

Transcription: BV023.16.14
Interview with Bill Gruenthal
Audio Recording: 2023_0016_0014_003.mp3
Interviewer: Eric Damer (INTVWR)
Interviewee: Bill Gruenthal (BG)
Date of Interview: July 31, 2023

- 1 INTVWR: Hello. It is Monday, July 31st, 2023. I'm Eric Damer, and I'm speaking with Bill
2 Gruenthal. Bill, thanks very much for coming along to talk.
- 3 BG: You're very welcome.
- 4 INTVWR: And you have a very long history in Burnaby. So, we'd like to know a little bit about
5 that and...
- 6 BG: About fifty-three years.
- 7 INTVWR: Fifty-three years, great! So... so how did you come to Burnaby first off?
- 8 BG: Well, it was quite, quite simple – or complicated, if you want. We... I was working for a
9 major insurance corporation. Was initially transferred to Calgary, but my wife didn't like Calgary,
10 so she campaigned to get back to Vancouver, and they finally transferred me and gave me a title.
11 We had a... a child with a second one on the way, and I said that we better buy a house. And the
12 options were quite simple. **00:01:00** We could live in a... The office was downtown Vancouver,
13 and we could buy a place in the West End. But we said no, it's not appropriate for children at this
14 time. So, then my wife laid down the law. Said she's not driving over bridges at night, so it limited
15 us to, if you want, the mainland of greater Vancouver, no... no North Shore and no south shore.
16 We looked at... at the west side, west of Cambie Street, and it was impossible cost-wise. The east
17 side, east of Cambie – between Cambie and Boundary Road – was fairly notorious in those days.
18 And so, we didn't want to bring up children in an area such as that. Of course, that area has changed
19 dramatically and is very nice now. So, that's how we came to Burnaby. And we very quickly found
20 a place to rent on... **00:02:00** on, oh, Kensington. And... and that was in 1966. '65 or '66. On
21 Hallowe'en night, I left my wife alone. I went for a walk because I didn't want to deal with other
22 people's kids. Came back two hours later and informed her that I'd bought a house and... I think...
23 I thought she had a heart attack, but we got a very nice little house in Brentwood. Single storey,
24 so, three or four steps up. Bought it from two little ladies who wanted to move away. Made a deal
25 with her. No... no... no agents, no nothing – just direct. **00:03:00** That was on the... the main
26 street there. The bus goes along there in Brentwood.
- 27 INTVWR: Near Willington?
- 28 BG: Sorry?
- 29 INTVWR: Near Willington?
- 30 BG: On Willington...? Is it Willington...? Is the...
- 31 INTVWR: Willington is the north and south.
- 32 BG: No, this is east and west.

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- 33 INTVWR: Union Street?
- 34 BG: It's very interesting... oh...
- 35 INTVWR: Anyway, halfway between Brentwood Mall and Hastings, though.
- 36 BG: No, it's between Brentwood Mall and Delta.
- 37 INTVWR: Okay.
- 38 BG: We, we were just a half a block away from Delta. And... so, we were there. Well we... it was
39 fairly nice. It was convenient, but then we decided that we needed a bigger house. And we... we
40 advertised, and my wife had me take, on a Sunday afternoon, two kids **00:04:00** and myself went
41 to the symphony in Vancouver. And by the time we got back, she had sold the house.
- 42 INTVWR: Cool.
- 43 BG: And... and a nice gentleman, whom I met, he was still sitting there. Happened to be a client
44 of my boss' at the time, and so I knew him, vaguely. He earned a... owned a furniture store on
45 Commercial Drive. So, then we went out looking for a house, and we found one on Springdale
46 Court. 19... [inaudible] Moved in there December 2nd, 1952.
- 47 INTVWR: '52?
- 48 BG: '62. Pardon me. Good question. And been there ever since.
- 49 INTVWR: Okay. Sorry. So, was that in '62? You bought the Brentwood in '65, '66. So...
- 50 BG: '72.
- 51 INTVWR: '72.
- 52 BG: '72.
- 53 INTVWR: '72. Okay.
- 54 BG: '72.
- 55 INTVWR: And that's [inaudible] been there?
- 56 BG: Fifty years. Yeah. No. Yeah. That's right. **00:05:00**
- 57 INTVWR: Fifty years. Now... now, before... before you and your wife came to Burnaby, what
58 sort of....? Going back a generation or two, what... what are your roots?

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59 BG: Well, I was born in Israel.

60 INTVWR: Okay.

61 BG: Palestine at the time. I mean, that story is long – if you ever want it, that story, I can give that
62 to you. But it's irrelevant to Burnaby, really. We, we... My mother and stepfather bought a little
63 place in Springdale... in Silverdale, which is just west of Mission.

64 INTVWR: So, they immigrated.

65 BG: When we immigrated, yeah. And... that's a long story, but, I mean, I could go on for an hour
66 describing all of that interesting story. I think it was an interesting story. And so, we moved into
67 this house halfway up to... to Silver Hill. It's about a mile, **00:06:00** mile and a half north of the
68 Lougheed Highway.

69 INTVWR: Mhm. Close to Mission.

70 BG: It's just west of Mission, about four miles. There were no kilometers in those days.

71 INTVWR: Right. [Laughs]

72 BG: And... school bus picked us up every day for the school, and it turned out that the neighbour...
73 We got there just before Easter holidays, and it also turned out the next-door neighbour, who was
74 three hundred yards away, happened to be the principal of the high school. So, during those Easter
75 holidays, he interviewed us – the two boys, my mother, and I – and put my brother in Grade Ten
76 and me in Grade Seven, after Easter. And... I had already done grade six in New York in twenty-
77 eight-and-a-half days. Very proud of that, with very limited English. And went into grade seven,
78 and then the next school year went into grade eight.

79 INTVWR: So, I'm curious, of course, why would you end up...? You moved... your family
80 **00:07:00** emigrated from Israel, had a quick stop in New York, and then...?

81 BG: Oh, it had to do with immigration. Oh, gosh. This is going on. I mean, if you really want to
82 know, I'd be glad to tell you. My stepfather... My father died when I was seven, you know, and
83 when he was forty. And you know, as I say, it's a long story, but she met this very nice English,
84 brilliant English gentleman– Irish gentleman, actually. An ex-communicated Irish Catholic, as I
85 always like to say. And his job was with the British government, and it was a very difficult job he
86 had. So, he was subject to assassination attempts...

87 INTVWR: Oh, my.

88 BG: ... a number of times. I was with him on one of those occasions. And... I said to my mother,
89 **00:08:00** "Look, I've got to get out of here while I'm still around."

