

094 Ron Hill

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

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: The date today is February 19th, 2013, and I'm meeting with Ron Hill. Ron Hill was a student at Central Tech from 1948 to 1953.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: And then would you just tell me the years you came as a teacher and as a head of the department? So when did you come back as an adult to [0:00:30] be on staff at Central Tech?

Respondent: That would be 1962, the fall of '62.

Interviewer: And then you stayed until?

Respondent: And I was there until 1988.

Interviewer: But then you did something that – you also mentioned the dates 1956 to 1992.

Respondent: Right. Before I was teaching, I wanted to get experience teaching school because I was hoping to get back to Central Tech, [0:01:00] so I knew the department head that ran the night school there. Joe Quinn was his name. Nice guy. And I'd met him, of course, as a student. So I phoned him up and asked him if he had an opening to teach high school. Any night, doesn't matter. In those days they taught from Monday right through to Friday night. They don't do that now. So he said, "Okay, we'll give you a try," and if a class [0:01:30] forms, the deal was – I think it was eighteen. You had to have eighteen in your class, or you wouldn't go. So they advertised it and I got more than eighteen, so I got my class. And this was in basic cabinet making, I think it was, the first one. And I loved it, and the next year we did it again, and every year after that, right through until [0:02:00] '92, I guess, was the last year I taught high school.

Interviewer: So you have a total of whatever adds up – I haven't done the math, but 1948 to 1953 at Central Tech as a young student, and then from 1956 to 1992.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: And tomorrow you're going to be eighty years old, you told me.

Respondent: Yes, that's right.

Interviewer: So you have spent many of your student years and working years right here [0:02:30] at Central Tech.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. That's right.

Interviewer: And that's why I'm considering you one of our experts [laughs] on Central Tech, and probably the neighbourhood. But you told me a story that I'd like you to repeat, and that is you were determined to come to Central Tech, but you lived out of the geographic boundaries, so how did you handle that?

Respondent: Well because of the boundary, every school had boundaries. Danforth, and Western Tech – they all had areas of the city that their [0:03:00] students were drawn from. Ours included the Island, but as far down as the Island. I'd forgotten how far east it went. I think it only went to Ossington or something as far as the west is concerned, and then it went up north to St. Clair. So all the students in that area, if they wanted to, they went to Central Tech. They could have gone to Harbord or, you know, any other school in the area. But Central Tech was number one [0:03:30] as far as technical teaching is concerned, and I was not really an academic person. I was more tech. And in those days, there was an exam that you had to pass to come here. I don't think they do that now, but I took that and passed it, and was accepted, but they said though there's a problem. "You don't live in the area. You're up in [0:04:00] Lawrence Park." So I fixed that by having a pent on – I'd forgot the name of the street.

Interviewer: Heath Street.

Respondent: But in the area...

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: ...to send my mail to and report cards, and all that stuff. I'd pick it up there. And it worked. Nobody cared really. So I was able to come down and it was wonderful. Never missed a day. And it was then that I was **[0:04:30]** determined to come back to teach here because I made friends with all the staff.

Interviewer: So for the sake of coming to the school, you lived on Heath Street, but you went home after.

Respondent: Heath Street. That's right. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Right. But you went home to Lawrence Park.

Respondent: That's right. Yeah.

Interviewer: Well, it worked.

Respondent: Yeah. It was a crooked deal, I guess, but nobody ever found out. So I don't know what would have happened. I guess I could have been expelled. **[0:05:00]** I had – the boundary – I'll tell you a funny story. The boundary thing worked out very well for me one time because I had really good students there, most of them from this area. Italians and Portuguese mostly, and they all lived around Major Street and all through here. But I had one terrible student. We just didn't get along, and we had problems in other classes too. [Laughs] **[0:05:30]** And so I looked up his record of where he lived and so on because I thought we got to do something with this student, and I found out he lived beyond the boundary, so I reported that, and it ended up he was in the boundary for Danforth Tech, and to everybody's sigh of relief he was expelled from the school and of course, my name was mud as far **[0:06:00]** as Danforth was concerned [laughter] because he went over there and caused an awful lot of trouble too. Funny kid. I often think about it. But they were quite rigid about where – but rightfully so. Now that's how it passed that he could go – as a matter of fact, my son went. I

lived on Castlefield when I was teaching, which is north of Eglinton Avenue, and I'm the only staff member that I know of that ever had a son go from grade nine to thirteen here.

Interviewer: And tell me what years your son was probably at...

Respondent: **[0:06:30]** He was here '75, which unfortunately was the year of that bloody strike. Anyway, '75 to '80 he was here.

Interviewer: So your family has a lot of experience with Central Tech.

Respondent: Oh, you bet. Yeah.

Interviewer: And what made your son choose – I mean you were really determined to have a certain kind of education. What's your son's name?

Respondent: Jeffrey.

Interviewer: Jeffrey. What made Jeffrey so determined to come here?

Respondent: Well he was very interested in aircraft. **[0:07:00]** And it's strange, but it's quite true that my – he was my first-born, and a plane went over ahead in – Jeffrey in his carriage. A plane went over, his hand would go up.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: And I'd say to Jeff, "Look at that. See?" He was interested in airplanes. Well that continued, and he just was all wound up with airplanes, **[0:07:30]** and he joined the squadron 285, I think it was, which is right on Eglinton Avenue – yes, north of Eglinton on Avenue Road. So when it came – he went to Allenby Public School, but when it came to high school, all these regulations of borders were gone at that time. I said, "You should come **[0:08:00]** down to our aircraft course here at Central Tech," because it was well known across the country. And he was delighted at that, and so he came down with me every morning for five years. And I work at – he was never late and never awake. [Laughter] He went home on his own because I had things at the school that had to look after,

but he always came down with me in the morning, and he took the aircraft course, and they [0:08:30] built an airplane at that particular year here with George Cousins, a wonderful teacher, who I still see. And then Jeffrey went on to Seneca to take the aircraft course, and then now he is a pilot with American Airlines.

Interviewer: Oh. So by three years old he loved airplanes.

Respondent: Yeah. Oh, it was strange. And he made model airplanes that were hanging all over his room, and [0:09:00] then a big deal was that my wife and I would pack a lunch and take Jeffrey out to Malton in those days. It wasn't a very big airport, the way it is now, and we parked the car and then go to the edge of the parking lot, which is overlooking the field, and we'd spend the day watching planes take off and land, you know? [Laughs] And my wife was very good about it. She had absolutely no interest in airplanes, but anyway, she'd take a book and read it, and Jeffrey would watch these [0:09:30] – so he'd be eight, seven and eight.

Interviewer: Yeah. But he had a passion at a very young age...

Respondent: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: ...and that resulted in his finding work and pursuing that.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: And he works for American Airlines right now.

Respondent: Yes, he's a Captain on the 737, the new 737.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: And it's wonderful, because I get free flights. [Laughter] As long as it's American Airlines. He works, you know. They're family. [0:10:00] And his wife is a stewardess, and he met her...

Interviewer: Oh my god.

Respondent: I shouldn't say stewardess. It's another fancy name now. Flight attendant, I think.

Interviewer: Yes, yes, yes.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Gender neutral.

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah. That's right. He'd be mad at me for saying that, but anyway, stewardess.

Interviewer: And is that where you're staying right now? You're staying with him?

Respondent: No, that's the younger son. My wife was American, from New York, and [0:10:30] so both children had dual citizenship, so when he graduated from Seneca, he joined the military and then he was a snowbird. You know, those planes that fly overhead in formation? He was one of those.

Interviewer: So that's a major additional kind of talent.

Respondent: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: And skill.

Respondent: Oh boy. It terrified me, but anyways, he just loved that. And he was in that from [0:11:00] '90 to '93, I think it was. But then once he was through his military training, and then he was through with the snowbirds, he applied to American Airlines and Air Canada at the time, but Air Canada unfortunately at that particular time wasn't hiring. But American snapped him up, so in a way, I was very disappointed because that meant that he – [0:11:30] Dallas, Texas is the corporate headquarters of American, so he lives in Dallas now.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: A very nice home.

Interviewer: Sure, but it's a few thousand miles away.

Respondent: Long way off.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: [Laughs] But the odd thing is in a way, I see him more than I do my other son, David, because all Jeffrey does is hop on a plane and come up, and I'd come and get him at Malton, and he spends a couple of days with me, and then he goes back. So **[0:12:00]** it works out fine, and then we go down and visit him. So Central Tech was very important in his life, I think, because he wrote his MOT here.

Interviewer: What is that?

Respondent: Ministry of Transport papers. But unfortunately, all that's gone now. That's about five years ago. They quit the aircraft course.

