

Transcription: BV023.16.16

Interview with Norman Dowad

Audio Recording: 2023_0016_0016_002.mp3

Interviewer: Eric Damer (INTVWR)

Interviewee: Norman Dowad (ND)

Date of Interview: August 14, 2023

1 INTVWR: Hello. I am Eric Damer. I am speaking here with Norm Dowad on August 14th, 2023.
2 Norm, thank you very much for coming along to share your family stories, how you came to
3 Burnaby, how your families came to Burnaby, what they did when they were in Burnaby. I know
4 we've had a sneak peek, and there's a lot to talk about. So, why don't you tell us how you came to
5 be in Burnaby, how your families came to be here?

6 ND: Well, I was born in December of 1948. So, my family... The Dowad family arrived here in
7 1945. My grandfather, who was Sam Dowad, Salim in Arabic, had been born in a Greek Orthodox
8 village in the southern Beqaa Valley in present day Lebanon. At the time, **00:01:00** the village was
9 situated in a province of the Ottoman Empire. During the 19th century, there had been a
10 considerable amount of enmity between Christians and other groups in the region, and there had
11 been a significant Christian diaspora which had begun. Many Christians had left for Canada,
12 among a number of other destinations. And to this day, we have a large family in Brazil that I visit
13 on a regular basis. At age 18 in 1913, Sam traveled by sea to Canada. An interesting aspect of this
14 event was the previous year, several of his relatives (including his mother, his father-in-law, his
15 sister-in-law and her new husband and a first cousin) had all boarded the Titanic in steerage and
16 had all died **00:02:00** in the sinking of that vessel. Notwithstanding this tragedy, Sam left as soon
17 as he was able as there were other family members who had already come to Canada and also the
18 United States. To this day, there's a large Lebanese community in Ottawa, which still has strong
19 links with their ancestral village which is named Kfarmishki in the Beqaa. At the time that Sam
20 came, he was also prime age for conscription into the Ottoman Empire, which would soon be
21 fighting at Gallipoli and other places in the First World War. In Canada, Sam established working
22 and social relationships with other Lebanese immigrants in Saskatchewan and Manitoba and
23 occasionally traveled to the United States **00:03:01** to meet others from that community. In
24 December of 1921, his wife Martha arrived by ship in St. John, New Brunswick – and they
25 established a new home in Winnipeg.

26 INTVWR: What sort of line of work was he in, or did that vary?

27 ND: Initially, he would've been a farm laborer. I've found him in the Canadian census in
28 Saskatchewan at that time, living with Lebanese family near a place called Willoughby,
29 Saskatchewan. I think in this period, he would've been learning how to speak English because he
30 only had been exposed to Arabic growing up. His, his wife and he moved to **00:04:00** Winnipeg
31 and, I believe, their first two children died as infants. But my father, Wilf, was born in 1925, and
32 a daughter Kathleen was born the following year. During his time in Winnipeg, Sam had been a
33 grocer in that city and had also been a farmer in a town named Langruth, which was not far from
34 there. I think it's a couple of hours' drive to get up there. He had been drawn there as his wife's
35 uncle had come in the 1890s and was much better settled in that area. I would understand that from
36 his business activity, **00:05:00** Sam accumulated some capital and acquired some interesting
37 property. In 1945, he moved to Burnaby from Winnipeg with Martha. Son Wilf had joined the
38 Canadian Navy in 1943 and had traveled both the Atlantic and the Pacific as a gunner on merchant
39 ships during the war. He was in Auckland, New Zealand, on VJ day. And after his discharge in

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- 40 1945, Wilf joined his family in Burnaby on Edmonds Street and quickly adapted to his return to a
41 civilian life.
- 42 INTVWR: And Wilf would've gone to public schools in Winnipeg area?
- 43 ND: Yes, he did. There was a well-known school named Gordon Bell High School, **00:06:02**
44 which he spoke of. It came of interest to me listening to the stories of the people from the Royal
45 Winnipeg Rifles, who were in the D-Day landings in the Northwestern Europe Campaign, who
46 had also gone there. So, I'm, I'm guessing he knew some of those fellows from high school.
- 47 INTVWR: And Wilf is your father.
- 48 ND: He is.
- 49 INTVWR: And did he – as far as you can tell, did he grow up, you know, speaking English?
50 Cultured [*sic*] to, you know, a Canadian way – whatever they may be?
- 51 ND: Yeah. I think primarily English, but he did speak some Arabic, which I presume that he got
52 from being in the home. And there's kind of a story that I find amusing. Is that in 1992, we went
53 to Lebanon just after the end of the war there to see the village, and there's a rotary club there.
54 **00:07:00** And he went along to a meeting, when the opportunity presented himself, he got up and
55 he went up to the front, and he started speaking Arabic to a degree that I had no knowledge that he
56 was capable of. But it wasn't all that good, and I think that he went to English when the Arabic
57 ran out. But still, I had to think afterwards that it was from growing up and listening to his, his
58 mother, primarily.
- 59 INTVWR: Do you know why they came to Burnaby, why they would choose Burnaby?
- 60 ND: Well, I asked my mother, who is still alive, and she says it's because they were "de-mobbed,"
61 was the expression they used when all the people came back from the war in 1945. And I think
62 I've got **00:08:00** something from the Canada Archives saying that he was de-mobbed in
63 Vancouver because I guess the ship sailed back to Vancouver, and then they let them all loose.
64 Now, it didn't seem to be much to me to put them on the train to Winnipeg, but I think they
65 probably heard about the opportunities that were available, available out here. And I suspect that
66 living with the prairie winters...
- 67 INTVWR: Not going to do it, I guess.
- 68 ND: Which I think was something that affected a lot of people who came here, to find a more
69 temperate climate.
- 70 INTVWR: Sure, sure.