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- 90 INTVWR: Wow.
- 91 BG: And so, I guess he proposed to her – although I’m... I presume that, because they quickly got
92 married... and... they... we flew out, believe it or not, out of Laud (now Ben Gurion) Airport.
93 Thirty-six hours to New York. Why they chose New York, I’m not a hundred percent sure, but my
94 mother’s younger brother was living there.
- 95 INTVWR: Okay.
- 96 BG: He emigrated from Germany, but he’d spent four years in the U.S. Navy. And so, it was a
97 base from which to go. And then, it was January, 197- 52, they took the New York Central Railway
98 up to Montreal, and then the CPR across. In January, of course. When they got to Manitoba,
99 **00:09:00** the old steam engine – I think you’ve got one around here somewhere...
- 100 INTVWR: Mhm. Mhm.
- 101 BG: I saw it somewhere.
- 102 INTVWR: Old Curly.
- 103 BG: It was... it froze up, and my mother said, “Where the...”, pardon the expression, “...the hell
104 are you taking me?!” But they finally made it here. But as they were going along the Fraser
105 Valley... I mean, even... let me [inaudible]. As they were going along the Fraser Valley, he was
106 sitting on the north side. As you know, the CPR went on the north side of the Fraser, CN went on
107 the south side. He was sitting on the north side of... on that side, and so he had little spots that he
108 thought were interesting. And when they got into Vancouver, they stayed in a hotel, Vancouver
109 Hotel, for \$7.50 a night.
- 110 INTVWR: Wow.
- 111 GB: Couldn’t afford that. And the next morning, went down the str-- Hornby Street, saw a real
112 estate agent. The real estate agent was the head of the N. – ah, **00:10:00** C.C.F., at the time...
- 113 INTVWR: Oh, okay.
- 114 GB: ...as it turned out. [Laughs]. Yes... history. Laid this map on the guy, says, “I’d like to see if
115 I can find a house in there.” So, so we got there. The man owned... the man owned the sawmill in
116 Ruskin. Do you know where Ruskin is?
- 117 INTVWR: Mhm.Yeah.
- 118 BG: And I worked there a little bit. He was very good to us. He was a very, very... He, in fact,
119 when... when... when my brother and I had to go across the U.S. to get here, and we took the New
120 York Central to Chicago, he was 15, and I was 12. Alone. Little English. And transferred to the

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121 'Empire Builder', yeah, [laughs] and... and travelled across to Seattle. The interesting... there,
122 there's three-day event. **00:11:00** One of the mornings we were following a lady to the breakfast
123 car, and she turned around and said, "Have you two boys seen the boys from Palestine on this
124 thing?" I said, "That's us." [Laughs] And it turned out that she was the sister of the principal's
125 wife. So, we met her again at Easter at our neighbour's house.

126 INTVWR: Well.

127 BG: Small world.

128 INTVWR: Yes.

129 BG: Small world. So, that's... So, then, when I graduated, from high school...

130 INTVWR: And that was within Mission?

131 BG: In Mission, yup. 197-- 52. We just had our 71st reunion a few days... in May, a few days ago.

132 INTVWR: Wow.

133 BG: My stepfather had the tenacity to tell me that I... I didn't have the intelligence to go to
134 university. So, I didn't. And he was right, by the way. He was right. **00:12:00** He was a brilliant
135 gentleman. And... So, he said, "Go out and get a job." So, in those days, the newspapers were full
136 of job ads. We got the *Daily Vancouver Province* every day. There was an ad for an insurance
137 thing, and thereby got in the insurance business. Been there ever since.

138 INTVWR: Mhm, mhm. And then, through your work connections, you ended up back in
139 Vancouver.

140 BG: Well, I first... I did two and a half years, firstly, with the Wawanesa Insurance Company,
141 which I liked very much. They were fantastic. They didn't want me to leave, but I got a job as an
142 insurance broker of a very notorious place – and it turned out I was the only applicant...

143 INTVWR: Oh! [Laughs]

144 BG: So I got the job. Yeah. And the fellow who left us, had left that place, stayed for a month to
145 teach me the ropes. He... he became very successful and created a new company of his own –
146 which is **00:13:00** well-known in town. And so, we always sort of remained – not friends, as such,
147 but good acquaintances. I went to his funeral about two years ago. These people paid me quite
148 well. I did very well with them. And after two and a half years there, I collected enough money, I
149 said, "I've got to go travelling." And so I... A friend of mine wanted to go with me, and I said,
150 "Sure." But he decided not to go, so off I went to Europe. I took a bus to New York, and then a
151 bus up to Montreal with occasional stops. Bus to Montreal, went on a ship... Got sick on the ship.
152 Went to Holland. And then I traveled all over Europe, went back to Israel. And my relatives there

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153 said, “Stay here. We can get you a job in the insurance business.” Instead, I went to work in a hotel.
154 **00:14:00** And, as an insurance clerk, you know, we didn’t have computers. We wrote down the
155 reservations. And I saw the reservation for a very prominent Vancouverite. So, when he came, I
156 went outside to greet him – and I was fired for doing that.

157 INTVWR: Oh.

158 BG: Oh, I was the clerk in the back.

159 INTVWR: Oh.

160 BG: And... kept on travelling. Went back. Hitchhiked through East Germany, which wasn’t easy.
161 Very dangerous, in fact. And to Berlin. From there, I wrote to my very good friend, who was then
162 working at Marsh and McLennan in... in Vancouver. I said, “Look, Peter. Get me a job. I have no
163 money left. As... and... as long as I’m not working, I’m going to live at your house without
164 invitation. And... **00:15:00** And so, he got me an interview in the place. To make a long story short,
165 the boss was a beautifully and... creative man by the name of Frank Hallonquist – a very religious
166 man. And as soon as he found out I was Jewish, he hired me.

167 INTVWR: Oh!

168 BG: Yeah, which was very unusual because his deputy didn’t like Jews.

169 INTVWR: Hm.

170 BG: His deputy overcame... I don’t want to talk about it. So, I did very well there, and I... I
171 complained to him. I said, “You know, I don’t have enough to do here.” He said, so he... then
172 he... By this time, I’d met my wife at the Jewish Community Center, and we got married. He said,
173 “Look, if... we have a position open in Calgary as manager of a department. You’re welcome to
174 it.” I said, “Sure.” So, my wife wasn’t too happy about that – going to ‘cold’ Calgary, but...
175 **00:16:00** There, I found out that the local manager [laughs] hired somebody else, and he was
176 sixteen-foot-tall football player. And he said, “What are you doing here?” So, we had to resolve
177 that issue. I spent four and a half years there. Did very well. All our clients didn’t want me to leave,
178 but the Vancouver office needed a manager of one of the departments, and I said, “Sure.” And my
179 wife wanted to go back, anyway. So, we went back, and I spent forty-one years there.

180 INTVWR: Yeah. I’m curious, growing, growing up in Jewish family in Mission or wherever you
181 were, what does that mean? What do you learn to...?