Interviewer: Oh, so Central Tech no longer has aircraft.

Respondent: No. No high school. Well we were the only ones that had **[0:12:30]** the aircraft course. And that's why he came down, but no, they don't have it now. And we had a CF-100, and it went off to the War Planes Heritage, and we had a Harvard there. They fired it up every now and then, and it would roar, and everybody would know, in the whole neighbourhood, that we were firing up the old Harvard Trainer. But that's gone. The whole thing's gone, and it's **[0:13:00]** turned over now to the auto department, which is great. I mean they have great big bays now where they bring the cars in and so on because we had – this whole addition here was – came in 1952. In large, the aircraft department had huge, big hangars there where we could bring the planes in. Oh, it was exciting. And anyway, I was head of it for some time until I got my assistant head **[0:13:30]** and it got to be really a big department. And we were able to break it up. But I brought in a Bell J helicopter to teach rotary wing because **[indiscernible 0:13:40]**.

Interviewer: So it was a big and very vital department at that time.

Respondent: Oh, it was huge. Yeah. Very important.

Interviewer: So that's why they have all that wonderful space that I see, because I'm walking up and down Borden Street all the time. That was for helicopters and airplanes.

Respondent: Well, helicopters and fixed wing.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: They never **[0:14:00]** had rotary wing before, but I decided to enlarge it. And one of the teachers there, Alec Northway, wonderful guy, had a background in helicopters, so he changed this program and taught rotary wing.

Interviewer: So what's it like for you – you're not at the school anymore.

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Clearly you have a strong attachment to it. What's it like for you that they took that whole department away?

Respondent: Oh, that was – well the whole school **[0:14:30]** has changed. It's very expensive to run a tech school, and the Principal, Milt Christmas, who is one of my favourite Principals, he's good...

Interviewer: He was the principal in the past or now?

Respondent: In the past. No.

Interviewer: What was his name?

Respondent: Milt Christmas.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Christmas. Yeah.

Respondent: And I'm about to meet the new Principal. It's a woman. The second. We had a woman two or three years ago, and then she went down to the board. **[0:15:00]** But this new one here, I'm about to meet

because I've been meeting with one of the teachers there. We're working on the hundredth anniversary...

Interviewer: Oh. Important.

Respondent: ...which is coming up in...

Interviewer: When is it coming up?

Respondent: Well there are two important dates. One, we had a meeting about the hundredth anniversary and when it should be, and they said, well, in 2015 would be about right because that was when the first graduating [0:15:30] year of the school. But in fact, the cornerstone was laid at the corner of Borden and...

Interviewer: And Harbord?

Respondent: No, not Harbord. What's the...

Interviewer: Oh, the street north of it.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: I don't know the name of that street.

Respondent: I don't remember that street. Anyway, that corner was like 1913. Big block said 1913 on it.

Interviewer: So this is a hundred years right now.

Respondent: Well that's right. And I said, you know, there are a lot of us that are pretty old, [0:16:00] and at least 2015 seems kind of a long way off. [Laughter] We may not make it. So they said, well, that's a good point. So what we're doing, we're still having the hundredth, and the school will be open, and similar to the seventy-fifth, I worked on that too, and I was here for the fiftieth too...

Interviewer: Oh. Yeah.

Respondent: ...but the idea was the school was open, and every shop was open, and any [0:16:30] teacher that, you know, would be there to go in and see, and then the cafeteria would have stuff available and so on. And in the auditorium, we'd have movies and slides from the early days, so we're working on all of that, but in order to keep me happy, I guess, and all the other old-timers, we're having a staff reunion in the fall of this year at the school in what we call the Exhibition Room. [0:17:00] The builder, bless his heart, gave for free a huge room in the school on the main floor. A fireplace, and beautiful woodwork, and detailing around. He donated that to the school. And it's a wonderful room, and anytime we have parents' night, or any big activity at the school – in the old days, they [0:17:30] did far more than they do now. We had open houses, and we had fashion shows, and we had all kinds of...

Interviewer: And that was all in the special room that the builder had given to you.

Respondent: That's right. It's a big room.

Interviewer: Donated. Whoa.

Respondent: Yeah. And all our department head meetings would be there and so on, so it's big enough to handle a lot of people. In the old days, our big Christmas party...

Interviewer: Assembly?

Respondent: ...dinners were there, so that's where we'll have [0:18:00] the staff reunion.

Interviewer: So that's in 2013.

Respondent: And that's now.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: In this coming September. Yeah.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

- Respondent:** And then the school will be open to students and everybody, and former staff, in 2015.
- Interviewer:** But it does make sense. I mean if it opened in 2013 – I mean, yeah.
- Respondent:** Well the cornerstone was laid then.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Okay. **[0:18:30]** So 1913 is when they started to – that's when they made the hole in the ground?
- Respondent:** Well yeah. It was beyond the hole. The cornerstone was about four feet above the ground, so they were building at that time.
- Interviewer:** So no students started to go until 1915.
- Respondent:** No. Well, it'd be the fall of '14, and then the graduation was the spring of '15.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** And so they – that's when they're going to have the – **[0:19:00]** and that's the deal we had with the seventy-fifth as well. So I think the seventy-fifth was in 1990.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** When you were a student, where did the other – I don't mean geographically. Who made up the population? Where were these young people from? And what kinds of homes, what kind of backgrounds, what do you remember about the student population?
- Respondent:** I do, and I had **[0:19:30]** a lot of friends in the area. I had a very close friend, he was the best man at my wedding as a matter of fact – David Volkosky, and he was a Frenchman. His father was French, and he immigrated over and he lived on 10 Major Street.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. And you remember exactly where he lived.

Respondent: Oh absolutely. Many times I'd go down, walk down to David's house. As a matter of fact, my second son is named after [0:20:00] this guy.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: And he hardly spoke English at all when he first arrived, and I kind of took him under my wing, and he started out here at Central Tech. And we both took the architectural course, and he went on and became an architect, and as a matter of fact, he died – it was very sad. His wife said that he didn't feel too well, and he went down and they were honouring him at some building that he had designed in Brooklyn, [0:20:30] New York, and he said he didn't feel well, and – excuse me for a minute. He went down and sat in his car and they found him there.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: He had a massive heart attack.

Interviewer: Oh my.

Respondent: Just a young guy making his way, but he had done very well, and he was brilliant here too. Wonderful guy. And then another friend – the street will come to me, but – Havelock, which is [0:21:00] fairly close by, 23 Havelock. Baron, his name was. Teddy Baron. And his father had just immigrated over, bought a house there.

Interviewer: From where?

Respondent: He was a Czech, I think.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: Anyway, they were Europeans. They had come over and settled here, and their kids went to Central Tech.

Interviewer: [0:21:30] So were a lot of these students children of fairly new immigrants?

- Respondent:** Well in both those cases they were, yes. Teddy's dad came over and started here. He was in the leather business cutting leather, and making stuff out of leather. And David's dad was a tailor, if I remember correctly.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. But you're talking about several people now. **[0:22:00]** Went to Central Tech, knew exactly what they wanted. You talked about the architect, you talk about yourself, you talk about your son. Went to Central Tech, were focused, knew what they wanted, and had very successful professional lives as adults.
- Respondent:** Oh yes. Their lives were shaped by this school, and that's what's sad now, is that the board and Toronto – I mean it's very expensive to run a school like this. And what they're saying now is that we're not **[0:22:30]** going to teach – this is what I'm afraid of when I go to have my meeting at noon with Bob Longworth, that all the shops that I had – pattern-making, foundry, aircraft sheet metal, standard sheet metal, plumbing, refrigeration, heating and cooling, big carpentry shops. I mean we built a building every year. **[0:23:00]** Full-sized building, and then I took my class out and we put it up in the spring. Oh.
- Interviewer:** Remarkable. Remarkable. Yeah.
- Respondent:** Well that's all gone. There's none of that now. It's all closed down.
- Interviewer:** And what – oh.
- Respondent:** It's just too expensive.
- Interviewer:** So what's replacing it? I know they have the cars.
- Respondent:** The big item there now is the auto, and I'm sure they're doing a very good job on, you know, computers and all of **[0:23:30]** that kind of stuff, but you still need craftsmen. You still need plumbers, you still need carpenters, and so on, but they're saying it's cheaper as far as the board is concerned to have the students go to George Brown. You know, they have different courses. But you have to pay.

Interviewer: But is George Brown at the same level? Is it high school level? Or just George Brown you have to already have high school [0:24:00] education and then you go in after that?

