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: And you know, that's a particular group of people there, and she says virtually all the kids to go Harbord. I said – because you know that some of them would be so much better served at Central Tech, but there's this whole idea that, oh, it's a trades school, you know, it's vocational, it's for dummies, **[0:13:30]** you know? And so both these kids aren't going to be rocket scientists. They would be a whole lot better off to get a practical education. I mean we had many kids going into engineering. I mean I went to Oakwood and my background's in engineering. I wish I'd gone to Central Tech. I went to Oakwood because it was close, my friends were going there, but I would never have dreamt of going to Central Tech.

Interviewer: But you're saying that for a long time, that was the attitude.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: That the more academic students will go **[0:14:00]** to the other schools…

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: …and this is the more hands-on, practical education. And it's been that way all the time.

Respondent: Yeah. And it's still that way. But the thing is what they don't realize is that most of their education, most of their academic work is academic. You know? In other words, I don't know what the percentages are, but I would say sixty-forty. So sixty percent of the time you're studying the same academics as you would in any other school, and the other forty percent of the time you're studying **[0:14:30]** – you're studying, you know, a trade, or you know, how to do drafting, or something that's of practical use.

Interviewer: Something practical and you can get a job.

Respondent: And I know now, for example, in when I was there, what did you give up? Well you couldn't take law, you couldn't take business. You know, all those other things. But all those things are offered at Central Tech now as well. So it's not like you're limiting your career **[0:15:00]** choice. The only way you limit your career choice, and it'll happen at a Collegiate, you go and you study the thing. Instead of taking it at the – what would be – we'd call it advanced and general in those days, now it's applied and I forget the term, but anyways there's two different streams. If you take the applied stream in academics, say for example in math, you cannot qualify to go onto university unless you upgrade **[0:15:30]** what you're doing.

Interviewer: Yup.

Respondent: And I would say automatically anybody who starts out at a point where they have to take applied-level academics should automatically be going to school where they're getting more practical, hands-on experience.

Interviewer: What percentage of the school would you guesstimate comes from the neighbourhood or comes from outside the neighbourhood, then and as the years passed?

Respondent: I have no **[0:16:00]** idea exactly how many, but I know that people travelled from all over Toronto to go to Central Tech.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And as a matter of fact, at one point in time you could – for technical subjects, you could go to Northern, Central, Danforth, or Western Tech. Central Tech had the most outstanding art program **[0:16:30]** anywhere, so people would come from all over the city to do that. And eventually, Central Tech, I think's reputation in the technical world was so much so that if you lived out around the Danforth area you'd say, "Now I'm going to go to Central Tech. It's considered that much better in every regard."

Interviewer: So they wanted the training.

Respondent: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: They wanted that education, and they were **[0:17:00]** willing to get up an hour earlier…

Respondent: Yup, yup.

Interviewer: …to be on the subways, and the buses, and the streetcars…

Respondent: Yup.

Interviewer: …and then at the end of the day, it was another long trek for these people, but they were motivated because there's something they wanted that they could get at Central Tech.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. And I don't know whether that – I don't know what to extent that's true now, but it certainly was – that was true when I was there. And when I became the Vice-Principal, so I worked for six years and you're registering students, and you can just – when **[0:17:30]** you're registering them you can tell they really want to come to this school. As I say, I think as well you develop a different type of student. You know, somebody with some gumption, you know?

Interviewer: And motivated.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: That they know that they want to work.

Respondent: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Interviewer: So they do all this – they're certainly using public transportation at two hours a day, many of these people.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And then they will be working because they're getting trained for something **[0:18:00]** practical.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: But it's unfortunate that schools – and this is more in general now – certain schools have reputations of being good schools, and for a variety of reasons, other schools are not so good. And I think sometimes those stereotypes have to do with perception of the population that lives in the area. We don't **[0:18:30]** like that particular school because there's too many of those kind of people there, you know, that type of thing. But it usually has racist overtones too.

Interviewer: And I suppose that some of the people who were certain they wanted their children to go to university might have opted out of that. Maybe they weren't even aware that you could go to university from Central Tech.

Respondent: No. And as a matter of fact, I used to do slide shows – I think I was mentioning to you – called Panorama, where we did **[0:19:00]** a view of the whole school. All the activities, the curricular work, and everything else. We'd mix it all together. It was not a – it was a collage. It was not a, "Now we're going to talk about this, now we're going to talk about that." So we would do close to five hundred slides in fifteen minutes with a soundtrack. Sometimes it would be live sounds, spoken voices, but mostly we let the pictures tell themselves. **[0:19:30]** And it showed the school as a city within a city. As a matter of fact, I think we used that expression in one of our – one of the shows we did.

Interviewer: Can you expand on that please?

Respondent: The city within a city?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Well because there's virtually everything you need there, you know? Like as I say, the camaraderie between the staff was great. **[0:20:00] [0:20:00]** I would go down to it to visit with a staff in the building construction area, the plumbing – and ask questions and so on and so forth. And they gave you this information freely. It wasn't as though, you know what? That I was imposing on them. And you know, they'd come to me for other kinds of advice because of whatever skills I had.

Interviewer: **[0:20:30]** There was a cooperative feel…

Respondent: Yeah. But as I say, the reason it was a city within a city was because, you know, all the various trades are there, various disciplines, you know? You had the music, you had the art, you know? You didn't have music to the same caliber, if you like, as you had in some of the collegiate. That was one of the things you gave up. But I mean, my kids all went to Oakwood where they had these – just fine musical program, but did any of them go on and use the music afterwards? **[0:21:00]** You know, I mean it's – there's so many things you learn at Central Tech that you can apply later in life. And just because you took an auto mechanics course, most of the kids who take auto mechanics don't end up working as auto mechanics.

Interviewer: But you're surprisingly pleased…

Respondent: Yeah, but they've learned a certain practicality about technical issues, and it holds them a good stead later in life.