182 BG: Nothing. We had no Jewish life.

183 INTVWR: Oh, really?

184 BG: No. No.

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- 185 INTVWR: Okay.
- 186 BG: No. None. My stepfather was not Jewish. He was an ex-communicated Irish Catholic.
- 187 INTVWR: Okay.
- 188 BG: And no, we... we had no Jewish upbringing at all. **00:17:00** A little bit in Palestine before I
189 came here, but... When I joined Wawanesa, they were very good. The management was fantastic.
190 The best. 'Best in the West'. And one of the senior [inaudible] Sullivan asked me to join him at
191 the Junior Chamber of Commerce – which I did. And I became the magazine photographer, and
192 recently discovered from my archives that I was also writing some of the articles. I'd forgotten
193 about that. And one of the gentlemen, one of the senior gentlemen in that organization, was Jewish.
194 And... so, he took me under his wing and... and brought me to the Jewish Community Center,
195 introduced me to a few Jewish.... And that's how things started. Yeah.
- 196 INTVWR: That's... that's fascinating. You became more interested in your Jewish heritage.
- 197 BG: **00:18:00** Very much, yes. I became very interested in Judaism. Not my wife, and she... Her
198 story is totally different because she came... was born in China, and Jewish.
- 199 INTVWR: Oh, right.
- 200 BG: Yeah. A little different, but the... I... I took an interest. I always had the Jewish interest in
201 me, but I knew my knowledge of Judaism was pretty limited. But I didn't care; it didn't matter,
202 and the fact that I don't necessarily live a Jewish life... but I like the Jewish connection. You know,
203 I don't... The Jewish holidays, I partly... partly celebrate – but to a limited degree.
- 204 INTVWR: So, once you got established in Burnaby as well, you...
- 205 BG: I'm sorry?
- 206 INTVWR: When you moved to Burnaby...
- 207 BG: Yeah.
- 208 INTVWR: ...and **00:19:00** got settled in Burnaby, your career was mainly Vancouver-based, was
209 it? Your...
- 210 BG: Yes.
- 211 INTVWR: Your... your work?
- 212 BG: Yes, yes. Yeah.

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213 INTVWR: And so, what of your, sort of, life in Burnaby...?

214 BG: It was pretty limited, really. We had... You know, when we came back from Calgary, we
215 basically had no friends. Yeah, no, me and my wife had all her school friends, and she connected...
216 reconnected with them. But all my school chums were in Mission and didn't move very much.
217 Two or three of them, I contact. The first boy I met when I came to Canada, went to that school,
218 but basically the first ever at school – is still a friend. And that's a long, long time. He's in an old
219 age home now, but I go to see him. **00:20:00** Yeah. But... and he's not Jewish because he was...
220 he made some very anti-Jewish remarks, but he didn't know what he was talking about. I mean,
221 he just didn't know. He stopped that very quickly. [Laughs] Yeah, so... So, I had no Jewish
222 connections in Burnaby. When... when our eldest daughter was six, I said to my wife, "Look,
223 we've got to get her some Jewish education." And that's how we got to join Temple Shalom. I
224 looked at others, but the others are more orthodox, and neither of us had any particular... So,
225 so... Temple Shalom, which is a 'Reformed' synagogue, that was the thing to do. And, and so we
226 drove her, and her... later on her sister, and then **00:21:00** her other sister back and forth every
227 Sunday for... [inaudible]

228 INTVWR: So, Temple Shalom is on Oak Street?

229 BG: 49th... 50th and Oak.

230 INTVWR: 50th and Oak.

231 BG: And no, at that time, they didn't have a building. Oh, that's another story. They didn't have a
232 building, and... but they utilized the church on 49th and Granville – and Oak. Unitarian. Unitarian
233 Church. Yeah.

234 INTVWR: The Unitarian Church. Oh, really, really?

235 BG: They rented that premises. And I was... I was... went... I was asked to be a Treasurer, which
236 I took on, and we found a building on West 10th to purchase, and I remember I had to get the
237 financing for it. It was torched. Yeah. A very interesting night. And, so, we've remained there ever
238 since. And you... the story about **00:22:00** 'Burquest', of course, is in that movie.

239 INTVWR: Mhm.Mhm.

240 BG: Yeah, we... So, the kids had their bat mitzvahs – I guess, you know what that is.

241 INTVWR: Mhm. More or less.

242 BG: More or less, yeah. I didn't have a bar mitzvah.

243 INTVWR: And they went to public schools in Burnaby?

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244 BG: Yes, they went to – yes. They went to elementary school on Delta. What’s that? It’s
245 Brentwood Elementary.

246 INTVWR: Okay.

247 BG: And they walked. You know, nowadays, they get driven. It’s crazy! And... [coughs] Excuse
248 me. And there was a nice park in between, and so they walked through the park. Well, now, you
249 don’t let six-year-old kids walk in a park.

250 INTVWR: No.

251 BG: It’s... it’s mad! But anyway... So, and then high school, they went to Alpha, all three of them.
252 Actually, **00:23:00** about eight or nine years ago, I found a whole bunch of books – and they all
253 said ‘Alpha’ on them. So, I put them in a bag, and I walked into Alpha school. Hundreds of these
254 kids. Of course, I, grey-haired old fellow, and... One of the kids came up to me and said, “Can I
255 help you, sir?” And I said, “Yes, I’d like to find the office. I have no idea...” So, he guided me to
256 the office. I went to the office, and I said, “Please, don’t charge me for late return of these books.”

257 INTVWR: [Laughs]

258 BG: No, no. So, it was interesting.

259 INTVWR: And recreationally, for fun – or did you have time for fun in the ‘70s?

260 BG: I gardened – you know, looked after my garden.

261 INTVWR: Vegetable or farm?

262 BG: Flowers, vegetable. I still do that. I planted a whole bunch of little shrubs, which are now
263 monstrous trees that I can’t reach, and so I have to have help to get them done. **00:24:00** And...
264 So, I, I didn’t golf or anything like that, and... That’s basically... and I still do the same. I talk to
265 the neighbours every day. It’s a very... very interesting neighbourhood there. I... I don’t know...
266 you’re interested, I... Not a well-known fact: I ran for school board here once.

267 INTVWR: Oh!

268 BG: Yeah.

269 INTVWR: I didn’t know that.

270 BG: And at that time, I still think there were the two political parties: the... the... the Independents
271 and the NDP connection – the ‘BCA’.

272 INTVWR: Burnaby Citizens Association.

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273 BG: Yeah, BCA. And I ran as an Independent. There was three to be elected. I... I'll never forget
274 this. And one of my clients, an insurance client, was... was a publisher and was connected to the
275 newspapers and he said, "Oh, I'll print... I'll... papers for you." And they're often green, **00:25:00**
276 of course, because of my name. And so, we plastered the city with this name, and... And we had
277 a number of All-Candidates meetings, and, and I don't know how many, but I was always sat in
278 the middle because the... the two were really at each other. And [laughs] of course, I... I like
279 politics, but one thing I did is, every one of these meetings, I'd come up with a new program. So,
280 it was a surprise to everybody. And they didn't like this. And, and... The BCA guy became
281 chairman of the school board because they got all the election, all the votes. And... but at that...
282 that particular meeting, at one particular meeting, he came to me afterwards. He was red as a beet,
283 furious at me. And I... He said, "You better go see your lawyer first thing tomorrow morning."
284 **00:26:00** I said, "Oh, don't worry. He was sitting right in the front seat." Which was a bloody lie,
285 of course. But, never heard from him since. So, that's my political involvement in Burnaby,
286 running for school board. I'm glad I didn't get in. Mind you, I had quite a number of people
287 phoning me and writing me saying, "Please run for city council." But I said to myself, "Oh, no,
288 no, no. City council does nothing." And it's proven by taking a look at Brentwood. I've complained
289 to Brentwood City Council. They don't even bother answering. They... So...