Respondent: Well, you have general high school education, and then you go to George Brown. But the trouble is, and it was true in my case too, most of the families wanted their kids to get out working as quickly as possible. They can't wait to go through four years of high school. And in my day, it was five. Grade thirteen. Of course, that's gone now.

Interviewer: Yeah. Just a few years. But there are students, as you mentioned earlier, who don't [0:24:30] – who don't want that academic education. They find that more difficult, so they want a hands-on, let's learn how to be...

Respondent: That's right.

Interviewer: ...a plumber, or electrician, or whatever it is.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: And that's all gone. So now they have to finish high school first, and for some students, that's very difficult.

Respondent: Yes. That's right.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And in a lot of cases – I won't say all, because that isn't true, but it was the shops that kept the kids in school to [0:25:00] the end. See, we had several streams here. There was the full academic stream that ended up in grade thirteen. Then there was – which is five years course. Then there was the standard high school diploma, which ended at the end of four years. And then there was – the name changed, but it was always the [0:25:30] same thing. A two-year course for a long time was called Junior Trades, and then it was academic vocational, but it was a two-year course. And you got a diploma at the end of that for kids that weren't academically

inclined, and didn't want to continue school. So there were those three streams. And you could switch over. You could take the **[0:26:00]** course, like I did and like my son did. You could take the aircraft course and then switch into the grade thirteen at the end of the four years, and in those days, everybody – UTS down the street here, Harbord, some could say there isn't a screwdriver in the entire building in those schools, you know? It was straight academic. They wrote exactly the same grade thirteen papers as we did here. A lot of **[0:26:30]** people think, oh, Central Tech, that's for dummies who are only good with their hands. But we all wrote exactly – we went down to a hall so we didn't even write it at the school, but we wrote it in some hall downtown somewhere for the end of the grade thirteen. It's the same paper for everybody.

Interviewer: And isn't that remarkable because you spent less time on the academic courses...

Respondent: That's right.

Interviewer: ...because you were busy doing the other, and yet you wrote the same final exams.

Respondent: It was very difficult. And it **[0:27:00]** – and a lot of them didn't make it because, you're quite right, a lot of the time was spent in the shop.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: Which is fine, that's what you want. So you didn't take French, for instance, and other subjects were tailored to fit into that program. So by the time you go to grade thirteen, boy, you were hit over the head with a lot of work.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: But it was fine. We did it, and we had some extremely good teachers. **[0:27:30]** The math head, Jimmy Dean, he wrote the math book along with Maclean and another one from UTS. Wonderful teacher. And the English head too, they were all top-notch people, and they all taught the grade thirteen program.

- Interviewer:** So grade thirteen, if you chose to do grade thirteen and write those high school leaving exams, and gearing yourself toward the university, they gave you **[0:28:00]** very good teachers.
- Respondent:** Yes. That's right.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** Unfortunately, that's all gone now.
- Interviewer:** But you're also saying that two-year course, for students who chose the two-year course, they could get some very good training, and go out and get a job.
- Respondent:** Oh absolutely. Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And they'd get into important work too, you know, because they could offer something to their employer.
- Interviewer:** And then they didn't drop out of school at fifteen because they couldn't handle or weren't interested in the academics.
- Respondent:** That's right. As long you were, I think it was, sixteen.
- Interviewer:** **[0:28:30]** Probably, yeah.
- Respondent:** You had to be in school.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** And they were very strict about attendance, and every day – and people were away, they'd be phoned and so on. As I mentioned, the Island people were exempt because of the problem, particularly in the winter.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

- Respondent:** You know, a snowstorm and the boats didn't run.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** So they were exempt. But the other students, they had to be there.
- Interviewer:** When you think about it now, **[0:29:00]** I seem to pick up that you have some feelings about the attitude that some people had about students who went to Central Tech.
- Respondent:** Yeah. You mean it – everywhere. And then I suppose it's human nature, but it always annoyed me really.
- Interviewer:** So it was a kind of snobbish judgement.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. That's right.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. You know, I met Robert Longworth.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** And now I'm meeting you. **[0:29:30]** And there's something that the two of you share, and that is a real love for Central Tech. For the students, for the work you did, for the programs that were offered.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** Am I reading you correctly?
- Respondent:** Oh absolutely. And Bob was wonderful. He was Vice-Principal, and we all wished that he would have been Principal. He went on to Oakwood where he went as a kid, but he was very good with the kids, **[0:30:00]** and had a program of pictures that – of the rugby teams and, you know, all this, and the swim team that my son was on. And everything the school did, he'd take pictures and they'd have a day in the auditorium, and they had three screens. I think we did this for the grade nines coming in to show them what the school – you know, **[0:30:30]** what they're going to get if they stayed. And there were three screens with three different pictures were shown, one of the swim team, another of the rugby team, and

the other – and it was wonderful. And Bob was behind that. He was a hundred percent of the school. Wonderful guy. And he's still involved because he's working on the hundredth anniversary now.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: So.

Interviewer: And you are too.

Respondent: Yeah. Yes. Yeah. That's right.

Interviewer: Well he showed me some pictures, and there were some [0:31:00] pictures with the teachers playing against the students. Floor hockey or something.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: I forget.

Respondent: Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

Interviewer: But what a lovely idea to have three screens going.

Respondent: Oh, it was...

Interviewer: And people could come in and see what they might have if they would come to the school.

Respondent: Yeah. Oh, it was very exciting. And he was all behind that. And he was a very good teacher. He taught physics and math.

Interviewer: When you were on faculty at the school, who made up the student population [0:31:30] at that time? Where did – who were the students? What kinds of backgrounds did they come from, and who were they?

Respondent: Well, they were – excuse me. They were mostly Portuguese and Italian. I would say the biggest section of it. And they were

wonderful. They were – talked loud to one another, you know, the way Italians do. [Laughs]

Interviewer: [0:32:00] They would what with one another?

Respondent: They'd talk loud.

Interviewer: Loud.

Respondent: You know?

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And shout, you know, and I'd say to them, "You know, you're standing right here. Why are you shouting at him?" "Well I make sure he hears what I had to say." [Laughter] And I say, "Well you know, do you do this at home?" "Oh yeah." And he just pictures them all around the dining room table, shouting, but they were wonderful students and hard workers, and they all lived down in this area.

Interviewer: Oh. So [0:32:30] most of them, you're saying, came from this neighbourhood.

Respondent: Yeah. Even though the borders were lifted, it didn't seem to matter much. We still got these same people, but it did allow people like me who lived further away to come to the school. And they were wonderful in my subject, in architecture and metal construction, because when the spring would come, the drafting department – and they would share drafting and [0:33:00] construction, so when they were up in drafting, they would design the building that whoever wanted – because somebody always wanted a cottage built. So I'd say, okay, and I'd say, "You have to remember first of all, that you're going to have to take the kids up to build it, and you've got to look after them, and you've got to feed them."

Interviewer: Whoa.

Respondent: And they eat, boy. [Laughter] I says, "You can't be just spaghetti." [0:33:30] I says, "It has to be real good food. And then you have to

provide lodging for them." You know, they have to stay somewhere. But they weren't paid and they knew that. The deal was they were just getting the experience. So if the person agreed to do that, and of course, you had to go home and ask his wife because [laughs] she was the one that had to do all the cooking, [0:34:00] the deal was on. And so they would design the cottage and do all the blueprints, and that sort of thing at the graphing department, and then they'd come down to me and I had a huge double storey room, which I called the retching room. [Laughter] Got into trouble for that sometimes. [Laughter]

Interviewer: If they quote you.

Respondent: Yeah. [Laughter] So anyway, we would actually make the building in sections, and [0:34:30] all the labels and everything, and then we'd have an exhibition. They don't have exhibitions now.

Interviewer: Wait a minute. So you'd build the building, the pieces right here.

Respondent: Right in the school.

Interviewer: At Central Tech.

Respondent: Yeah. And the windows, and the doors, and the stairs, and as much that we could as possible. And in March, we had this wonderful exhibition for the weekend. The school was opened up to the general public, and oh, it was so exciting. And all the shops would be showing off all their stuff, and [0:35:00] I had the house up. You know, in this room. And then when that was over, Easter holidays and everything were finished, we dismantled it all, label it all, and then come the spring, we'd rent a huge truck and take it up to Haliburton or Port Severn, or wherever it happened to be. And we did a building for Bob Longworth, and he was wonderful. And his wife too. They just treated [0:35:30] the kids – they thought they were in heaven. Of course, they'd swim and he built the – and of course they got bitten by black flies [laughs], but they loved it. And it was a wonderful carrot because I would say I'm only taking people that I can rely on, you know? I'm not taking the – the people that we're building for are very close friends and colleagues of mine. I says, "I don't want any problem." So it worked wonderfully

because they – [0:36:00] living down on Havelock and Major, and these streets, they didn't get out to the country much.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And in most cases, they'd say to me, you know, "First time I've been away from home." And we'd cook steaks out on the rocks out front, and swim, and you know.