Interviewer: **[0:21:30]** But why would you say – I mean if they take this special training and they know how to do it well, why would they not go into that?

Respondent: Right. Things change, you know? Your tastes change. You become ambitious. You want – you decide you're interested in business, and you haven't studied business. You know, you may go out and work for a couple of years as an auto mechanic and then, ah, you start to sell cars. You **[0:22:00]** know? The next thing they know…

Interviewer: So they might move on from there, but they are very well prepared to be in the workforce.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. The course that had the highest placement was printing. The printing industry – there was a very close relationship between the printing staff and the printing industry, and these kids were a year later – eighty percent of them were all still placed in their printing jobs. And I remember being interviewed by a Toronto **[0:22:30]** Star reporter, and she said something to me about – and the prejudice about why would you go to Central Tech if – you know, because you're just going to be a, you know, printer, right? Or something. And I said, "I tell you, the head of our printing department right now was a student at this school, okay? He's now gone through printing, worked in the industry for seven years, come back as a teacher, got a university **[0:23:00]** degree, now has a master's degree." I said, "You're telling me he's not successful?"

Interviewer: So you're telling me that even the media, people who – you're interviewing, you should be informed.

Respondent: Oh yeah. Yeah. So you're continually living with that stereotype of, you know, technical people are not – you know, haven't got intellects. And **[0:23:30]** Central Tech, double whammy, it was downtown, so there was this idea that it's downtown, tough part of the – you know. So you've got the both thing…

Interviewer: Two strikes.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And I found that the kids would live up to any expectation you placed on them, so one of the saddest comments I heard was from

a teacher who had **[0:24:00]** taught math at Central Tech, went to another school, and we were playing football against them, and we were losing as usual because we didn't have a great football team. And this guy, who was a – actually he'd been – I won't say what he did. He was very senior in the athletic area because I wouldn't want to identify him, but anyways, his comment was, "Central Tech would never have a championship football team because the kids lack character." And I thought, you know, that runs totally **[0:24:30]** against everything that I believe, but I had no way of refuting it. I mean how do you refute something like that? How do you prove somebody has character? A couple of years later we had a football game out on our field there, and it was pouring rain. Mud, mud, mud, mud, mud, and we were playing to get into the – maybe not a quarterfinal game, but it was – we were playing against Northern, our archrivals. At the other end of the school, all these blonde-haired kids when they take off their helmets, you know? And **[0:25:00]** we would – this one particular fullback, he'd take the football down five yards at a time down, and they would kick, and it would go wide, and the other team would take over. Anyway, they just – they weren't taking penalties, you know? But it was a – you know what's different? It was a different coaching staff. And it wasn't – what I learned at that day was it wasn't the kids who lacked character, it was the coaches because these coaches had an expectation of **[0:25:30]** these kids, and they went on. When they finally won that game, to me it was a great victory. And from then on, we went on and we regularly won city championships, metro bowls after that because of the expectation of the coaches. See? So it's – these kids would respond to whatever you placed on them. I remember when I was – I'm a big football fan, so I never missed a football game at Central Tech, **[0:26:00]** but when I was a Vice-Principal, of course I had to go out and I had certain responsibilities to make sure things were done politely. [Laughter] And you know, I came back from one football game once with my wife. I said, "I'd have been shopping." She says, "What do you mean?" I says, "Well, I got half a dozen rolls of toilet paper, a dozen eggs, and half-a-dozen beer that I'd taken off kids during the game." [Laughs] So anyway, but they had a **[0:26:30]** habit of wanting to sing raunchy songs or chants.

Interviewer: Your students?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: And as kids are, they don't know when to stop. Okay, there's one thing they used to say. "If I had the wings of an angel and the ass of an old black ho, I'd fly over Northern tomorrow and shit on the bathroom below." [Laughter] Okay. So it's funny, right?

Interviewer: It is, yeah.

Respondent: But it's not funny when you do it every ten minutes. **[0:27:00]** [Laughter] Right? [Laughter] So I remember sitting down with the student council because I still had a rapport with them, and I said, "You know what? It's got to stop. And you know why it's got to stop? It's not because it's wrong. It buys into the stereotype of everybody who's in the stands that you're stupid."

Interviewer: Rough around the edges.

Respondent: Yeah. But stupid. "Not even creative, and you know, you're not **[0:27:30]** showing a certain level of maturity." So I said, "I want you guys to make sure that that doesn't happen. Get the word out there." And of course, they would be – the cheerleaders were down in front. I used to always stand up at the back of the stands so I could kind of keep an eye on what was happening. I know a lot of people, a lot of the staff were supposed to be on duty, would stand on the sidelines watching the football game. What was going on behind them, they wouldn't – but I was on the back of the stands. **[0:28:00]** So you see a better football game from there anyway. Anyway, the word got out, and we were playing at Northern once again, our archrivals, and the Northern kids started with some obscenities and maybe even the same song, I don't know. But I remember that, and the kids down in front are looking up at me…

Interviewer: **[0:28:30]** Oh.

Respondent: Right? [Laughter] And they're going – our kids are like this, right? And the kids were – a lot of them know me, right? And Robert

Longworth's up there, right? And finally somebody started, "Northern's immature. Northern's immature." [Laughter] And you know what…

Interviewer: Great comeback.

Respondent: …you could do whatever want – those kids – it was beautiful. **[0:29:00]** But you know, as I said, I started out by saying this teacher saying the kids lacked character. No. It wasn't the kids that lacked the character; it was the people who either taught them, or led them, or did whatever.

Interviewer: Well and it was more stereotyping.

Respondent: Exactly.

Interviewer: Serious stereotyping.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. They would – once they started to win football games, that was the expectation, and the coaches could say, you know – and you know, you don't make the practice, you're sitting on the bench. You're late, you do this, whatever, **[0:29:30]** you know? You're taking a penalty. It was the coaches that really had to develop the character.