290 INTVWR: So, I think we're talking kind of in the mid-to-late-'70s here, are we?

291 BG: Yeah, I think I... If I'm... my... that one time I ran for school board, I think it was... It had
292 to be in the **00:27:00** early '80s.

293 INTVWR: Early '80s.

294 BG: Early, early '80s...

295 INTVWR: I'm thinking this is about the time when Burquest started up. [Inaudible]

296 BG: Oh. That, I'd have to ask Max.

297 INTVWR: I think it was, like, '75 or '76 it officially...

298 BG: It could be...

299 INTVWR: ...launched?

300 BG: ...and probably earlier than that. But Burquest is really not a Burnaby outfit. It was started by
301 Burnaby people – Max Jacobson, a few others. He can... he can give you the names.

302 INTVWR: And an interesting story about how Max Jacobson found you.

303 BG: Oh, yes. Oh yeah. Well, I was sitting on the then #14 bus commuting downtown to Kootenay
304 Loop.

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305 INTVWR: Is that your usual commute?

306 BG: Yeah, and on a local bus before. After a few years, they gave me a company car, that was
307 [inaudible]. But... I... I was subscribing to the 'Jerusalem Post', which is **00:28:00** a flimsy
308 English paper that came by air mail. And I was sitting there reading it, and this gentleman beside
309 me: "Are you a member of the tribe?" And I said, "Yes." And we've been very good friends ever
310 since. He's in hospital as we speak. Yeah.

311 INTVWR: So... so Burquest was an attempt to kind of bring sort of isolated Jewish people in
312 suburbs to form... [inaudible]

313 BG: Burquest was started out with the idea of creating a school for children of Jewish families
314 here. And Max and his wife took... At that time, the Jewish community in Vancouver created a
315 phonebook of all Jewish names they could... they could find. Ah, hundreds of them – of course,
316 thousands, maybe. And so, they went through the phone book, **00:29:00** and ... and contacted
317 people, and created a school. I think they were starting with ten kids. So, there were quite a number
318 of people at the time. They probably didn't find... didn't phone us because, with a German-
319 sounding name, they... well, I don't know, but they didn't.

320 INTVWR: But was there a social element, as well, to Burquest?

321 BG: At that time?

322 INTVWR: Do you remember about...?

323 BG: Well, they got to know each other. There was nothing formal. There was just a... a bunch of
324 families getting together. It was not... I... I'm not too sure exactly, but it was sometime later that
325 they formed the... the... an official organization and rented a space in an Anglican – Anglican?
326 Or United? Anglican church, I think it was, in... on Austin Avenue, or just off Austin...

327 INTVWR: Okay.

328 BG: ...in **00:30:00** Coquitlam because they did attract some people from [inaudible]. And then, if
329 you saw that movie – which you did – there was quite a move afoot to buy this building. And they,
330 they bought some land first, but I wasn't involved in that. That was really after my time as president.

331 INTVWR: I guess, I'm curious why you thought it was an important group to support.

332 BG: Um – a good question. I... I guess, it's because I believe in getting Jewish people together.
333 You know, Jewish people are always under... under stress of sorts. There's always, you know...
334 In my job, at my previous job, there was one of the managers didn't like me or Jewish – not me
335 because I was successful, but... I mean, I can tell stories. He was a **00:31:00** very religious
336 Christian. I can... I don't want to tell you the denomination, but it's an unusual denomination.

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337 Compared to his... the previous boss was also a very religious man. Belonged to a church, but
338 he... he loved me. You know? You know. And we got... He... after he retired, he went... moved
339 to Toronto, ran something else, but we always kept in contact until virtually the day he died. But
340 this fellow, no. And... So, I had a bit of a problem with it. But I had huge support from my clients.
341 But that was – I... I could write a book about that and... I mean, I had accounts in Winnipeg, of
342 all places, in the grain industry. I did... a good seventy-five percent of the grain industry, I, I
343 insured. And **00:32:00** the company wanted me to transfer it, at no loss – financial loss – to me,
344 but transferred to our Winnipeg office. We had the Winnipeg office. And... and the... I said, “They
345 won’t move. They won’t – they like dealing in Vancouver.” I didn’t say ‘me’. Vancouver. “Well,
346 go there and try.” And of course, I commuted back and forth to Winnipeg, my wife says 180 times,
347 I say 120 times. But many times. And so, I went there, and I said, “Reggie,”... this is the biggest
348 one. I said, “Reggie,” and he said, “Why are you here this time?” I said... I said, “Well, I’ve got
349 something to talk to you about.” And I still see him. Took out a piece of paper from his desk, and
350 there’s a format in changing insurance brokers. He said, “All I need to do is sign this, and it goes
351 to your competition.” I said, “Give it to me.” So, I ripped it up. **00:33:00** I mean, we had...
352 tremendous relationship with all my clients, always. I still do. And, and there was no way he was
353 going to move or any of these other guys because I had really good relationships with them. And,
354 and... So, the president of the company, a Canadian company, [laughs] he said, “Bill, you’re
355 making a big mistake.” I said, “Well, I... there’s nothing I could do. Look, if you want to force
356 him, you go ahead, do it.” But, so he transferred the manager and moved him to Toronto to run a
357 big department – bigger than the whole Winnipeg office. I said, “Good, get rid of him.” But six
358 weeks later, he was fired because of incompetence. All I said was, “I told you so.” [Laughs] But...
359 I had, I had a very successful time. Difficult in... in certain areas. **00:34:00** Partly because of my
360 Jewishness, but partly only. Otherwise, also because I worked for success – and I wanted to
361 succeed. And I have clients better serviced than most other people.

362 INTVWR: Do you think that some of the people who joined Burquest were looking for just a sort
363 of group of people who wouldn’t, who would just accept each other’s heritage?

364 BG: Yes, but it’s more dealing with the kids in school.

365 INTVWR: Okay.

366 BG: A lot of these community organizations start with the parents wanting their kids to get a, a
367 Jewish education. You know? And this is how I got to join Temple Shalom – we wanted our kids...

368 INTVWR: And what do you learn in a Jewish education for kids?

369 BG: Well, in, in these schools, they go to regular schools. And they, they... They learn about the
370 religion, the Jewish holidays, the celebrations.