Interviewer: So they realized they were having a very special – I mean it was a special life experience for them.

Respondent: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: But you made it very clear to them that I'm not taking you up unless you behave.

Respondent: [0:36:30] Oh absolutely. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. But what an amazing thing. So you created the whole thing here, beginning with blueprints.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you constructed it here, took it apart, transported it up north, and they put it together up north?

Respondent: Up north. Right. And the person we were doing it for, it's his responsibility to get the foundation ready.

Interviewer: Of course.

Respondent: We didn't want to bother about foundations. So – and everybody did. You know, in all the years I was there, we [0:37:00] had one year, including my own, up at Port Severn, and we did two more buildings at my place. But it worked out beautifully.

Interviewer: It's a remarkable story.

Respondent: And it's...

Interviewer: Outstanding.

Respondent: I don't know whether they do it now, because people would say, "My god, what if the kid fell off the ladder and hit his head?" I used to visit every parent and explain to them – because some of them were very worried about going away with a teacher [0:37:30] overnight, you know?

Interviewer: They were about fifteen years old? How?

Respondent: Oh yeah. Well, there was my senior class, so they were getting seventeen and eighteen. They were more mature kids, but still, they were away from home.

Interviewer: Away from home with a gang of kids.

Respondent: [Laughs] And a lot of them were Catholic. Most of them, I guess, were Catholic. So [laughs] I would go to visit the parents, and I'd have a sheet [0:38:00] explaining where we are, what we're doing, and they'd have to sign it. And in a couple of cases, I had a – one example was a – what do they call? Religious cult that doesn't allow blood. They could get cut, and – oh dear god. Anyway, strange religion.

Interviewer: You know what? I'm drawing a blank on it too. I'm sorry. Yeah.

Respondent: But if they can't get their transfusion or anything else. [0:38:30] What the hell is it? Anyway, wonderful boy, and at the end, I'd say, "Okay, now we're going and I'm choosing who I want," and I wanted him. And I went to visit his parents and he said, "Oh no, he can't go. He cuts himself up there, and he needs a transfusion, you know, and that." Seventh Day Adventist, is it? One of those kind of off – well he was in tears because, you know, he just desperately wanted to go, [0:39:00] and he was a good guy.

Interviewer: And he had worked on it in the city.

Respondent: Oh yeah. Sure. But no, he didn't go.

Interviewer: Oh, he didn't.

Respondent: Parents wouldn't allow. And another time, the father – I explained to him what we were doing, and the father said, "This boy has to go to mass." I said, "Okay, that's fine. We'll find a Catholic church nearby." And he said, "I don't mean any Sunday morning eleven mass. The early mass, which is [0:39:30] five or something."

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: So the woman involved there, the wife said – I'm afraid her [indiscernible 0:39:38], you're going to have to take this lad to early morning mass. And so she got up with him. And the kids said to me at school, "Don't worry. Tell my dad we're going, but don't worry." And I said, "Absolutely not. Your father says you're going, you're going." So Maud got up, and went off – and it was Coboconk, was [0:40:00] the name of the little town where we're doing it, and there was a Catholic church in Coboconk.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: And Maud had to take and sit through the whole service and then bring him back.

Interviewer: She was a good sport.

Respondent: Oh. That's right. But they got a nice cottage out of it, you know?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: So anyway, then that worked out fine. And nobody fell off ladders, and nobody got hurt, or...

Interviewer: How many students did you take with you? How many?

Respondent: Well, because there [0:40:30] were always, excuse me, examples of kids that couldn't go, there would be eight maybe.

Interviewer: And more like twelve or so had worked on it in the city.

- Respondent:** Yeah, that's right. Yeah. But eight – trying to house them. One time we did an A-frame cottage, with circle stairs in it. And the whole front was V-shaped glass. Oh, it was just a stunning thing. [0:41:00] Anyway, we took it up north, and there was the middle of nowhere on a wonderful lake. I'd forgotten exactly where it is. Was. So we all got tents, and I said to them, you know, what do you think about staying in tents? "Oh, great idea." [Laughs] So we got tents, and sleeping bags, and one thing and another, and I did, and [0:41:30] they stayed over in tents, and had fires and stuff in the fire. Was great. We got the building up.
- Interviewer:** You know, I'm making an assumption but I know I'm right [laughs] – that these students will remember that for the rest of their lives.
- Respondent:** Oh I hope so anyway, yeah.
- Interviewer:** That they created something from nothing, from an idea, from a design, and they saw it right to the last minute of being erected.
- Respondent:** Yeah. That's right. And they can go by now and point out and say, "You know, [0:42:00] we did that at school."
- Interviewer:** When I was seventeen, sixteen, seventeen years old.
- Respondent:** Yeah. It's an important age, doing that. As I said, in many cases, it was the first time away from home, and of course that was a big deal too. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** So it was – but I mean the aircraft did that when they built the – I'd forgotten the name of that plane now, but it was George Cousins ran that when my son was there, [0:42:30] and they made it, and it flew, and they sold it, and flying somewhere, you know? It's incredible.
- Interviewer:** Well they were being trained to do this as their life's work, those who chose to do it.
- Respondent:** Yeah. Most of them...

Interviewer: And they were trained well.

Respondent: ...boys did go out into the aircraft business. Like my son now, he's flying. So and he'll remember that the rest of his life. I mean actually creating a plane, and putting the engine in, and have the thing [0:43:00] fly.

Interviewer: But you worked in many different kinds of work. I mean very different kinds. How many different departments were you working at? Or was it all under one umbrella?

Respondent: Well it was Joe Quinn who I got to know when I was a student. He and another chap named Bob Greenwood really ran the show. Quinn was in aircraft, but he ran all the [0:43:30] building construction, the carpentry, the plumbing, all that side of it, and Bob Greenwood did the auto mechanics part, which was a very big course. And when I started at the school, Joe Quinn was still there. I worked for him, but he was sort of an advantageous type, and he went – took time off from school to go to Africa to teach and work, and did a lot of [0:44:00] good, you know, Christian work in Africa. But I think as far as principal is concerned, he did it once too often, and he told me, he said, "If Joe goes one more time," he says, "That's it."

Interviewer: He was taking too much time off from the school.

Respondent: Well that's right. And the board allowed that. Excuse me. To take time off to go somewhere else, and up to a point it was good, but I mean you're employed to work here, not in Africa. [0:44:30] Anyway, Joe went to Dar es Salaam this particular time and the principal, Ken Shute, said, "Well, fine." And he came down to me and he said – and he offered me the job, so.

Interviewer: And the job was which? Doing what?

Respondent: Taking over Joe Quinn's job, which was running aircraft, building construction, that whole wing of the school. But it grew. I had a wonderful assistant head, [0:45:00] and we grew that department. As I say, I brought in the helicopter, and it does seem to grow, so I

was able to get rid of it after a while because it was big enough to be a department on its own, and then I concentrated – which is my background anyway – into the construction field. So that split up. And [0:45:30] Greenwood retired, and a great friend of mine, Lee Evans, who I went to university with actually, became the head of the machine shop and the auto side of it. So those are the two big – I don't know what it's – how it divided up now, but...

Interviewer: So it was under your job as head of construction that you built these homes.

Respondent: That's right. Yeah.

Interviewer: And that you constructed, and assembled, and [0:46:00] had here, and then you took it up in pieces in a truck.

Respondent: That's right. And we did a lot with the plumbing department too. We did all the – there's the school up – what's the lake just north of Toronto? Not Simcoe, but closer to Toronto? Anyway, there was a big camp there. God, I'd forgotten the name of it. But [0:46:30] somehow, the board came to us and said, "Would you build the dormitories for this camp?" And I thought, well, that's good experience. So we did that, and then it included the plumbing department because they all went up and did all the plumbing. And then Bickford over here did all the drywall. They got various schools to do various jobs, so we [0:47:00] did the construction and the plumbing for it, and it's still going. They send kids up there in the camps and so on, so that was one job that we did that included the plumbing department, which is great.

Interviewer: So it took a coordinated effort to...

Respondent: So coordinated that. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Anyway, we did that right up until I left, and the chap that took over, [0:47:30] Kirkpatrick, Alan Kirkpatrick, he kept it on for a couple of years, but kind of died out and it ended up – the last I heard was there were no seniors in that area at all. And I'm going to find out

today when I go for lunch whether it's this new man has built it back up again.