Interviewer: So you're saying your coaches didn't have high enough standards…

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: …for your students.

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah. But it – I never really discovered that until the right people came along. And it was…

Interviewer: And were your students aware of that reputation?

Respondent: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: "Oh, you're just going to Central Tech downtown."

Respondent: **[0:30:00]** That's right. And as I said, many times I would say to a class, "So what did you guys think before you came here?" And personally, how they react to our school – "But I wanted to really take printing, so"…

Interviewer: So they had some trepidation.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah. I mean the school's reputation was not good, and I don't know whether it even is now, but because people have this attitude about downtown, you know, certain ethnicities. **[0:30:30]** And it's a stereotype you have to work very hard against, so when I first came to Central Tech, we hadn't won a game in two years. We finally won, and it was interesting because our – we would have a massive number of kids show up for Bantam football, and eventually **[0:31:00]** we won a Bantam championship. So we had this great group of Bantam football players, and then, ah, they're pretty mediocre by the time they got to junior. By the time they got to senior, they stopped. And I used to rather facetiously say it took us all that time for us to train the character out of them because if you believe that these kids are undisciplined – in other words, if you're victimized by the stereotype, and they're victimized by the stereotype…

Interviewer: **[0:31:30]** Your expectations are low.

Respondent: Exactly. So what happens is when a call goes the wrong way and the kid then mouths off and takes an additional penalty, they're acting according to the stereotype.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And as soon as somebody says, "That's not acceptable, that's not what our expectation is of Central Tech students," the whole thing changes.

Interviewer: But the education had to be at both **[0:32:00]** levels from the teachers, the coaches, to the students. Everybody had to…

Respondent: Yeah. Exactly.

Interviewer: …rethink who they are.

Respondent: I know when I became a Vice-Principal and I never kicked a kid out of school – I met kids later who said, "Oh, you kicked me out of school." That wasn't the case. That never happened. But I would say that somebody would be in my office and they were – you know, they'd be creating trouble, and I'd say – my attitude was, "You're not good enough for **[0:32:30]** this school." Okay? Now I would never have – that's something that I grew into, but once I said it and believed it, it stuck. You see? Like there's a whole different mental attitude, and I can remember during the course of the time when I was a VP there, it was around the time when we started doing better and better at football, **[0:33:00]** and I think we created a whole different positive attitude that, you know, this is a good school, and you better measure up to those standards, as opposed to this is a school for dummies, this is a school for, you know, people who are going to be the grudges of society.

Interviewer: So it started from the top. You were the Vice-Principal…

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: …and it just kind of trickled down.

Respondent: Well, but I…

Interviewer: Through a lot of effort.

Respondent: **[0:33:30]** Yeah. I was doing my bit, okay? I know the football coaches are doing their bit. These things are running parallel to each other, but it was – winning football teams came out of a winning attitude of what it meant to be a Central Tech student, a Central Tech football player, and my – what I was doing in the office in terms of discipline was mirroring that as well, you know? You can't get away with it at this school, as opposed **[0:34:00]** to,

"That's the expectation." The expectation was this is what you're going to do because that's the kind of person you are because we have these lowlifes. And as I say, obviously I've been a big advocate of schools.

Interviewer: But if people are coming there because they're motivated, because they want a certain education, but then they arrive there, and you use the word "lowlife."

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well that's who we are.

Respondent: **[0:34:30]** Yeah.

Interviewer: Thinks that of us. So we'll prove who we are.

Respondent: Exactly.

Interviewer: And you're saying no, no, no.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: We're going to rethink who we are.

Respondent: Yeah. People will live to whatever expectation you put on them.

Interviewer: Yeah. I was thinking of the word expectation.

Respondent: Yeah. Well, as a matter of fact, when I was – I remember one of the expressions I used when I used to teach a performance review, and one of the people who we were lecturing at were people don't do what you inspect, but what you expect. **[0:35:00]** So you create an expectation. So it's – you're not walking into a classroom to inspect them and judge them; you're walking in there with an expectation that what you're going to see is top-notch, you know? It's a different sort of philosophy that – in other words, you're only good because I make you good, because I'm inspecting it, because I'm watching it. Well are you good because that's the expectation?

Interviewer: Yeah. And I will – I do **[0:35:30]** respect you.

Respondent: Mm-hm. Yeah.

Interviewer: So you reach that level, and you can.

Respondent: Yeah. Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: No. And you know, you can apply this to any school, of course, but…

Interviewer: But certain schools need to be elevated. It's possible.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. I think the Principal that's there now, Cheryl Freedman, is excellent. I think she's doing an excellent job.

Interviewer: So she has a similar attitude.

Respondent: I think so. We **[0:36:00]** certainly see eye-to-eye on a lot, yeah.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Now I know that your daughter is at…

Respondent: King Eddie.

Interviewer: Ah-ha. And what's her position there?

Respondent: Principal.

Interviewer: So that apple didn't fall too far from the tree.

Respondent: No, no. She's more successful than me. Of course, she's probably grayer than me too, so.

Interviewer: Oh. [Laughs]

Respondent: Actually it's interesting, I didn't learn until very late in life, or midway through life, that I have a learning **[0:36:30]** disability.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: I'm dyslexic. And two of my three kids were in special ed, and that's what alerted me to the fact that they'd come by it honestly. But Susan was the only one that wasn't a special ed, and I'm not going to tell tales on Susan. She's the apple of my eye. Well all three of them are, but…

Interviewer: Oh, but I told you when I spoke to you that my grandson is at the school at the JCC and he's going into grade eight at King **[0:37:00]** Eddie next year. [Laughs] So he's going to be at Susan's school.

Respondent: Well she has been, from what I can gather, extremely well thought of by staff and students wherever she's been.

