



Interviewed: Shane Teper

Oral History Clip Title: Chaos in the Classroom

Theme: Arriving In Canada

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(Shane)

I lived at Glengrove Apartments on Yonge Street, which is basically midtown Toronto. And we arrived September the 20th or 21st, and so the school year just started. And there was a... So it was basically right at Yonge Street. The school was Blythewood Public School. It was just around the corner. And so within that first week we were signed up and off to school there. And it was this time of year now, you know. It was fall in Toronto. I remember the leaves changing. The excitement of Halloween. And also living from going to a very suburban upbringing we were now living on Yonge Street. There was a Mac's Milk across the street and you could go buy a bag of chips or something like that. That was exciting. However, we went from quite a large house to maybe a three-bedroom tiny apartment and we were all living in there for a couple of months before we found a more permanent house. But I remember the school was very welcoming to us.

My parents purchased a townhouse at Don Mills and Sheppard, close to Fairview Mall. And it was not... Most South Africans who came at that time either were in Thornhill or at... There was a large group at Bayview and York Mills. And so I'm not exactly sure why my parents chose this townhouse. I think growing up in South Africa, as I said, that school experience was very [sic] it was very communal and supportive. And there was little schoolyard scuffles occasionally but generally it was very well... It was a nice crowd. When we came to this school I remember there were swear words. I remember, you know, you hadn't heard of these swear words before. I won't repeat them today, but the words that we all know. And so that was... And there was all this... It was in the 70s in the public school system and the kids were a bit wild and they weren't welcoming to new kids. And so I remember within the first couple of days you went out at recess and then all of a sudden there was a gang of kids that wanted to beat you up because you were the new kid. And I made some friends relatively quickly who protected me. One of them—I think his great-grandfather invented basketball, so he became one of my close friends—he stood up to these other kids. And it was... And then the school system, I think we had a teacher who was absent for half the year or so. There was always a substitute teacher so there was chaos in the class. And I don't think that I really learned much in that first year for sure. It was a... The public school system here at that time and at that grade... I learned a lot, I think, in South Africa. I realized what a good education I'd actually received. And so even though I came to this school we didn't have much active teaching, as I recall as a kid. But I just remember it being a bit of a wild type of chaotic environment. Kids not listening

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to teachers because there were the supply teachers, you know, one after the other. So that was the chaotic part.

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