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71 ND: Now, on arriving in Burnaby in 1945, Wilf joined his family here in Edmonds **00:09:00** and
72 quickly adapted to a return to civilian life. He once told me that he had little interest in talking
73 about the war and was happy to get on with his civilian life. I know that he worked at a mill, at
74 Fraser Mills, and he studied building construction and drafting, which were skills that he used all
75 of his life. Now, I, I know at this time, I can remember from my early life that I visited a house
76 that Sam had on Edmonds not far from Canada Way. And there was apparently a lot next to it, and
77 Wilf with Sam's assistant bought the lot, and Wilf built his first apartment building **00:10:01** at
78 age 24 on it. And that building still stands.

79 INTVWR: Now, we also talked a few minutes before the interview about your grandfather having
80 a small shop somewhere else in that area, Edmonds and Canada Way?

81 ND: No. There was a building, more of a commercial building, which was right on Edmonds and
82 Canada Way, where he would've had a store. And there were, I believe, some suites there. And
83 the suite – one of the suites was initially occupied by my parents after they got married. Martha
84 died in 1954. And soon after, Sam moved to Kelowna where he bought an orchard. We often visit
85 him – visited him – as children. **00:11:02** In 1957, he remarried to another Lebanese lady by the
86 name of Mamie Dowad, and they lived there until the mid-1960s when they went to White Rock
87 to a home that they purchased there. Sam died in 1969. Wilf, his son who was very much involved
88 in activities here in Burnaby right from the time at the end of the war on until about 1970, when
89 he acquired some other property interests. He, either alone or in partnership with others, built
90 apartment buildings both high-rise and framed duplexes and houses all over Burnaby **00:12:01**
91 and New Westminster in Vancouver. He was very active in the Junior Chamber of Commerce and
92 held offices at the local, provincial and national level. I remember the year that he ran for National
93 President. Also, he was the first president of the Burnaby Winter Club and had been an active...
94 He had an active role in its original construction. In, in 1970, Wilf purchased a large parcel of land
95 along the Squamish River in what was to become Highway 99 in Squamish and lived there the
96 following year. Over the next 40 years, he was involved with subdividing lands, building houses,
97 condominiums, commercial developments. And he eventually died in April of 2011. **00:13:01**

98 INTVWR: We think of Burnaby's big growth period of as being 1945 to 1970, so your dad was
99 part of that big boom of Burnaby at the time.

100 ND: Yes.

101 INTVWR: Did you, do you remember growing up if he was really, really busy all the time?

102 ND: Oh, very much so. There was always something going on, and there were six children in the
103 family, and I was the oldest. So, I was off working on his jobs from a very early age.

104 INTVWR: And was he very hands-on, so he's doing the financial side of things?

105 ND: Oh, yeah.

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106 INTVWR: The construction side of things as well, and...?

107 ND: Well, he had a lot of people working for him. He was an employer who... And, of course, as
108 the job got bigger, there would be more people involved. The first big apartment building was
109 Massey Place, which is on Massey... It's on 8th and McBride in New Westminster. **00:14:00** I
110 understand the building is still there and still occupied. So, that was a much bigger project. So,
111 yeah. Yup. This is also... This is all true. I am... I'm... I think I was learning how to frame houses
112 when I was 12. You know?

113 INTVWR: Wow. Was this your summer job?

114 ND: That was my summer job until I was 16, and he got me a job with a surveying crew in northern
115 BC, and I spent the next two summers surveying on the BC hydro power lines that were coming
116 from Hudson Hope.

117 INTVWR: Wow! Now, now your, your mom also was around. I think I read that she was involved
118 in the business in some regard.

119 ND: Well, her... Her family arrived in Burnaby in 1942. They'd come to Vancouver much earlier.
120 I believe it was 1923. After The First World War, they, **00:15:02** with the husbands of some of
121 their British sisters had gone to Peace River and lived there for a few years under very difficult
122 conditions, we would say here in the lower mainland. And he eventually came to Vancouver, but
123 he had worked with Empire Stevedoring on the waterfront. He had gone to see, at a very early age,
124 he became, he was a master mariner. And he, in fact, during the 1920s, had been a rum runner
125 working for some of the big rum runners who were based in Vancouver.