Interviewer: I've heard about her.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: I have heard about her. Yeah.

Respondent: Like her mother, she's a Girl Guide leader, Brownie leader, whatever. She basically – she was a pretty carefree teenager, and she went through – we had this philosophy **[0:37:30]** that you don't – you can't repeat grade thirteen. Whatever you get in grade thirteen, that's what you – that tells you where you're going to go to university or community college or whatever. So she managed with her marks to get into early childhood education, and she decided that – this stuff's all off the record, but she decided to try to…

Interviewer: So we can come back to this.

Respondent: No, so she decided that, ah, **[0:38:00]** "Maybe I don't want to be with little kids in baby diapers all my life. Maybe teaching would be better." And she checked it out, and you could get into OISE if you

had a mid-B average. Well she never had a mid-B average in her life. She got straight As from that point. [Laughter] But she's…

Interviewer: So when she knew what she wanted, she went for it. She went after it.

Respondent: Yeah. She's never regret it.

Interviewer: Did she talk to you about the population in her school, because she's right in our neighbourhood.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Do you remember any of the things she said? Or should I interview her? **[0:38:30]** [Laughs] No, this is all on the record.

Respondent: No, no, no. Yeah. Yeah. You should interview her, but when the tape's off I'll tell you something.

Interviewer: Okay. [Laughs] That's fair because you signed the paper, so everything on the tape is for the public.

Respondent: No. She's an exceptional person, and I remember when she first became Principal at Montrose, which is just south of Harbord Collegiate…

Interviewer: Yes. I know that school.

Respondent: …and, you know, I'm interested in what my kids do, so you visit **[0:39:00]** them at work. And so I went in, and she introduced me to her secretary. A very nice Portuguese woman, I believe she was, and Susan was off taking care of something and she'd only been there a couple of months, and this woman took me aside and she says, "We really love her."

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: So I thought, okay, you know, the head secretary – you know, you've got…

Interviewer: Okay. Well let me ask you a similar…

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: …question. **[0:39:30]** You became Vice-Principal and you had high expectations, and it really trickled down through the teachers, the coaches, the students.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you think if I spoke to some of the teachers or students now, they might have some similar comments about you as the Vice-Principal?

Respondent: Some might. [Laughter] I'll tell you, I got a philosophy that you want to find a person's strength, **[0:40:00]** look at their weaknesses and turn it over, and you'll find their weakness. In other words, you're too much that way, or too – whatever. If you want to find a person's strength, take a look at their weakness and turn it over. My problem probably was that I was always good at people that worked for me where I taught. I was not very good at getting along with people further up the ladder.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: **[0:40:30]** So I've always been sympathetic to students, I've always been – it's always been about relationships. I could count on one hand the number of kids that as I say were really pretty crummy kids. To me basically, they don't – bad things happen to kids, and you know, they behave badly, and you have to help them through that. So **[0:41:00]** my daughter's probably a bigger disciplinarian than I am, okay? But I believe in my own way that I was very successful with the kids.

Interviewer: Because you had a special understanding of what it is, these people above you.

Respondent: Yeah. And I – so there might have been people who said that I was too soft on the kids, but to me, my **[0:41:30]** job as a Vice-Principal was to – the most important thing that happens is in the classroom

– the relationship between the teacher and the student. And I saw my job – if it's a breakdown in that relationship, to restoring that relationship. And so I – my own kids will tell you I taught them to death, you know? You'd say – you'd bring them to a point where they would see that what they did was wrong, they went back to the teacher to apologize, **[0:42:00]** and so on. I never believe in forced apologies. I never once said to a kid in my life, "You have to apologize."

Interviewer: So you want to mend the relationship.

Respondent: Yup. As far as I'm concerned, they would apologize because they felt it was the right thing to do because there's no point in the kid saying, "I'm sorry" just to get back in the classroom and they're sitting there, resenting it. So it took a little longer, and maybe I was perceived as being **[0:42:30]** a little soft on the kids, but I think most good teachers would appreciate what I would do to the kid because they wanted the relationship restored. And you know as well as I do that in any profession, in any whatever, there's the ten or fifteen percent who shouldn't be there anyway, right? And you can't satisfy that group.

Interviewer: You know, I've spent the last half-century **[0:43:00]** working in psychiatry doing therapy, and I have a private practice still, and I think what my work is all about is relationships.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: If I had to really boil it down to one word, that's – I think it is about relationships.

Respondent: Yeah. No, I know when I went to Oakwood, which was more modern, I went in under a bit of a cloud because the **[0:43:30]** staff there liked to run the show, and they were more used to a Vice-Principal where the kid comes in, okay, three days off, and back out. You know, bang, bang, bang, so it was a revolving door of discipline, and I used to take the time to get to the root of the problem and, you know, because it seemed to me that the important thing was the kid got back in the classroom and they restored their relationship. Sure, sometimes you had **[0:44:00]** to sit

them out for a while. I know the board in general, there's a whole zero tolerance, you know, to do this – you're suspended. But I don't necessarily believe in that. I would see a – I could see a suspension where the kid still had to come to school and would **[0:44:30]** be in a special room or something like that where they'd still be working on their studies, they would be supervised to give them a time-out for the teacher to show that there's a consequence, but still the most important thing is that that kid gets back into the classroom and…

Interviewer: And not ostracize them.

Respondent: Yeah. And they have a working relationship.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. And I would add and remains part of that community.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. You know, part of my teaching job as a Vice-Principal is to **[0:45:00]** teach people how to discipline, you know? I had a couple of rules of discipline, and one of them was never make a threat you can't carry out, and the other one is carry it out. Always carry it out. So you know…

Interviewer: So think before you make the threat.