Interviewer: No – what did you say? No what at all? No seniors?

Respondent: No seniors in **[0:48:00]** architecture and construction. That it was cancelled. The classes dwindled.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. So that's another change in this...

Respondent: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: So from what you're saying, there have been a lot of changes that so many of the departments that you had where students could be educated and trained are no longer at the school at all.

Respondent: No. No, not as far as I know.

Interviewer: What seems to be left is – well, computers, which is relatively new, and the auto mechanic...

Respondent: **[0:48:30]** Yes.

Interviewer: ...work. But many of the others are gone.

Respondent: That's right. Which is really sad. I hope, as I say, when I go over there today at noon that they are swinging the other way and this new lad that's taken over my job is going to start it again because there was – you had to work at it. One day a year was set aside for the students **[0:49:00]** to examine – it was in the spring. What they wanted to specialize, because in the first two years they took general courses, and they got into all the shops, and they did grade nine carpentry...

Interviewer: Oh, so they had a sampling of everything.

Respondent: They had a sampling.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: So at the end of the second year, they were to choose what major they wanted to take, and so all of us put on a [0:49:30] big display to try to coax students to take our course. [Laughter] And it was great because the school was closed down. No classes for that one day. And the schools – the students at least, rotated around to all the different shops, and by that time, my house was up pretty well. And then I had another – grade twelves did stair [0:50:00] work, and fine cabinet making, and tables, and I had it all out on display. And the plumbing department had the same thing, and so did sheet metal. It was sort of like a mini exhibition, except it wasn't for the general public; it was for the students. And they'd come down and ask questions, you know, and "What do we do here?" And I had the course of study all laid out, and everybody did. My whole department. And aircraft too. And they [0:50:30] had the CF-100 all shined up, the aluminum all shined, and the helicopter would all be shined. [Laughs]

Interviewer: But of course, these students had all had rotation through each one of these.

Respondent: Yeah. For a bit.

Interviewer: They had some – a little bit, right.

Respondent: Yeah, a little bit.

Interviewer: And then they could see whatever they chose, ultimately what they would likely be doing for the rest of their lives.

Respondent: Yeah. They'd get right into the meat of it.

Interviewer: Very wise kind of programming.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: They have a [0:51:00] sample of it, and then they could see where they could go with it ultimately, if they choose that.

Respondent: That's right. And we'd start out in the auditorium and we'd explain the course, and then next, the head would come up and explain his

course, and Hugh Maiko, who was the plumbing assistant, he'd explain his. And then they'd break out and turn around and actually see. So by the – it was great because there's nothing worse [0:51:30] than having a student in your class that does not want to be there. And of course, it always leads to problems. This way, the student chose the year before to take your course, and I kind of knew what my class was going to be before I saw them in the fall. And if there's any problem you say, well, you know, "You chose this course." And sometimes, and through the – we had a very good guidance [0:52:00] department. Excellent group of people there. We'd say, "Well listen, let's set up a guidance counsellor and we'll switch you in something that you think you'd like better," and so we tried very hard to do what the student wanted.

Interviewer: Well, and that makes sense too because maybe...

Respondent: Oh of course.

Interviewer: ...the student thought he or she wanted this and it wasn't right.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you would help them make the transition to the other one, which would make them a happier person.

Respondent: Yeah. No, that's it.

Interviewer: Yeah. It sounds as if the school really offered [0:52:30] wonderful programs. That's my impression. Yeah.

Respondent: The only downside at that whole time there, unfortunately, you can't discuss the area here without discussing the strike. The teacher's strike.

Interviewer: What year are you referring to? What was that?

Respondent: It was the fall, the late fall. Actually the first day was November the 11th of '75. And it went [0:53:00] right through Christmas and into the end of January. I forgot the exact date we went back. And I was hoping, I just hoped that the board wouldn't close the school. And

we wouldn't go. But they didn't. The school was open, and so we had to – it was so terrible. We had to wear these god-awful [0:53:30] sandwich boards.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: And march around the school, you know? Teachers, professional teachers doing this. It's the first time it ever happened.

Interviewer: Now was that the union who had made that decision?

Respondent: Teacher's union.

Interviewer: Teacher's union. And what percentage of the teachers do you think were probably in agreement with that, or not?

Respondent: Well, the point was we were – we didn't like it, but we were all [0:54:00] in agreement because what were we to do? I mean if I said, "No, I'm not coming in," then I'm going to be a strike-breaker, and it ruined – I had a very good friend that taught over at Castle Frank, which is a school in the valley here, east on Bloor.

Interviewer: Sure.

Respondent: It's not called Castle Frank now. But it was a tech school. He taught small engines there. And the strike came, and [0:54:30] we weren't allowed to go into the school. But Paul did, kept going, and there were a couple of teachers here too that kept teaching. But their life was miserable during that time, and after of course, and it ended up that Paul quit. And he was a wonderful teacher. So it was really terrible. [0:55:00] A terrible time.

Interviewer: So if they really stuck to what they believed was ethically correct, they paid a high price for it.

Respondent: Of course. That's right. And mindfully, he had a good number of arguments at home over it. And you know, a lot of your principals and so on – and you see, I'm a teacher at school, and I'm not going to jeopardize that position. You know, I worked all my life for this.

Interviewer: So you knew that if you would cross that picket line, **[0:55:30]** you would pay for it.

Respondent: Oh yeah. Yeah. I wasn't going to do that. And so we had to put up with all this bloody marching. [Laughs] The worst was that Hugh Maiko. My good old friend. He's gone now unfortunately. We marched around the school, and we were coming along Harbord, and north on Bathurst...

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: ...with this stupid...

Interviewer: Sandwich board.

Respondent: ...sandwich board. Oh. **[0:56:00]** It was so humiliating, and I was on the outside of the sidewalk and Hugh was in, and the car came down the street and crossed over into the wrong lane. Now fortunately, there were no cars going north. Came right over up onto the curb, rolled the window down, and spat out, and the thing came and it landed on my board. It ran down my board.

Interviewer: Humiliating.

Respondent: It's terrible.

Interviewer: Especially since you were not happy **[0:56:30]** to be doing that.

Respondent: Oh no. None of us were happy about that, but...

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. But you know, this was in '75.

Respondent: '75. Yeah.

Interviewer: So that's thirty-eight years later, and you still feel the injustice of what was happening.

Respondent: Oh yeah. It was awful. Well, they're going through troubles now, these teachers are with work to rule, and all that kind of thing. And you do – when you're a teacher, you don't do that. And it seems to

me that they should make it – like firemen, police, and so on, you can't strike. [0:57:00] It's an essential service. And to say to a student who comes to you and says, "I'm having troubles one way or another. I want to talk to you after school," you can say, "No, I'm not doing that. Buzz off." You know?

Interviewer: Yeah. So you're saying a person who's truly an excellent teacher doesn't do that to their students.

Respondent: No, of course not.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: It's against their grain, and yet they're forced into it. It's a horrible situation. I don't know how this is – this new Premier, how she is going to handle it, [0:57:30] but...

Interviewer: It will be interesting to see what happens with that.

Respondent: Oh yeah. It will.

Interviewer: Did most of your students, do you think, speak – when they were at home with families, speak a different language?

Respondent: Very often they did, yes.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: Moms didn't. They only spoke Italian.

Interviewer: So the mothers didn't speak English as far as you know.

Respondent: Yeah. Often we had parents' night. I don't know whether we even have that now, but parents' night, I loved parents' night, and I say to all the [0:58:00] kids. "I'm phoning your father and telling him to be there," you know, because a lot of them say, "Oh forget it." [Laughs] Parents' night was very important, and I said, "Bring your parents in." And often, the kid – you know, they'd have to translate for them.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

- Respondent:** But you get to meet the parent, and of course, you have his report card and everything there.
- Interviewer:** I guess you would also understand **[0:58:30]** too that these parents have grown up in a different country, and these children were kind of transitioning from the European or Portuguese to the Canadian way of life.
- Respondent:** The whatever – yeah.
- Interviewer:** So you understood more about the family dynamics probably too.
- Respondent:** Yes, yeah. And they – and we had one [laughs] – one big job was Chairman of the Exhibition Committee. And I escaped that for all the years that I was there because it was an enormous job. **[0:59:00]** But the very last year, the Principal said, "You're," [laughs]. I said, "No, you're kidding." I said, "This is my last year." [Laughs] And he said, "Oh no. It's yours." So I thought – it had never been done before, and I thought because this school is such a cross-section of languages, I'm going to make it a multicultural event. And I told him, I said, "I need your backing because I'm going to have to go **[0:59:30]** to the board" because what I wanted, all the other exhibitions over the years had directions to the different electrical, and carpentry, and science, physics, and the school was filled with people. It was a very exciting night. But in this time, I thought, "I'm going to have every one of those directions on every floor in seven languages."
- Interviewer:** Wow.
- Respondent:** So the principal says, **[1:00:00]** [laughs] – so the board, they went along with it, and they printed up – we had Korean, Italian of course, and [laughs] the only language the Principal didn't want was French. He didn't get along with the French.
- Interviewer:** Oh. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Yeah. So it was in every language. Not French.