371 INTVWR: **00:35:06** The history?

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372 BG: The history of the Jewish – the Exodus, and it goes... Basically, the Bible – it's history of the
373 Bible. And it's not anti-anything. It's just teaching them the Jewish... I mean, some religions teach
374 negative things about others. Jewish people don't do that. They just teach the kids their heritage,
375 if you want.

376 INTVWR: And the more modern history, as well? You know?

377 BG: Yeah, well, in the older ones, they would go into the history of Israel and so on. But of course,
378 just like anybody, they teach a history that Israel can do no wrong. You know, but that's human
379 nature. And, of course, I'm, I'm very political on that issue, too, but I have arguments all the time.
380 **00:36:01** And, and, and they have bar – you know, bar/bat mitzvah. A boy celebrates his becoming
381 an adult at the age of 13, a girl at the age of 12.

382 INTVWR: There's quite a bit of study that goes into that.

383 BG: Oh, there's further study – yeah – in the celebration. It depends, again, on which synagogue
384 you belong to. The orthodox are much more orthodox, if you want. And then there's the
385 conservative, and then there's the reformed – which is, eh, glosses over things. The orthodox have
386 a very limited program in the bat mitzvah thing for girls. It's basically not recognized. Traditionally,
387 if you go into Jewish tradition, it's boys' only. But then the modern North American world brought
388 in this bat mitzvah – which I think is a good idea because we like equality. **00:37:00** Yeah, and,
389 and we have, for example, a lot of female Rabbis now – which, not in the orthodox. And I'm not
390 – I don't know about the conservative, but certainly reformed have got a lot of... And, quite frankly,
391 just like women politicians, they're probably better than... You look at female politicians, they're
392 usually smarter than the male ones.

393 INTVWR: And is learning Hebrew part of it as well?

394 BG: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. But they learn to read it. They learn the alphabet, but it's very limited – very
395 limited conversation because there's nobody to talk to other than their friends. And they switched
396 to English right back.

397 INTVWR: Did you grow up speaking in the Hebrew tongue?

398 BG: Yes, I went up to grade five in Hebrew. Yeah.

399 INTVWR: Okay. So, do you still use it much?

400 BG: **00:38:01** Very little. Not at all, in fact. When I go to Israel – and I'm desperate to go there
401 again because I'm getting old – I use it a bit, but everybody speaks English there. You know? So,
402 they wander back to their English. So, speaking even... I also speak a bit of German.

403 INTVWR: And a bit of Yiddish, as well?

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404 BG: No, Yiddish is, is Eastern European language. It's a very beautiful language. Very inclusive
405 language. I know people in Europe who speak it fluently, but it's pretty rare here. So, yeah. I, I...
406 I go into politics. So, Burquest was the name, by the way. I think you saw in the movie, it was
407 created by the son of people who live in Burnaby, actually. **00:39:03** Max – I don't remember his
408 name. He was a professor at Simon Fraser, the son. And the son at Burnaby, New West – you saw
409 that in the movie. It was a very clever combination.

410 INTVWR: He's a great actor.

411 BG: Very clever. But it's... You know, it's situated in... Jewish people in Burnaby have a bit of a
412 problem because they're in the middle. And Burquest is not highly developed as a community,
413 whereas the, the synagogues in Vancouver are, and... Burquest also my term... I don't know how
414 he became president, but we had quite a few members – a lot of members. [inaudible 0:40:01]
415 from Burnaby, [inaudible 0:40:04], the other professor. There was a member who was a close
416 friend of, of... What was his name, in Cuba, the guy...?

417 INTVWR: Castro?

418 BG: Castro. Yeah, Fidel Castro – his friend. He wrote two books about him. He was a member,
419 too. But then, after my time, they – the reform movement tried to attract them into the, into the
420 fold. And, and I remember they were going to the meetings, and I said, "No way! I belong to a
421 reformed synagogue, but don't join it!" I spoke very strongly against it, but the board at that time
422 voted in favor, and it literally destroyed the place for a while. **00:41:01** Because Burquest was
423 secular, if you want. They had the ultra-religious, the middle, and the non-religious. So, anybody
424 who wasn't a sort of reformed, if you want, would quit. And so, the membership went... But it's
425 going back up. The problem right now with them, as I see it – and I still am a member – is that the
426 Jewish people in this East Burnaby, Coquitlam, Tri-Cities are mostly Israelis and Eastern European,
427 Russian, Ukrainian, and the like. And these people don't like to join anything. They like to take,
428 but they don't like to give. **00:42:00** I mean, I remember when, when there was a large number of
429 Russian immigrants, my mother-in-law had them come to our place for dinner, and we gave them
430 gifts of furniture and all kinds of stuff. But once they did well, she became a professor at SFU. He
431 started a collision repair place in Vancouver. Never saw them again. But we did our deeds. So,
432 they're not all like that, but that's the difficulty in attracting these people. It's, it's more the
433 Canadian Jews, if you want, North American, are not the... Of course, there are a lot of American
434 Jews up here, too [inaudible].

435 INTVWR: You personally got involved in many community activities, community service
436 activities around Burnaby and some philanthropic activities...?

437 BG: Not really. **00:43:04** I, I belong to the Conservative party, if you want, sometimes...

438 INTVWR: But you said you, you help with some fundraising for some local hospital?

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439 BG: Not in, not, oh – oh, yes. I mean, Burnaby General Hospital, you see my name on the board,
440 my wife and I. Yeah. I, I don't know how I got... Well, I do know how I got there. I, I'm asthmatic,
441 but more or less cured, but I was... I had a very bad asthma attack from food poisoning in
442 Vancouver. I've had food poisoning four times, all of them in Vancouver – and I've traveled the
443 world. And... My wife called the ambulance. They put me in the ambulance, and of course, I
444 passed out because the one thing you don't do with asthmatics is lay them flat, straight up and
445 down. **00:44:03** But they laid me flat. And by the time they got to the Burnaby Hospital, I was in
446 a coma. And fortunately, there was a pulmonary specialist on duty. He shoved a thing down my
447 throat, saved my life. And I've been through that two or three times for other reasons. I cut my
448 finger...

449 INTVWR: And so, there's a soft spot in your heart for the Burnaby Hospital.

450 BG: Absolutely, yeah. No, no, they get – they get... I don't know what range I'm in, but I'm in
451 there.

452 INTVWR: And you mentioned also...

453 BG: And I keep going, and I keep doing it. It's not a one-time thing.

454 INTVWR: It's ongoing.

455 BG: It's every year. Yeah.

456 INTVWR: You mentioned also when we met in February about a program you delivered meals
457 around town.

458 BG: Yes, I do – yeah – for the Jewish Family Services, I deliver for them every two weeks on
459 Thursday. I have six people. Fortunately, the two of them are pairs, so only four, five, five places
460 I go to. I get to know all these people because I've done it for two or three years now, and it's very
461 interesting. The, the one family is not Jewish at all – which is fine. I'm not saying we only give to
462 Jewish people. Jews are very communal, if you want. They do things for others a lot. I mean, you
463 can tell by buildings in Simon Fraser and buildings in hospitals and so on, all Jewish names, and
464 they cure anti-Semites. Well, the Hebrew... The Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem, **00:46:01** which
465 is apparently 25% of the staff, is Muslims. Yet, only 20% of the population is Muslim. But, I mean,
466 there was a case two or three years ago where a Palestinian girl – young woman from the
467 Palestinian territories – was badly injured. They brought her to this Israel – Hadassah Hospital,
468 which is the best of... Probably one of the best in the world. They cured her and sent her home. A
469 few days later, she came laden with bombs trying to blow it up. But that's... That's, you know,
470 Jewish hatred. And you get this all over the place. We've been lucky here.