Respondent: Exactly. So don't say you're never coming back to my classroom because you don't have that choice because that's a – we don't allow students to choose teachers, and we don't allow teachers to choose students. You know? If people could – **[0:45:30]** you'd have chaos if you just let them – "No, I don't want that teacher. I want to go to this one."

Interviewer: Well life's not like that.

Respondent: No. So the trick was is to make that relationship work, and so you would have to. You know, when a kid – when there's a problem with a teacher and a student, there's a little bit of a problem on both sides usually. Okay. Not a hundred percent, but a little bit. **[0:46:00]** So when the student comes in, they've got a gripe, and if you just say to them, you know, "I told the teacher to fuck off." "Here," right, "Go back up your books. Get out of here." But if you sit down and

say, "Okay, so why did you do that?" then they – once they get a chance to tell their side of the story, **[0:46:30]** they're more interested in listening to what you've got to say, right? But so often they never get a chance to tell their side of the story.

Interviewer: So it's about listening and being heard.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And respect.

Respondent: "Oh, sir. He just got me so mad. I mean why does he do this? Why does he da, da, da, da, da?" You know what I mean? You know it's like, whoa, whoa, whoa. You know? "Do you think it's easy being a teacher? You know? Like got thirty people like you in there?" [Laughter] **[0:47:00]** Right? And they start to say, "Oh." [Laughter] "Hey, they're the teacher. It doesn't make them any better than you or any better than anybody else, but once you say the teacher, they have a responsibility. They have a responsibility to educate thirty people, and you're one of them. And if you disrupt that, you can't do that. We'd have chaos if we just let people be **[0:47:30]** destructive like that. So you know, the teacher is in charge because they're the teacher. Just like we have laws, we put uniforms on people and they are called policemen, you know? You don't talk back to a policeman whether they're a good, bad, or a different person, they've got a blue uniform on. You have to respect that uniform. You have to respect the teacher. So that's the way the system works. Can it work any other way? You got a better idea?" And then of course they, "Mm." Right?

Interviewer: Well and they also begin to **[0:48:00]** see the teacher as another human being.

Respondent: Exactly.

Interviewer: Not just that authority figure.

Respondent: So then I say, you know, I would say, "Listen," you know, "Sit the next period out here in my office. I want to talk to the teacher and find a way around it." And then I would get into the negotiation with

the teacher because some teachers – they felt this is what the consequences should be, **[0:48:30]** but when you negotiate with them, sometimes a simple apology would be good enough because there's always this thing about, "I think you should get his parents in." Okay, now there's an avenue that I would go down when I had to, but I used to talk about only having so many guns in my bullet – you shouldn't talk that way with violence. But you know, if calling in the parents is one of my best shots, I don't want to use it until I have to. As a matter of **[0:49:00]** fact, frequently I made progress by saying to the student, "So what's your dad going to think when I call him about this?" "You're not going to call my dad, are you?" [Laughs] Right? All right? And you get a whole lot of behaviour modification. Now mind you, towards the end of my career – and once again maybe because there's a different ethic at Central Tech, but I found calling the parents was – there was such **[0:49:30]** an uneven response. In some cases, the kid would get beaten when they'd go home. In some cases, you'd be fighting the parent.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: So the kid wins.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: So I'd call the parent in, now the parent's screaming at me, and the kid's sitting back there saying, "Ha." Right?

Interviewer: Yeah. So you could not assume that calling in the parent…

Respondent: Was going to be helpful.

Interviewer: …was a good solution.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent: So it was kind of a magical time. So I ended up more years as a **[0:50:00]** VP than I did as a teacher, but in some respects, I was still teaching.

Interviewer: But you definitely believed in moderation and mediation.

Respondent: Yeah. Absolutely.

Interviewer: As opposed to something really drastic, and we're going to show you, we're not tolerating that. Out.

Respondent: At Central, when I was a VP, we had what we used to call single day withdrawals. And it was like a day suspension, so you…

Interviewer: Single day with?

Respondent: Single day withdrawal.

Interviewer: Oh, withdrawal.

Respondent: You didn't even have to **[0:50:30]** fill out any paperwork. You just kept a list, and you'd say, "All right. You've got to go home. Got to call your parents, and you can come back when I meet with them." And you didn't have to go through all these formalities of suspensions. Fill it out in triplicate and all this other stuff. And you used that when you had to.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Respondent: But as I say, you only got so many **[0:51:00]** things you can do, and the trick is to modify the behaviour and reconcile the situation with the teacher. Or if it's two students fighting, reconcile between the two of them.

Interviewer: Well I can see how invested you were in that student population.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: You really cared about them.

Respondent: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: In those young individuals who were going to face life in the real world.

Respondent: **[0:51:30]** Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And you put me off by saying, you know, what other people think of me, and I know I still get – I meet kids all the time that I taught, or I was a Vice-Principal with, and they would always go, "Oh yeah, you were cool." That was the most frequent adjective was that I was cool. **[0:52:00]** And Ken Shutt, I remember when he made me staff advisor for the student council – and this was, I started in '65 and I think he made me staff advisor in '68, and I thought he'd written up in one of these articles that I've got here, he said, "I want you to take over as staff advisor. You speak their lingo."

Interviewer: Oh yeah. Which means that you can really communicate with them, which is obviously not **[0:52:30]** the rule, it's more the exception, if lots of people are saying that to you.

Respondent: Yeah. And you know, I thank him dearly for that because, you know, it brought me so many close friendships. As I say, there's got to be hundreds of kids that have come up to our cottage. Most of them were on the student council. And still to this day, I mean it's friendships that go back. **[0:53:00]** When I retired, you don't often see students showing up at teachers' retirements, and I had sixteen, I think, from Central Tech, and I hadn't been there for fourteen years.

Interviewer: That's just what I was about to ask you. So fourteen years later, so sixteen students came to your…

Respondent: My retirement. Yeah. And twelve of them had been student council presidents. **[0:53:30]** So yeah. That was testimony in itself, so.