- Interviewer:** He wouldn't allow French here in Canada?
- Respondent:** No. Well, only on directions.
- Interviewer:** Yes, I know. Yeah. So you had Korean, Italian...
- Respondent:** So I had Korean, I had [1:00:30] Chinese, I had Italian, I had Portuguese, I had Spanish. I think I had German, and one other. What was that? Anyway, there was seven.
- Interviewer:** Lovely.
- Respondent:** And my son, who was into music by that time, he was sixteen or something, I said, "Davey, I need your help." I said, "I need a tape." Oh, Greek.
- Interviewer:** [1:01:00] Oh yes. Uh-huh.
- Respondent:** I said, "I need a tape of all the different types of music. I need Greek music, I need Portuguese music, I need," – "Oh," he says. "Okay." So he did that. He made in those days a tape.
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent:** Not a disk.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And we played it at home, and it was wonderful. And I went up to the front office and said – this, a week ahead of the exhibition, and all during the [1:01:30] exhibition, "I want this played in the"...
- Interviewer:** The loudspeaker system.
- Respondent:** The loudspeaker system...
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** ...in the school. You know, going to use it for announcements and so on. I said, "I don't care." I said, "I want to play this." And the kids

would say, "Hey, listen." They go along – when I had the directions out finally, the board had to come up and drill all the holes in the wall, put directions in for the exhibition, and the Portuguese would say, "Hey, look." [1:02:00] It was fantastic. And then I had my own class at that time who were mostly Italian and Portuguese. I said, "I want made for the cafeteria a kind of stand that looked like awnings and so on." And instead of making donuts, I don't want donuts, I want ethnic food.

Interviewer: Oh my god.

Respondent: So we got those Portuguese [1:02:30] tarts, you know? They're wonderful things.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: Round-bottom tarts down here on College.

Interviewer: Augusta.

Respondent: Augusta. Right. We went in, we got dozens.

Interviewer: I love those tarts.

Respondent: Oh, they're marvellous.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: And then we got – what's the Greek sweet layer? Baklava? Or? Baklavas? Or?

Interviewer: Baklavas? Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Sweet. They're very sweet.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: But it's very Greek.

Interviewer: Yeah.

- Respondent:** And there's a Greek...
- Interviewer:** With honey on it or something.
- Respondent:** [1:03:00] Oh, it's all honey. Oh.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** But anyway, I went up. There's a Greek restaurant, and we got great slabs of this stuff. And they were just astounded. We found this kind of awning thing at the [indiscernible 1:03:14], and the music was playing, directions in all these languages, it was fantastic. A wonderful thing because it was multicultural.
- Interviewer:** And you really paid attention to every one of these different groups.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** [1:03:30] So the students enjoyed it, and the parents must have been delighted to see that too.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. They all were. They were just astounded to see their own language. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** And their own pastries.
- Respondent:** And their own pastries. Right. It was very expensive.
- Interviewer:** But you know what? I will bet that – I'm assuming again, but that they remember that. The parents remember it.
- Respondent:** Well I can hope so. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** And it was extremely welcoming to every different population...
- Respondent:** Yeah. That's right.
- Interviewer:** ...that was at the school.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: [1:04:00] But that's what the school was made up of. There were very few what would have been in the old days we used to call "WASPs." Remember "WASP"? White, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant.

Interviewer: Protestant.

Respondent: [Laughs] Really were in the minority.

Interviewer: Well, I wonder. I don't know what the population is now, but I would think that it might still be a minority.

Respondent: Well yeah. I hope so because, I mean, it's a wonderful area here, and my brother lived on Shaw, and his wife, for many, many years, which isn't [1:04:30] too far.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: And she taught at Bickford, and most of her students were from this area too. But anyway, it was great. But they don't have exhibitions now. It's all gone. It's just terrible.

Interviewer: What do you know about the school now? I mean you know that they've eliminated many of these programs. Anything else that you know about the school as it is today? Because you've [1:05:00] described it in lovely detail with fabulous anecdotes. But do you know much about it now? And if so, what?

Respondent: Well, unfortunately I don't. I'm about to find out today what's left of the school, but I'm kind of worried because I know that there isn't going to be – it's just too expensive. The one, Gerry Osborne, who was one of [1:05:30] our most wonderful Principals, he was a student of mine from the faculty. Not as a boy, but from – the faculty would send over practicing teaches to my class, and to others too, but I worked very closely with the university on – to practice teaching, and Gerry came over and stayed with me for,

well, six weeks in all. [1:06:00] And I saw that he was something special. Very different. Organized. Wonderful guy. And he was in woodworking. He came and taught construction and so on, and I knew I'd be seeing him later on. He went through the ranks and came back as principal.

Interviewer: Of Central Tech?

Respondent: Of Central Tech. Yeah.

Interviewer: So you knew you saw talent there and intelligence.

Respondent: Yeah. I used to say to him, we'd be going in the hall and [1:06:30] we'd pass my room. I say, "Don't forget where you got your start." [Laughter] Anyway, he was wonderful and he worked very hard with the football team, and when they won he met all the kids out in the field here with pancakes, and coffee, and oh, and donuts. Just – what was it? Breakfast of champions, as it was called. He was great. He spent money on uniforms, [1:07:00] they looked so smart in their blue and white until they got covered with mud...

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: ...during the game. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Do you have any idea of whether the parents encouraged the sports part of it? Whether the parents came to...

Respondent: Oh, I'm sure they did.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: Oh, you bet they did. And the kids were very involved in it. And we have an Olympic pool there. When we had swim teams that were just...

Interviewer: You know, I know there's a pool. I didn't know it's an Olympic-sized pool.

Respondent: Oh, Olympic-sized pool. It's incredible. And we had – [1:07:30] there's another one, when I was a kid there, in the main building. Much smaller, but we all had swimming, girls and boys. And then when the addition was on, the government came along with a lot of money to thank us for war effort because during the war here, the school never closed down. It had day school from eight to three, it had night school [1:08:00] from six to nine-thirty, I think it was. Anyway, in the evening. And then the Armed Forces came in for all night, until the morning. The students came back in, and it was training for soldiers and sailors.

Interviewer: So that happened – the night school was six until nine, and then the training for soldiers, sailors, that happened...

Respondent: All night long.

Interviewer: ...through the night.

Respondent: Yeah. Never closed.

Interviewer: So what years would that have been?

Respondent: Well, it would [1:08:30] have been from '40, '39, '40 to '45. Right through.

Interviewer: Oh, that is remarkable.

Respondent: Yeah. And so the government, in a way, it was saying thank you. See, the government had nothing to – the federal government, I mean. Not provincial. The federal government had nothing to do with education, but in this case they said thank you by giving a lot of the new equipment and machinery, but they also [1:09:00] built the Bathurst building, which is that horrible concrete thing, dreadful building, in '66, and then they built the art building. I think it was in '61, which is on the north side.

Interviewer: Yes, and it's used a lot.

Respondent: Yeah.

- Interviewer:** Has good programs. Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah. And the art department was number one too in the country.
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent:** And they had very important people there. Charlie Goldhammer, and...
- Interviewer:** But you're [1:09:30] saying that the government, the federal government, thanked Central Tech for using its facilities right through the night during those years.
- Respondent:** During the war years, yeah.
- Interviewer:** And so they gave them an extra budget as...
- Respondent:** An extra budget to build that huge – the art building used to be in the top floor where the tower is, in the main building. But then in '61, that round building was built for the art department alone, only art over there. [1:10:00] But it was an incredible building, and they had a foundry of brass casing for their sculptures, and they had – oh, it was – ceramics. It was a beautiful ceramic department.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. They do have excellent programs. I mean they have the students, and then they have other adult students who can come too.
- Respondent:** Oh, you bet.
- Interviewer:** They have a three-year program.
- Respondent:** That's right.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** I am just...