471 INTVWR: And there are Jewish traditions, aren't there of being charitable and, you know, making
472 the world a better place.

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473 BG: Well, yeah, we believe in charity. But not everybody goes into that. **00:47:02** I... I donate a
474 lot to charities, as much as I can afford. Not all Jewish, but Burnaby Hospital is the biggest, by the
475 way. Is it the biggest? No, probably the second biggest of my donations. And... But, so that – that
476 has nothing to do with it. Anyway, these six people that I deliver to, I got to know them because
477 I've been doing it for two or three years. The same people. One is an Iranian woman, not Jewish.
478 You know? And then there's a Russian couple or family which are Jewish. Then one on Horne
479 Avenue, I think one grandfather was Jewish but... the Jewish tradition follows the female line.

480 INTVWR: Mm-hm.

481 BG: **00:48:00** The theory being that you always know who the mother is, but you don't necessarily
482 know who the father is. So, it... If your mother is Jewish, you're Jewish – whether you like it or
483 not. If your father is Jewish, you can choose. Technically, you've got to convert – but that's another
484 issue. So, I've done that. I also deliver in Passover and Hanukkah to Salvation... I always,
485 separately from other organizations. I said, "Look, East Vancouver or Burnaby?" And the first two
486 I delivered Passover – and there are special foods at Passover. First off was a Sikh couple, you
487 know? And I, I was really taken... and then next was Chinese. **00:49:03** Now, there are Chinese
488 who are Jews. Very few, but not here, I don't think. But Chinese... China has never been anti-
489 Semitic and still isn't. It's very interesting. They're not anti-Israel, never have been. But that's not
490 the issue. Yeah, so, I deliver food for the food bank in Burnaby. Yeah, and sometimes I can't find
491 the places.

492 INTVWR: How about for fun and games? What have you done for fun and games here, living in
493 Burnaby for 55 years?

494 BG: Nothing. I used to play Bridge. And my best friend, who is long deceased now, we used to
495 play together. And one time, I made a mistake, and I still remember him – throws the cards on the
496 table. He says, "God damn it, Grünenthal! I will never play with you again!" And he didn't.

497 INTVWR: **00:50:02** He took the game very seriously.

498 BG: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. He was an Englishman.

499 INTVWR: Through your children, were they involved in any sort of community activities or in
500 sports?

501 BG: No, no. No. Once they left Alpha, they sort of left town, if you want.

502 INTVWR: Oh. And your wife? You mentioned Hadassah...?

503 BG: She – what is she involved in? Nothing now. She plays Mahjong occasionally.

504 INTVWR: I've heard that Mahjong and Bridge have similar plays.

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505 BG: Apparently. I don't know Mahjong at all. She's there now, actually. But not necessarily with
506 Jewish people. I don't know whether she plays with any Burnaby people, I don't know. Certainly,
507 at the moment, today, she's in Coquitlam. Fortunately, she still drives. So, yeah.

508 INTVWR: **00:51:04** Do, you know, visit any of the art gallery or see shows in town?

509 BG: No. Really?

510 INTVWR: It sounds like you're a hard worker, though. You, your career is still ongoing.

511 BG: Oh, yes, I still work.

512 INTVWR: Yeah. Yeah, so.

513 BG: I don't know if you saw this. There's – the one-percenter email. If you were born between
514 1930, 1926 to 1940 or something like that, you're less than 1% of the world. And it goes, all the
515 things that you do and you don't. And then at the bottom it says, "If you're over 77 and still
516 working, you're 1% of that." So, I'm 1% of the 1%. So, I'm a 0.001, I guess. But -

517 INTVWR: That takes up a lot of your time, then, presumably. **00:52:00** You mentioned the Nikkei
518 Center you're involved in that as well.

519 BG: The Nikkei Center, yes. And that's in Burnaby. I had lunch with them just this week or last
520 week, actually. Last Monday. I... Boy, that's a long story. I got to insure many if not most of the
521 large Japanese corporations who had offices in Vancouver in the '80s and '90s. I think it goes back
522 to my friend Peter Westlake, who didn't play Bridge with me anymore, and who got me the job at
523 Marshall McLennon, and he left – that's a long story. And, and... So, all these people. I had a very
524 good relationship with these corporations. They talked – these Japanese people, they talk to each
525 other. They don't compete. They talk to each other. "Oh, if you want to get insurance, go to Bill.
526 Go to Bill." So, I was contacted initially by – I can't remember who. **00:53:13** And we were
527 forming the Nikkei Place Foundation. Brand new. "Would you like to join us? Could you help us?"
528 I said, "Oh, sure. Why not?" I can't say no to anything. Like you, I haven't said no yet. And so, I
529 joined that group, It was all Japanese except me – of course, it was all in English. They didn't
530 know how to form this foundation, non-profit foundation. And I said, "Look, I think I can help in
531 that respect." So, I brought in two ladies who ran foundation one for the cancer society at the time,
532 a Jewish woman, and one for a Jewish foundation at the time. **00:54:07** And, and so we had lunch
533 together. They agreed to come. So, they told us what to do, and off we went. Now, I... I wasn't
534 doing any of the format stuff, but there I was for 15 years on this board. And after 15 years, I said,
535 "Look, it's time for me to go." I was the only non-Japanese on there. It was very interesting. They
536 treated me like a king, and the executive director – the lady who ran with me – looked down the
537 hall, looked down the table at me and said, "Bill, you can't leave us." I said, "Why not?" "You are
538 our..." Oh, the word – I'm missing that. **00:55:01** I, I've forgotten this, so I stayed on for another
539 two years.

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540 INTVWR: [inaudible 0:55:06].

541 BG: Hm?

542 INTVWR: It wasn't token, was it?

543 BG: No, no. You're our – something to do with... Isn't that funny? I'll think of it before we go.
544 So, I stayed another couple of years and actually, she now runs the health services for the Japanese
545 community. But, so, I insured the Nikkei Place Foundation under construction, and I still have
546 some involvement. One of our subsidiary companies from the company I work with now is a
547 Japanese fellow. Any time he needs advice, he comes over to the Hilton. Oh, what's that, stupid
548 of me...? All of a sudden! I've been using it all the time! I'll think of it. **00:56:00**

549 INTVWR: When it pops into your mind, feel free to interrupt.

550 BG: Hm?

551 INTVWR: Feel free to blurt it out when it comes into your mind.

552 BG: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I will.

553 INTVWR: So, you mentioned that you'd been living basically in the same home since 1972 here,
554 and the trees have all grown up. What else has changed, good or bad, in your neighbourhood?
555 What do you like about it?