Interviewer: Was there any influence from the University of Toronto or any kind of cooperation? Anything with the University of Toronto and Central Tech?

Respondent: I don't recall, except for the student teachers that we got from OISE.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: **[0:54:00]** Although it wasn't called OISE in those days. OISE was there, but it was Teacher's College, I guess.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. What about Kensington Market? Any kind of – did your students use it, not use it? Was it an influence at all?

Respondent: It was their backyard. I mean – you know what I mean? Like Kensington Market, a lot of kids lived in the area. An interesting **[0:54:30]** anecdote was the first year I was staff advisor of the student council, we had a – part of this is written up somewhere too – a Christmas drive, and we had this student, he was our "Blow-up" editor, John Mullins, and he decided…

Interviewer: And "Blow-up" was your magazine?

Respondent: Magazine, yeah.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: He decided we were going to collect an outstanding amount of toys, and we were going to deliver them all personally **[0:55:00]** to families. And so he put out some kind of a notice, which said, you know, "Let us know where you live, and we'll come and pick this stuff up." I don't know whether there was anybody else except my station wagon picking stuff up.

Interviewer: Oh my gosh.

Respondent: But I remember we spent a Saturday going around picking up stuff. But they were bringing stuff in as well, but **[0:55:30]** the interesting thing is that the houses, the places we went to including the Kensington area, but going out into River Street and everything else, were some of the most run-down places that you would ever find.

Interviewer: And they were giving toys.

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah. And we collected a – well there was a picture of it in there somewhere. My classroom was just jammed with stuff, and people were coming in after school and fixing it up, and cleaning them up, and so on, but he insisted that everything we collected had to **[0:56:00]** go personally to a family. Well you know, you get these families on the lists and so on, so we made a lot of deliveries. And the Principal at the time was Ken Shutt, who was a son of Baptist missionaries, and pretty straight-arrow sort of guy. And I remember when John Mullins was elected **[0:56:30]** to the "Blow-up" position. First of all, John was a bit of a revolutionary. He didn't – he wouldn't stand for "God Save the Queen," at the end of assembly. Stood for "O Canada," but not for "God Save." And this was sort of the beginning of student power, you know? 1968, that type of Woodstock era. So he decides he's going to call the magazine the "Blow-up." Ken calls me into his office, he says, **[0:57:00]** "We're not going to have any seditious material published here." He says – because it used to be about blowing up schools and yeah. And I said, "Oh, no, no, no, Ken." I said, "'Blow-up' refers to the movie. There's a movie out called 'Blow-up.'" And I said, "They were enlarging things. So you enlarge the issue." Wouldn't you know it, the first cover of the magazine has an exploding bomb. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Oh boy. Where did that put you in his eyes?

Respondent: Well he let it pass, I guess because **[0:57:30]** I spoke their lingo. But when it came time to deliver the baskets, Ken Shutt made more deliveries than any other person. He went back and forth, and back and forth, and back and forth.

Interviewer: Oh, so he really got into it.

Respondent: Like some of the staff took a box, you know, and drove it to an address and then went home. He made seven trips. And when he came back the last time, here we are mid-afternoon, these kids had all been into the homemade wine at lunchtime because the staff was having their staff party in the cafeteria, and they were having their **[0:58:00]** [laughter] – so some of them were pretty friendly at

this point. So the principal pulls up for the last time. I remember to this day because Borden Street used to be a one-way street going south outside the school, and he's driving south. He came out through the south entrance there where he'd been coming in to pick up the baskets, and came back to say, "This was – we're done. We're all done." The kids all said, "Let's go wish them a Merry Christmas." I thought, "Oh my god." And I said – **[0:58:30]** out they go, and they're all standing around this car with the windows open, "We wish you a Merry Christmas, we wish you a Merry Christmas." [Laughter] He didn't say a word. It was – but it's funny, and there's a point in this article about John Mullins, who is the antichrist – if Ken Shutt's the Christ, he's the antichrist, right? They kind of had a little grudging relationship after that because John Mullins **[0:59:00]** thought the Principal was somebody who delivered all these baskets. Fulfilled his wish. And Ken Shutt saw him as somebody who had to organize it all, so they may not have looked like they were playing on the same team, but for that day they were on the same…

Interviewer: There was some respect. They just had to **[indiscernible 0:59:17]** each other.

Respondent: So.

Interviewer: In terms of socioeconomics, how would you describe the population at the school?

Respondent: Mixed. Very mixed.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: **[0:59:30]** You know, some of the kids, especially the art students, came from very well-to-do backgrounds, and some of them were so dirt poor you didn't want to know about it, you know? We used to have – in those days, we used to have what you call promotion meetings, and the promotion policy was that you had to – if you failed two subjects, you had to have at least the sixty percent average to be promoted **[01:00:00]** to the next grade. And it wasn't subject promotion. So you could fail math in grade nine, but you'd still take math in grade ten. You just carried it forward, right? So