- Respondent:** But I can't answer your question.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** [1:10:30] What is happening there now isn't as extensive as it was when I was there. They don't have – they used to put on Gilbert and Sullivan every year.
- Interviewer:** Really?
- Respondent:** Every year. And I'd do the sets, and...
- Interviewer:** Oh my god.
- Respondent:** ...the home ec department – they don't call it that now – it's...
- Interviewer:** I don't know what it's called.
- Respondent:** Anyways, but family studies, is it? Anyway, they would do all the costumes, and the [1:11:00] art department would do all the painting.
- Interviewer:** So another coordinated effort.
- Respondent:** Another coordinated effort.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And it went off. We had pat houses, and it was wonderful.
- Interviewer:** And every year they did it?
- Respondent:** Every single year. We did "Pinafore," and "Iolanthe," and, you know, it was wonderful. But that's gone. And they had fashion shows, and we had to put on – we had to make ramps for the girls to come down with their new outfits and everything. That's all gone. [1:11:30] The exhibition was two nights, and teachers gave up their time. I mean they came down Saturday and had to be in our room for the day because the public came in. And was there all – for the whole weekend. That's all gone.

- Interviewer:** So the teachers put in long hours.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah.
- Interviewer:** It wasn't, "Sorry, I'm on strike. I leave at three."
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. Right. See? That's what's happened.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** So that's gone. **[1:12:00]** It's sad because that's part of the students' education, not just straight – you know, going to classes. It's what they go after.
- Interviewer:** I agree with you so much. Yeah.
- Respondent:** Anyway, the principal after Osborne, and he spent a lot of money on the rugby team, but it was a woman. She said, "No, finish that." No, no, rugby's too expensive. All that was all cancelled. **[1:12:30]** So I don't know. It's what I'm going to find there. And I hope it'll come around, but it's certainly much cheaper. Even when I was there, they'd say to send a student to Harbord was eight hundred dollars a year per student. You know, for academic, straight academic. But Central Tech was something like twenty-five hundred.
- Interviewer:** Really?
- Respondent:** **[1:13:00]** Because of, you know, it was expensive. I had a huge budget for wood, and material, and sheet metal, and copper, and you know? And electric department had big budgets, and the art department. It was a very expensive school.
- Interviewer:** An expensive school, and then it graduated people who could go get jobs if they wanted to.
- Respondent:** Well that's right, but the government's saying, "Well, that's all very well. They can go to George Brown now."

- Interviewer:** Uh-huh. Yeah. But it's not the same because some of those students [1:13:30] might not reach George Brown if they have to go through an academic high school.
- Respondent:** No, that's right. So. I'm hoping it'll come around, but nobody seems to have money anymore for anything. Everybody's got budget problems. [Laughs]
- Interviewer:** Yeah. And you can't spend what you don't have, but nevertheless, what you're talking about is Central Tech during those years was very rich, it had a soul. I mean when I speak to you, when I speak to [1:14:00] Robert Longworth, you gave so much and you got so much from the school and from the students.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. No, I loved it. I'd do it all over again, provided it was in that – I don't know [laughs] if I'd want it now. We had – the other thing too that they don't have anymore is we had a Cadet Corps, and everybody had to belong.
- Interviewer:** Really? Every student in the school?
- Respondent:** Yeah. And it was a great thing, and in that north field, [1:14:30] long before the art building was there, the army would bring tanks up and they'd have tanks circling around there, and they have a reviewing stand, and oh, it was wonderful.
- Interviewer:** And the students would be in what?
- Respondent:** And the students – all in uniform.
- Interviewer:** The whole school?
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. And how do you...
- Interviewer:** And the girls too?
- Respondent:** I don't think – oddly enough, now that you ask that, I don't think the girls were [1:15:00] involved in that. Isn't that funny? But you're right. I don't think the girls were. But there were several on staff, the head of the phys ed department, Major Armstrong, and the

Principal himself, Major Gillespie, they were all army people and they'd all be on full, but...

Interviewer: How do you think the students felt about putting on this full uniform?

Respondent: They loved it.

Interviewer: Yeah. I would guess the same thing, by the way.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And the thing [1:15:30], interesting thing was that somebody asked me after it disbanded and we started having problems at the school, they said and they asked me, "What do you think is the core problem with the discipline in the school?" And I said, "Well part of that, I think, is the dismantling of the cadet corps because that was regimentation," and even in the halls, they don't – certainly don't do it [1:16:00] now, but every class had to march down the hall, and every teacher had to come out of the room and stand, and be kind of guides, and we'd have to go behind him and into the room, and everybody marched along. [Laughs] And it was very well organized, and – but now, you know, they straggle around and so the same.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent: So I think getting rid of the Cadet Corps [1:16:30] was kind of sad.

Interviewer: You know, you've described very richly so much of what was there at that time, and also describing the changes. I don't know if you realize how much you are describing the changes that have happened.

Respondent: Here. Yeah.

Interviewer: In this past.

Respondent: In the area. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. In the school.

Respondent: Oh yeah. Oh.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Unfortunately that's right.

Interviewer: Well...

Respondent: Anyway...

Interviewer: I think that we're going to wind up. You've just been [1:17:00] marvellous. Thank you. But I'm wondering whether there's anything that we haven't talked about. When you knew you were coming from Penetanguishene to speak to me, whether there were some stories that you had thought of that we haven't touched on at all today?

Respondent: Well, to do with the school you mean?

Interviewer: The school, the neighbourhood.

Respondent: We had – the worst part, or the most difficult part of my teaching [1:17:30] there was when we had an enormous bulge of students, for some reason. The population went up to three thousand students.

Interviewer: Oh, that's big.

Respondent: And I had to bring in what we used to call portables. These horrible buildings that they'd assemble on the grounds, which meant, of course, you couldn't use the grounds. And we had to teach woodworking and so on in these horrible portables, [1:18:00] and I couldn't move equipment into them.

Interviewer: They're like trailers.

Respondent: Yeah. You know, these mobile homes.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent: And they'd come in half, and put them together, and there was one big classroom. And we had a lot of them.

Interviewer: So that was on the football field? What's now the football field?

Respondent: Football field, and all across the north yard between the school and the art building. [1:18:30] And it was very crowded. Three thousand. Boy, it was terrible. And when we had an auditorium, it was jammed full, and we had to be very watchful of what was going on there. [Laughs] So, but that bulge went through and finally we started to cut back down to normal, and I imagine it's maybe two thousand now, or eighteen hundred, or something. But that was a [1:19:00] very difficult time.

Interviewer: Yeah. So they obviously chose to accept them, even though it was problematic as opposed to saying, "Sorry that we reached our limit."

Respondent: Well, that's right. They wanted to come, and Danforth and Northern and Western, the big four, were all full. But for some reason, we seemed to get – we went up as high as three thousand, which was – it was a very difficult thing for – even [1:19:30] in the cafeteria and, you know, everywhere. It's just a lot of people. A lot of...

Interviewer: Yeah. Well I guess it permeates every aspect of school...

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: ...if you have a thousand people too many.

Respondent: Yeah. Well that's right.

Interviewer: Or twelve hundred too many. That's a lot of – and especially with the energy of these people. They need space.

Respondent: Yes. They sure do need space. So I was glad that that passed back to normal. But it was [1:20:00] a great experience. One of the sad

things that happened in my time was moving into this building here meant that there was a new auditorium, which is fine. It's a nice auditorium, but the original auditorium was in the main building. Have you been in the school?

Interviewer: Yes. I've taken some courses there.

Respondent: Well you know the big main stairs?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Well that used to go up to a huge [1:20:30] auditorium, and they had an organ in it. A Casavant. Gorgeous organ. And the deal was in 1916, I guess it was, just after the war, the First World War, the Principal said, and the board said, "We want a war memorial." And they left it open to the students to choose a war memorial, and some [1:21:00] chose statues, and some chose pictures, and some – but somebody chose – said, "Why don't you put in an organ to add to your auditorium?" And so they thought that was a marvellous idea. Boy, that would never happen now, but anyway, the board paid for this entire organ.

Interviewer: Oh my god.

Respondent: All the pipes. Oh, it was gorgeous. And we had a teacher there that played the organ [1:21:30] at Shae's Hippodrome down on the corner of Queen and Bay, I guess, wasn't it? You weren't here, I guess. There was...

Interviewer: I'm not from here.

Respondent: You'd see it. And there was the organ – came up from the [laughs] – below.

Interviewer: Oh. Huge. Huge.

Respondent: And he'd be playing.

Interviewer: And he was a teacher?