556 BG: Good or bad? Oh, yeah. Oh, well... More fast cars lately. Noisy cars. Fortunately, we have a
557 dead-end street. So, they can only go so far. But you know, look... Two or three years ago, doing
558 a very bad wind, snowstorm, I was outside in the backyard putting garbage in the thing, and I saw
559 a car two doors down struggling to get into his garage. So, I went over there and said, "Can I help
560 you, young man?" It was a young guy. "Oh, sure." So, I pushed him. There was this old fellow
561 pushing... It was a young fellow...

562 INTVWR: **00:57:00** The Canadian thing to do.

563 BG: And he – he was a good... He... 10 minutes later – well, 15 minutes later – he was at the front
564 door of my house. I don't know how he knew which house I was at. He was there with a box of
565 chocolates.

566 INTVWR: Aww.

567 BG: He was, what, 30 years old? Something like that? I was like, "Come on. All I was doing was..."
568 No, no, no. Well, since then, he shovels the snow quite a bit. Not all the time... I'm – the
569 neighbourhood... And he's got a noisy car, but I haven't complained to him. I've told one lady
570 driver who goes down the lane at about 50 miles an hour, I said, "Look, Burnaby lanes are 15

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571 kilometers an hour.” She now goes instead of 50, she goes 49. I said – I find women drivers are
572 much faster than male drivers, by the way. It’s interesting, especially in electric cars. Oh, my god!
573 They go – zoom! And of course, you catch up to them at the next red light. **00:58:14** Yeah, now,
574 the neighbourhood... I’d become very friendly to all of the neighbours, even the new neighbours.
575 The... The two neighbours on both sides were there before us. On the west side, they both died
576 eventually, and there was a, a Black fellow and his wife and kids – very friendly. But and I got to
577 know them quite well, but they were renting for a short period of time while a house was being
578 built for them. But now, there’s an Asian couple, if you want. Chinese. I’m not sure who owns the
579 house. **00:59:00** I think it’s Daddy, but Daddy’s never been there. And so, it’s a son and his wife.
580 She’s the only one who speaks any English. He refuses – she told me he refuses to learn English.

581 INTVWR: Hm.

582 BG: I don’t like that. And how he makes a living, I don’t know. I don’t think he does. Probably
583 Daddy pays for it. His mother and her mother come along once in a while. They commute back
584 and forth. They don’t speak a word of English. He cuts his lawn once every six years. I used to say
585 five years; it’s now six years. On the other side, we have a widow. She and we have a pact: neither
586 of us will sell because she’s been there before we were. She was 57. That very nice lady across the
587 lane, we’re very friendly with. **01:00:02** Her husband left her – a stupid fellow because she’s a
588 very nice person – with twin boys. And another couple. Yeah, so, so the community is changing a
589 bit. We have one, two, three, four, five Chinese moving in – which is fine. The lady across the lane
590 from us, she was widowed recently. 53-year-old guy who dropped dead. And she came over to me
591 in tears. I was the only neighbour she came to tell. I went to the funeral. I don’t like these funerals
592 where you have to look at the body.

593 INTVWR: Ooh, yes.

594 BG: We don’t do that in Jewish... I don’t know if you know that.

595 INTVWR: I don’t...

596 BG: We bury within 24 hours in most cases. Sometimes, we wait for family to arrive, but we don’t
597 embalm, and very plain boxes. None of these million-dollar boxes. Just plain plank boxes.

598 INTVWR: **01:01:04** And no cremation.

599 BG: No cremation. Mind you, some do, but that’s not Jewishness. My wife’s best friend’s husband
600 was cremated – and she was cremated too recently, too. But it’s not within the... This is why the
601 world’s largest cemetery is in Jerusalem.

602 INTVWR: Interesting. Yes, yes.

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603 BG: It's huge. It's, been there. It's on a hillside, and now burrowing underneath because they're
604 running out of space because Israel is a very small country. The whole thing would be a cemetery!
605 This goes on. So, there are Jewish cemeteries around here.

606 INTVWR: Speaking of your neighbourhood, here's your opportunity: you're not too impressed
607 with the Brentwood development.

608 BG: No, only because I don't mind the tallness of the buildings. What I do mind is the lack of
609 architecture – a totally lack of architecture. **01:02:03** Now, I think I mentioned to you before if
610 you drive on Loughheed Highway west from Holden towards Brentwood, you're faced with a big
611 60-story wall – black. I've always said that when I get reincarnated, I'm going to come back to
612 Burnaby as a black glass manufacturer. It's an abomination that they've got in Brentwood. The
613 lower – the shopping center... Oh, it's fine. You know? It's not as nice as it used to be with Sears
614 there and the shopping center, but things change. And, and these buildings, apparently, are very
615 badly built, to boot. I was told two stories. One, my barber who's in Brentwood (a nice Italian
616 fellow). He was telling me that he has some clients coming in from these tall buildings above him.
617 **01:03:03** One was telling him last summer – not this summer, this was in the spring he was telling
618 me this... Last summer was hot, just like this summer. And this guy was up at the 16th floor or
619 whatever he is, and he wanted to open the door to the veranda – and couldn't. It was metal. So, it
620 expanded. He couldn't open the door. He had to leave the apartment for three days and go in a
621 hotel where he could cool off.

622 INTVWR: Wow, wow.

623 BG: And then, my neighbour across the lane – who was actually an immigrant from, from where
624 is he at? Guatemala. I don't know what he does, but he's a plumber plus a few other things. He
625 says he spends most of his time repairing those buildings. They're two years old!

626 INTVWR: Very expensive to rent, and I'm sure even more to buy.

627 BG: I'm sorry?

628 INTVWR: They're very expensive to rent, and I'm sure even more to buy.

629 BG: Apparently, or to buy. **01:04:00** It reminds me of this Max Jacobson had a flood in his – he's
630 on Augusta Avenue in Burnaby. It's one floor, and his neighbour – there was something wrong
631 with the plumbing, and he was flooded out. So, the insurance company put him on the 17th floor
632 of one of the buildings west and south of Brentwood. So, one day I was on the phone with him,
633 and I said, and I heard the fire alarm going. I said, "Max, get the hell out of there!" He said, "Bill,
634 I can hardly open the front door because it's heavy." He says, "Even if I do that, he says, I'm in a
635 walker." He says, "Don't forget, I'm in a walker. The elevators are out, of course, as soon as the
636 fire alarm goes. I can't go down steps." I said, "Max, you only have one option. Get out the veranda
637 and jump!" And... No, no. It is an abomination. **01:05:00** I mean, you look anywhere in the world,