what would happen at the promotion meeting, Ken Shutt, he always said these things like, "If anyone has anything to say about Mr. Smith here." You know, because two failures and didn't have a sixty percent average. **[1:00:30]** So somebody would say, "Oh well, I'll give him a pass. Or I'll up his marks, or he gets his average," and whatever. And we'd go through name by name by name until we – unless it was an outright pass, and you just say "Pass" and go on. But what would happen was occasionally a teacher who had gotten to know a student would get up and say, "I think there's something you should know here." You know, "The father's an alcoholic, the mother's abused. This kid has to go home every day at three-fifteen to take care of the kids, and **[1:01:00]** protect them from the father," and da, da, da, da, da. Or whatever. Some tragic story. And I'd say, "I'd rather not have known that." You know what I mean? In other words, because I treated them like – you didn't sort of say, "Oh, this poor kid here," right? And as a matter of fact, I think what happened, because I was considered so cool, I was almost like one of the gangs, so you don't show your weak side. Okay? I didn't find out about some of the tragedies that **[1:01:30]** our kids were experiencing until I became a Vice-Principal. And as a matter of fact, the common thing that people would say, because of how much I love teaching, they'd say, "Do you miss the kids?" And I said, "I don't miss the kids. I have more to do with kids now than I ever did." I Mean before, I was a physics teacher, and yeah there's been family tales and talk about the cottage and, you know, or I work with them in the student council, or **[1:02:00]** working on the yearbook, or all kinds of this extracurricular stuff, but it was kind of a buddy relationship. When you get somebody in your office and you say, "Okay, you missed yesterday. Where were you?" And they'd say, "Oh, ah," I'd say, "Well what's your parents going to think about that?" "I can't call home." You know? And I've had this happen where in one case, the girl was **[1:02:30]** pregnant, and you know. I mean as I say, you could write a book on some of the tragic situations that came out, right? This – actually this particular story had happened over at West Toronto, and ironically she'd come from Oakwood. And she had a very, very stern Orthodox, Eastern European family background, two daughters, and the deal was, "You get pregnant, you leave." **[1:03:00]** Right? So she was just…

Interviewer: Terrified.

Respondent: She was terrified, and she told me. And it was funny because my secretary, once again, maybe thought I spent too much time, you know? And in those days, there was no problem with shutting the door. You know, the door's shut, and right? And so she says, she tells me she's pregnant. She doesn't know what she's going to do. "My dad's going to kill me or kick me out of the **[1:03:30]** house," so and so, right? And I said, "So what do you," – I'm a Vice-Principal. I'm a guy. I've got daughters, I feel sympathy, but ooh, right? So I said, "Well maybe you should probably sit down and talk to a guidance counsellor." And it's interesting because not every guidance counsellor was in there because they were great at guidance. Sometimes it was because they didn't like **[1:04:00]** teaching. And kids didn't always have the highest opinion of some of them, so I said – she said, "No. No. I've told you. That's enough." I said, "Well, I don't know what I can do. What can I do for you?" I mean – and she says, "Well is there some place I can go to talk to people or whatever?" So I thought – you've got your little blue book. So what I did was I started phoning some of my female Vice-Principal **[1:04:30]** friends to get some – you know, what places do you know are sensitive? Okay? Because you want somebody that's going to sit down and talk to the girl and counsel and everything else. And they gave me the name of this place, so – and unfortunately it wasn't a good name, but I'll finish the story. So I said – and so I came back with this, **[1:05:00]** and the name, and the phone number and I said, "This is what I've got." She said, "Can you call them?" I said, "You're going to have to talk to somebody sooner or later." So I phoned and I gave – I started to tell the story and I said, "Can you talk?" And she said, "No." I said, "I'll leave the room. I'll put her on the phone." So I put her on the phone and left the room. Came back and she **[1:05:30]** says, "Oh, I've made an appointment," and so on and so forth, and I said, "Good." So I didn't see her after that. A month later she's skipping school.

Interviewer: Did she have an abortion?

Respondent: Well what happened was I was hoping that it was going to be a place where they would lay out the options and that could be one of the options.

Interviewer: Of course.

Respondent: And help her come to grips with whatever decision she made.

Interviewer: Yeah. Mm-hm.

Respondent: I mean if she's going to get kicked out of the house, that's one thing. If **[1:06:00]** she's going to have an abortion, that's another. You know? I was livid because what happened was they made her an appointment, they walk in, she says, "They just assumed I was having an abortion. We didn't talk. My boyfriend dumped me, he wouldn't even go with me. I went all by myself." So here was this poor young girl, goes into this thing all by herself, she has an abortion, and now she's totally distraught.

Interviewer: Oh, so she had no – there was no dialogue.

Respondent: No. Well, **[1:06:30]** I mean they probably told her the whole thing and, "Come back tomorrow," or come – you know what I mean? I put her on a treadmill that she couldn't get off, and you know, I mean regardless of what one feels about whether you're pro-life, pro-choice, or pro-whatever, that's just plain wrong.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: You know? So.

Interviewer: But you're saying that – anyway, but she could come and speak to you.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you opted to send her off **[1:07:00]** to a place where she could have more discussion and make some choices.

Respondent: Yeah. But the point of the story was that I got to know kids – the kids were in trouble – much better than I ever did before. And you started to see some of the pain that they had in their lives. And…

Interviewer: So but I had asked you about socioeconomic levels, and you said people came from all different kinds **[1:07:30]** of homes.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: From the art students to the other.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: And here's another all kinds of homes, and the families would have said, "Come and talk to us and we'll help you make the decision."

Respondent: Yep, yep, yep.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: I would say that the average was average. The average was, as I would say in the beginning, good, solid first-generation working class kids.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Respondent: So they had a pretty straight-ahead thing.

Interviewer: But they were also living in a **[1:08:00]** country where a lot of the practices were different, so they were having to make – the parents and the children were at odds a lot of the time.

Respondent: Another one of my favourite expressions is what you can use even with – but it would come up a lot, especially in ethnic families where there was – the kids were living one life and the parents were living another.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: But I know sometimes you have a parent and a student sitting in front of you, **[1:08:30]** and you know, they're both **[indiscernible 01:08:34]**.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: And the kid's feeling unsupported and whatever, and beaten up, and I would turn to the parent and I would say, you know, "How long ago were you a teenager? Do you remember what it was like? Because I've got to tell you, it's one of the toughest times in your life." I said, **[1:09:00]** "You know why the number one killer of teenagers is themselves. You know, teenage suicide is because it's tough being a teenager, okay? So cut them a little slack." So okay, now the kid is saying, right, "He's cool." And then I'd go to the kid and say, "You know what? There's going to be another **[1:09:30]** time when it's tough in your life. You know when that is? When you're a parent of teenagers."