Respondent: And he was a teacher of science here. And he came and he played the organ, and the kids loved [1:22:00] that because during the noon hour, they'd go into the auditorium and he'd play, "Let's Go Out To the Ballgame," and all that kind of stuff. [Laughter] And then when it came to do Gilbert and Sullivan, he would do all the background music, and oh, it was fantastic. Well, when the addition came, they had a new auditorium and so they made the old auditorium into a big gym and got rid of the organ.

Interviewer: [1:22:30] When was that?

Respondent: And that would have been, oh, 1962 maybe.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: Very early on. And this Bob Greenberg guy I mentioned was the head of the auto hall, and machines hall. He came out and saw it all piled up on the corner of Harbord and Borden. All these pipes, because it went to a cathedral in Hamilton, and [1:23:00] he burst into tears, poor man.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: And I can understand it because it was the soul of the school. Everybody just loved that organ. Here it was, all piled up. You could see it on the street waiting for the truck to come and pick it up. Poor man.

Interviewer: He was the one who had been playing it the whole time?

Respondent: He which?

Interviewer: Was he the person who had been playing it?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Oh, it was somebody else.

Respondent: It was a teacher there...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: ...but in those days, every morning the student [1:23:30] body went in, and you got hymn cards, and you had a little lecture from the Principal, and you sang a few hymns, and a reading from the Bible.

Interviewer: And the whole school was there...

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: ...singing hymns together...

Respondent: And then it was mandatory.

Interviewer: ...with the organ.

Respondent: And then pieces for the organ, and so on. So it was very much a part of the school, and we all felt just terrible. And then to see it lying around the street...

Interviewer: It was going somewhere, but it kind of looked like a pile of [1:24:00] junk that was just waiting to be removed.

Respondent: Yeah. All these huge brass – it was a pipe organ. A good, old-fashioned Casavant pipe organ, and boy, that guy could make it. Anyway, they got some stupid little electronic thing that nobody liked, and by that time – I can't remember this teacher's name – had retired, and the new math teacher played it a bit, but didn't like doing it. Anyways, [1:24:30] it was a disaster.

Interviewer: So he wasn't as good a musician, and he wasn't playing...

Respondent: Well he was probably a very good musician, but it wasn't – it was one of these little things he would fiddle – and then it was enclosed behind a grill, so you could hardly hear the darn thing. It had a bit on each side, and it was electronic, and it sounded tinny and horrible. Awful. So that was a blow to the school. [1:25:00] They closed that all up, and the gym. But if you go in the gym, you can still see the beautiful carvings and, what do they call it, gargoyles and so on around it were in the auditorium, but they're still there.

- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. Well, I must admit I was in the gym because I took belly dance class there. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Oh really? Oh for goodness sakes.
- Interviewer:** There's a big class of us, yeah.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Well good, so the school is still doing some outside stuff.
- Interviewer:** [1:25:30] Well that's through the TDSB. They have all these courses. I've taken stained glass.
- Respondent:** Oh really?
- Interviewer:** Oh yes. They offer...
- Respondent:** In the art building?
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** Was that?
- Interviewer:** Yeah, that was in the art building.
- Respondent:** Yeah.
- Interviewer:** I could show you some of my beautiful creations. [Laughs] Anyway, I think we'll stop. It's been such a pleasure to listen to you. You're filled with wonderful stories, and I could see now that I've met Robert Longworth and you, and I'll still meet somebody else, as you know, but you gave [1:26:00] a lot, and you received a lot, and you loved the school, and it had real soul.
- Respondent:** Oh yeah. Oh.

- Interviewer:** From what I'm picking up from you.
- Respondent:** It did.
- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** Now you're asking me about pictures. We have an archives room that is filled with stuff. I mean pictures of the cornerstone with the Mayor. This cornerstone, and when the houses were [1:26:30] all torn down, the whole playing field there was houses.
- Interviewer:** Yes.
- Respondent:** Hundreds of them.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And also, the parking lot on Borden Street were all row housing, just like further north.
- Interviewer:** So they took down...
- Respondent:** And they were all down except for one old lady, poor thing. Graham Gore, who was Principal here and gave me the job, he ended up being Director of [1:27:00] Education, and when he was Director of Education, he had the authority and power to demolish these houses. And There was an old lady living in one and she begged Graham not to take her house down until she died. I mean she was eighty-eight or something. Very old and not in very good health. So Graham said, "Okay." So for a couple of years, there was this enormous parking [1:27:30] lot with this very thin [laughs] row housing in the middle of it, and she went about her business, and shopped around Harbord Street here and so on, and then when she died, the house came down, and they paved it over, and it was gone.
- Interviewer:** So that's in what is now the parking lot?
- Respondent:** The teachers' parking lot. Right.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: And he got a lot of press out of that, I'll tell you, in the paper about giving teachers private parking. [Laughs] But it was great. [1:28:00] We were all very happy. The teacher parking was in the north lot where the art building was at the time, but it wasn't nearly big enough. And then he took all the houses down here in front of the school, and there used to be a street there called Hutchison right – you went down the stairs of the school, and right along Hutchison that went out to Bathurst.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: Well they were all demolished. All those houses. And the [1:28:30] football field was put in, because up to then, they were really difficult to manage. Up to then, all the football games – and it was big. Interschool football games was very important to the school in those days. They were down at Christie Pits. So all of us have to go and marshal the kids up at Christie Pits, and it was very hard to do. They were waiting in the school. Anyway, [1:29:00] they expropriated all that property and where all the people ended, I don't know because there were a lot of them. Rows and rows of houses, so.

Interviewer: I'll bet that those people who owned those homes, even though they were paid for them, must have been very upset.

Respondent: Oh, I'm sure they were. But when you expropriate, you can take it to court and say, you know, "I'm not getting what I think I should get," and so on. I suppose the lawyers would get involved and they settle it, but when they were – unless they have an experience [1:29:30] like they did with this old lady, and she begged to leave her...

Interviewer: That's a very touching story.

Respondent: She'd been there all her – yeah. It was a funny, funny thing because it was so narrow. We were all kind of betting it's going to fall over.

- Interviewer:** I wonder – somebody must have taken some pictures of that.
- Respondent:** Well what I was going to say is when I see Bob, I'll say, you know, do you want pictures for your...
- Interviewer:** Yes, definitely/
- Respondent:** ...online?
- Interviewer:** Well I took some – Bob has an [1:30:00] album, and I took some pictures. Like I have 1913 where it was just a hole in the ground, and 1914 when they were beginning to build. I have some of those pictures.
- Respondent:** Oh, good.
- Interviewer:** But it sounds as if there were more pictures. Like I'd love a picture of that woman's house. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** Yes. Well, what I'll do is I'll ask if we can go up there and go through the pictures.
- Interviewer:** Well one of the members of our history committee is taking a – is making better copies, and I'm going to be meeting with him [1:30:30] this afternoon, so if you have any information for me, I'd love to hear about it because then he would go over it with a scanner, which is much better because I just use a little camera.
- Respondent:** Oh yes. Oh, I'm sure it is. Right. Because – well Bob took an awful lot of pictures.
- Interviewer:** Well, I saw some of those and they are fine pictures. Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** And there would be early ones I know that I'd seen myself of the parade, Cadet parade in the days [1:31:00] of, you know, with Cadets, and the tanks. And they came up – the armories used to be on University Avenue.
- Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

- Respondent:** Beautiful building designed by Lennox, as a matter of fact. Did the first City Hall. It's all destroyed now. But they marched up. That was University Avenue. The tanks came up University Avenue along Bloor, and in Central Tech's yard.
- Interviewer:** Whoa.
- Respondent:** And I'm sure there are pictures of that. I know Major [1:31:30] Gillespie, I know there's a picture of him out on the reviewing stand that our carpentry department had to make, of course. The stand, and flags, and...
- Interviewer:** Well, I'm going to discuss this with Richard Gilbert, who's running around with a scanner. [Laughs] Maybe we can connect with each other.
- Respondent:** Right. Okay. Well, in a minute – maybe even useless, but I know...
- Interviewer:** No, no. Not useless. Yeah, yeah.
- Respondent:** ...we have got an archive department there that I want to get opened when [1:32:00] – for the hundredth, because the students would like to go through and see. And I have all – I took pictures of all my class every year, of course, when we put the houses, the cottages. And I want to get them up because they like to come back and see their picture.
- Interviewer:** Well we're going to stop for now. Ron Hill, I thank you...
- Respondent:** Okay.
- Interviewer:** ...so much for all this...
- Respondent:** Well, it was a treat talking about it.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. Thank you. And [1:32:30] wonderful information. We value it, and we thank you for it.
- Respondent:** Well good. I'm happy to hear it, and I'll get back...

[01:32:38]

[End of recording]