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638 and I've... I've actually went to the city council three times. I've actually sent them pictures. I did
639 some... Even downtown Vancouver has got some architectures. I mean, there's a nice building
640 behind the Baptist church going up with four circular things... The Trump Tower, or whatever it's
641 now called, has got a twist to it. I mean, most of the buildings have got some kind of a design.
642 These are nothing. They've got four blank walls. Ugly as sin. The height doesn't bother me when
643 I know it's necessary, but... It's – it's.... I get very verbose on that subject and the city council
644 couldn't care less. They couldn't -- I had one response, and the clerk or clark or whatever you want
645 to call it said... Basically, he said, "We give the permit. What they build is their business."
646 **01:06:03**

647 INTVWR: Really? Wow. So, what then?

648 BG: So then. One final thing – I think. This mission from the new city hall, they've got to build
649 up in Metrotown. We need that like we need another hole in the head, and somewhere else another
650 options. And I said, "None of that. Leave it where it is." I mean, "Tear it down and rebuild it, if
651 necessary." But, look, it's a beautiful area. This is the nicest part of Burnaby. Close to a beautiful
652 lake. Why Metrotown? I mean, Metrotown is a zoo by itself. It doesn't need any more... But you
653 see, they, they do these surveys, but they really don't look at them. I'm convinced of it. I'm sure
654 each one of them goes straight in the garbage. **01:07:00**

655 INTVWR: And what would you like to see in the future of Burnaby, then?

656 BG: What would I like to see in the future of Burnaby? Burnaby's a pretty good place to live. I
657 think they do some stupid architecture, as I've covered before. I understand it's necessary to build
658 new buildings. I mean, they... There was a, a flyer came around about allowing duplexes and
659 triplexes. I didn't get it. My neighbour did. She gave it to me. And I – I think the city probably
660 told them, "Don't give it to that Bill guy. He's, he makes too much fuss." It's, it's okay. As long
661 as they don't force us to, to tear down what we've got. I mean, our houses... **01:08:00** I don't think
662 are teardowns. Some of them will be.

663 INTVWR: They're in good shape.

664 BG: They're in good shape because they're old. It reminds me, again, in the insurance business
665 that I'm in, a lot of the insurance companies say, "How old is your house?" "Well, it's 50 years
666 old." "We can't insure that." I would say, "What would you do if you lived in England?" Of course,
667 they, they don't know what I'm talking about. But the old houses are much better built than the
668 new houses. Mine is... I didn't build – five years old when I bought it, but it's as solid as the rock
669 of Gibraltar, if you want. Otherwise, you know, Burnaby... The parks are good. I think, for
670 example, Brentwood Elementary School was a very nice little place, and they had a big playground,
671 and they built new schools on it. Now, so I don't know what happened to the playground. No
672 playground. No playground anymore. I don't like that. I understand you need schools, but I'm sure
673 you could do other things than take off a playground. **01:09:13** We need... Burnaby does funny
674 things. I live close to Beecher Park – Bleacher? Beecher Park on Holden. I was there 55 years

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675 before they put a fence on it. But why did they put a fence on it all of a sudden? I, I don't know...
676 Burnaby is a community. I'm glad it doesn't have a big downtown as downtown Vancouver, but
677 it has Metrotown and has Brentwood. Brentwood is – was. Now, it's become a bit of a zoo. You
678 know, parking was free. **01:10:01** Now, well, there is some free parking, but it's disappearing very
679 quickly. So, they, they lose me as a customer. Why should I pay for parking to go to the bank?
680 Except I like my barber. Yeah. I, I... I don't know. It's okay to live in. I, I'm not about to move.
681 The kids want us to move. Two of them want us to move to Calgary, and one wants us to move to
682 Ladner. Well, I have two kids in Calgary and one in Ladner area – and we are getting old. So, and,
683 and quite frankly, I don't know how long we're going to survive and where we're going to survive.
684 So.

685 INTVWR: Hm. Well...

686 BG: I think that's...

687 INTVWR: That's absolutely fascinating. So, I know we've been talking for over an hour here. So,
688 if you have any last words that you'd like to pass on about, you know, your observations of
689 Burnaby over the years? **01:11:02**

690 BG: I think the city council should be a little more proactive in what they allow to be built. I
691 understand building is necessary. That's not a problem, but I think there should be a little bit more
692 attraction to the stuff they build. And/or listen to the citizens – which, I'm convinced they don't.
693 Once they get elected, that's it. I don't think something like Mr. Trudeau, he doesn't listen to
694 anybody, either. Yeah, no... Burnaby finally has a member of parliament who's, who's a cabinet
695 minister. I don't know what kind. But of course, again, it's, it's... Burnaby's partially with
696 Vancouver, partially in, in New Westminster, if I'm not mistaken. **01:12:01**

697 INTVWR: Yes.

698 BG: It's crazy, but that's not Burnaby's fault. It's the federal government. Divide and conquer. No,
699 Burnaby is, is okay. It's livable.

700 INTVWR: Good to hear, good to hear.

701 BG: Oh, yeah. Oh, no, otherwise, we wouldn't be here.

702 INTVWR: Very good.

703 BG: And... The education, it's got Simon Fraser University, which...

704 INTVWR: And BCIT now as well, and the BC Institute of Technology.

705 BG: BCIT, yes. But... But you know, when you go and listen to the national news, they're both in
706 Vancouver.

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707 INTVWR: Oh, yes, yes.

708 BG: Unfortunately, you know? Surrey gets a bigger name than, than does Burnaby. Of course,
709 Port Moody is never mentioned. New Westminster is hardly mentioned.

710 INTVWR: It sounds like Burnaby's fate has always been to be sort of in the shadow of Vancouver,
711 no matter how great it is.

712 BG: Oh, yeah, yeah. **01:13:04** Squeezed in. You know, many years ago, when I was on the board
713 of treasurer of Temple Shalom, we didn't have a building. So, we, we always met in people's
714 houses. And of course, all the executives – west of Cambie Street. That was my dividing line:
715 Cambie Street. Everywhere east of Cambie Street was... So, one day, I said to the boys – it was
716 all boys – “Look, I'd like to meet at my house for a change. We have tables, we have chairs, we
717 have coffee. We can have cake. We have nice carpets. We've got a very nice home. Not as
718 expensive as yours, but believe you me, it's a very nice home.” The president says, “Where do you
719 live, Bill?” Now, he happened to be my lawyer, too. “Where do you live, Bill?” I said, “I live in
720 Burnaby.” “How do you get there?” **01:14:01** And – Arthur Gutman, who was then working for
721 the Burnaby school board in some capacity, said, “It's very easy. You fly to Kamloops and walk
722 back.” Famous. I've repeated that at least 10,000 times. Beautiful.

723 INTVWR: Maybe that's a good note to end our discussion on, then. So, thank you very much, Bill.
724 That was very fascinating.

725 BG: My pleasure.

726 INTVWR: It sounds like, as you say, you've got more stories that you could share.

727 BG: Oh, I've got more.

728 INTVWR: Maybe on another occasion. So, thanks again very much.

729 BG: My pleasure.