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: You know? This isn't easy.

Interviewer: Well and these parents often are repeating what they grew up with on that other continent.

Respondent: Yeah, or even here though. You know what I'm saying?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: You know, there's a tremendous amount of stress when you're raising kids.

Interviewer: For sure.

Respondent: You know? And it's – so you – **[1:10:00]** you know, as I say, as much as I didn't enjoy being a VP as much as I enjoyed teaching, I felt at least it was worthwhile.

Interviewer: Well it was a very, very different relationship. Obviously you love the teaching.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: But certainly as the Vice-Principal, you had a lot of different kind of exposure to the children.

Respondent: Yeah. And because I love teaching, I felt that that was the most important relationship in the entire school, was the relationship between the teacher and the student. I'm – **[1:10:30]** my position of authority doesn't make me special. All it does is mean that I'm in a unique position to mediate.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Respondent: And restore the relationship that is necessary in order for what we learn to do goes on. You know, teaching, so yeah.

Interviewer: Well I think that – well when you knew that I was coming…

Respondent: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: …were there some topics you knew you wanted to talk about that we haven't touched on yet? Because since we…

Respondent: **[1:11:00]** I'll remember them all when you leave. [Laughter] No. There's a sort of a wealth of stuff in this material that you – that book for example. You know, I mean, I think we've hit on the important stuff. You know? I mean I could go on and on about the interdisciplinary stuff with the art department, or – but you know, I think I've thrown in enough of a flavour of that.

Interviewer: **[1:11:30]** Well and I have some pictures, and I have the book.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And you are going to connect me with some people.

Respondent: Yeah. I've made some notes here.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: I can connect you with Fernanda, I'm going to send you Colin's correspondence, and I'm going to send this – more stuff. And if I can…

Interviewer: If you can…

Respondent: …I can send you this "Blow-up" things too.

Interviewer: If you know some people, but I'd need some contact information. So if there's **[1:12:00]** anybody you know who was there at that time, lived in the neighbourhood, went to the school – but if people give me just the names, it's very hard for – you know, let's turn this off.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: I just want to say to you thank you very much. This was very rich, very informative.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: And you added a whole lot…

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: …to our fount of knowledge, so thank you very, very much.

Respondent: Glad to help some.

[01:12:23]

[At this time the recorder was turned off,
then turned on again a few minutes later for a few final remarks.]

Interviewer: Okay. Robert would like to add one more anecdote.

Respondent: No, it was something that came up.

Interviewer: And it's in relation to what part of our discussion?

Respondent: Well we were talking about one's – what one thought of Central Tech from outside, okay? And I remember that I said I went to Oakwood Collegiate and I played basketball for Oakwood. The only time I was in Central Tech was for a basketball game down there, and I was terrified of the place. It was massive, and **[0:04:00]** whatever. So after I had spent three years working as an electrical engineer and decided I wanted to teach, I went around to different places to interview as a teacher. And the first place I went to, of course, was Oakwood. I wanted to go back to my old alma mater. It's nice and safe and sound. But they were playing it by the rules, but they had to check with the – they had to hire people from the Faculty of Education and **[0:00:30]** actually had a year of teacher's college first, and then they could go into the pool and get people like myself who were going to come after having a quickie summer course. So – but since I had a wife and a child and, you know, I wasn't going to sit around and wait for another week waiting for them to make up their minds, so I went to other interviews, and the first one I went to was Central Tech. And Ken Shutt – because I had a background in engineering, and he knew how that would be – **[0:01:00]** that would work in Central Tech, he wanted to hire me on the spot. I said I had other interviews to do, and also my company – I worked with General Electric – wanted me to go to Peterborough. They didn't want to lose me. And so we – my wife and I, we went down to Peterborough and they wined and dined us and everything else, and came back on a Monday and Ken Shutt had said he wasn't going to hold the job forever. **[0:01:30]** He was bluffing, of course. But [laughs] he – when we got back, it was a Monday afternoon and I'd seen him on the Saturday afternoon and I said, "What are we going to do? Am I going to go to Peterborough? Or am I going to go to the Central Tech? Or I'm going to wait for Oakwood?" And so we made this really irrational decision. I'm going to phone Ken Shutt. If the job's still available, I'll take it. If it's not available, I'm going to go back to General Electric and work as an electrical engineer. There was no rational – whatsoever, but that's **[0:02:00]** what happened. So I phone him up and he says, "Oh, good. Can you come down and sign a contract tonight?" Oh. [Laughter] What am I getting myself into? So sure enough, I went down that night and signed the contract. Sure enough a week later,

I get a call from Oakwood. "Okay. We're able to hire you now." And I said, "I've already signed a contract with Central Tech." "Oh dear, dear, dear, dear, dear. Well we wanted you. You know, thought a lot of your sister, and I knew her." **[0:02:30]** And I said, "Well, I'll see you next year." And so I put in a year at Central Tech. I would never leave there.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: I mean it was just – I mean I was – I think I might have done some of my best teaching then because I was so scared, [laughs] you know? I would go in totally prepared, you know, so that you didn't want a lesson to go sideways. But no.

Interviewer: But what was **[0:03:00]** it that made you reluctant to work at Central Tech? What had you heard? What was the reputation?

Respondent: Tough school. You know, downtown. All of the stereotypical stuff…

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: …that everybody had. And to some certain extent, some still do have. And yet after a year there it was heaven. I mean I love the kids, I love the staff. Yes.

Interviewer: And this was a few decades later you still feel the same way.

Respondent: Yeah. Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: So **[0:03:30]** anyway.

Interviewer: Certainly your love for your profession and your love for Central Tech just comes through so richly and so warmly.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Well.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Respondent: It's honest.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Thank you.

[00:04:14]

[End of recording]