

Interviewed: Brenda and Colin Baskind

Oral History Clip Title: A Khaloupe

Theme: Arriving in Canada

Interviewer: Lisa Newman

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(Brenda)

Well when we arrived we stayed on St. Clair and Oriole Park. There was a rental building and we rented...we were there for six weeks. And we met another couple there that we remained friends with, they'd also just immigrated, and they were staying in the same building. So it was quite a nice little adventure. We would walk onto St. Clair and do our shopping and walk back, we didn't have a car yet. We only got a car when...

(Colin)

[inaudible]

(Brenda)

We started looking for houses but we didn't even know where we were in the city, you don't know where you are or where you want to live. But our friends Evelyn and Rod Friedman who'd been our neighbors in South Africa, had been here already ten years and she said to me, she said, look near the Newtonbrook School because that's on Steeles, the kids can get the bus to York University and if you don't have a car, there's a bus to Finch subway. I mean we didn't know where we were in the world. We did look in Thornhill where a lot of South Africans were staying but the houses were very expensive, like \$250,000.

(Colin)

[Laughing]

(Brenda)

And Colin said no, we can't afford that. We have to be within our budget, we don't want to get in trouble. So we looked on Fontainebleau Drive, which was just up from Newtonbrook School and I think the house was \$190,000.

(Colin)

\$180,000 something.

(Brenda)

\$180,000. Colin said we can do that. And it was such a...

(Colin)  
(lauging)

(Brenda)  
It was such a...I don't know if you know the word *Khaloupe*. It's a *Yiddishe* word, it was a, like a really poor house.

(Colin)  
Badly kept.

(Brenda)  
Badly kept house, it's a *Yiddish* word *Khaloupe*.

(Colin)  
[Laughing]

(Brenda)  
And my kids said oh my G-d we've come from this beautiful home in South Africa with a swimming pool, and you know really, not luxurious, but a nice home. And they walked in and they said Mom this is awful, it had that orange shaggy carpet throughout and wallpaper and it was dull and dreary and I said, we're going to fix it up, it's going to be okay. And we bought that house and we painted it and we took up the carpeting...[laughing]

(Colin)  
Right, it came out very nice.

(Brenda)  
And it was a beautiful home and we had a big garden which, those houses have got a big property at the back. We had a big garden and we planted trees and it was just the most wonderful beautiful home.

(Colin)  
Yeah.

(Brenda)  
All Jewish neighbors, elderly Jewish people, we were the young couple on the street.

(Colin)  
[laughing]

(Brenda)

Slowly they moved out and we became the old couple on the street [laughing]. But we loved it, and it was nice. And we got our first car from Les Otis, he gave us some credit cause you have to get credit, and all those things you don't think of when you come, nobody knows us.

(Colin)

Yeah

(Brenda)

We got one car and we managed. I used to drop him at the subway and pick him up.

(Colin)

I think the fact that you as South Africans which may be different from most other immigrants, is you actually start to come down, most people...maybe (inaudible) certainly in those times. You definitely came down in your standard of living. I think your standard of living goes up, because your living in a place like this and it depends on how you define the work standard, but certainly your living abode is mostly (inaudible). And you don't have health, everything you do on your own. Then you come from a rich spoiled society, the white South Africans, Jewish particularly, were very spoiled. And we had three or four people that helped us, with ironing, this and that. And then you come you have a smaller home, costs a hundred times more, no help, your looking for work, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. But the standard of living, as you can talk about the safety and the healthcare and all that kind of stuff, if you weigh the two, if you're not too materialistic thinking, it's far superior. I think even if we didn't say that, I think that's what we thought and acted on.

(Brenda)

You know what I found in that house when we moved in, we went to bed at night it was so quiet, you couldn't hear shouting, you couldn't hear gunshots, because often where we lived we heard gunshots at night, you know you heard that and I said to Colin it's so quiet [whispering]. The street was quiet, there's no traffic on that street, it was just, I remember that eerie quietness, which was so peaceful, it was wonderful, it really was a wonderful feeling.