126 INTVWR: Wow. Is that something that you knew about growing up, or is that a bit of a family
127 secret?

128 ND: It's... It's a matter of pride to all of his grandchildren. I know my grandmother didn't think
129 much of it. **00:16:01** And I think she sort of laid down the law eventually. We all thought well of
130 him for what he did, and I think I've provided you with some literature he had written about his
131 experiences during those times. However, getting back to their coming to Burnaby, he arrived here
132 in 1942, and it was an acreage that he bought on the corner of Burris and Canada Way. And they
133 built a house there. It was.... He had four children. There were three girls and a boy, and I think
134 the boy was already off in the war at that point. And my mother, I think, would've been about 12
135 at that time. **00:17:01** So, she grew up there, and she eventually graduated from Burnaby South in
136 1948 with that class. I was going to... Continuing on to, I guess, the current generation: Wilf had
137 six children. I think we all went to Burnaby Central.

138 INTVWR: And you're living in – what area? Sort of the Deer Lake area?

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139 ND: At that time, we were living on Buckingham. We actually had two houses there. And in
140 between, we had a house over on Monarch Avenue, which is not far from here.

141 INTVWR: And what do you remember about the neighborhood?

142 ND: **00:18:00** Well, the things that a young person does. We had lots of friends. There were people
143 across the street. Their name, they were from Holland. Their name was Divisor, and next to them
144 there were the Stubsons.

145 INTVWR: When you say, “next to it,” are these houses – lots of space between them?

146 ND: Well, not on Buckingham. It was pretty well the way it looks today, although there are houses
147 – including the house next door to us, which I think was torn down. And that house had been
148 occupied by Doctor Rideout, who was a family doctor. His – two of his sons are doctors, as well,
149 although one of them has just retired. He was my doctor for – well, forever it seems like after his
150 dad. And he still **00:19:00** has a house up on Buckingham. So, he’s been in the community all of
151 these years. When he was going to McGill in Montreal, I was going to Ozgood in Toronto, and I
152 would go up and visit him for the weekend. I think I was curiously up there the weekend when
153 there was all the problems with the FLQ. And John’s fraternity house was right next door to the
154 house that James Cross was kidnapped from. So, we had a lot of things that were happening there
155 at that time. My aunt, my Auntie Kay, lived most of her life in Montreal, and it was only later in
156 life that my sister and a friend went to Montreal and moved her out to Squamish. **00:20:02** And
157 she died in 2012, I believe. Oh, I’m sorry, 2015. Excuse me. I was going to go on to the next
158 generation...

159 INTVWR: Can I ask you a little bit more about growing up in your neighborhood there?

160 ND: Please, please do.

161 INTVWR: You mentioned earlier also about horses in the neighborhood.

162 ND: There were. There was a, a pasture at the back of the house my father built at 5533
163 Buckingham. And there was a small cottage out there where I think my brother and I were exiled
164 to at one point. But we had people who kept horses there. So, certainly on the property that he had
165 built. Now, he... I believe he bought that house from a, a family with the name of Mathers.

166 INTVWR: Okay.

167 ND: And my recollection was that there was... **00:21:02** I believe it was Barry Mathers who was
168 a writer with the Vancouver Sun

169 INTVWR: Yes, yes.

170 ND: – and I think it was the same people.

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171 INTVWR: Yeah, they actually – one of the houses across the road from us was owned and
172 occupied by the Mathers for a while.

173 ND: Yeah, yeah.

174 INTVWR: And were horses quite odd? The... There was the equestrian center down, also, near
175 the corner of Burris and Canada Way.

176 ND: Yes, and I remember going to it when I was fairly young. We had spent a year or two living
177 out in Surrey. So, it was common to us to be around horses and to be involved in a more rural
178 environment. I think that I... We, we came back to our first house in Buckingham, when I would've
179 been in grade five at what I believe was... Oh, boy. Maybe it was Douglas Lake School. I don't
180 know if it still exists.

181 INTVWR: **00:22:00** Douglas Road?

182 ND: Douglas Road. Douglas Road, that's correct. Yeah.

183 INTVWR: And when – when you, before you had to spend your summers framing for your dad,
184 how did you spend your summers?

185 ND: Often, we'd be sent off to our grandparents'.

186 INTVWR: Ah.

187 ND: Sam was in Kelowna, and my mother's father was Sooke on Vancouver Island, and he was
188 actually running the government warfare.

189 INTVWR: Oh.

190 ND: So, you know, so, we would spend a lot of time close to the water or on the water with him.
191 And, of course, Sam had the orchard in Kelowna, so we'd be picking fruit depending on the time
192 we were there, etc.

193 INTVWR: Did you ever go swimming in Deer Lake?

194 ND: A lot, and I remember there was kind of a float there – which we used to swim out to. I don't
195 know if it's still there. **00:23:00** And, frankly, I don't know if people still do.

196 INTVWR: Too, too many geese.

197 ND: Is that true?

198 INTVWR: Yeah, the water's not usually considered safe for swimming anymore.

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199 ND: Okay, okay.

200 INTVWR: And, of course, in, in your time, Oakalla Prison is also on the other side of the lake. Is
201 that ever...?

202 ND: Yes, it was. Well, we did. On the one hand because my father was in the Junior Chamber of
203 Commerce, he was bringing people home all the time. And there was one fellow who was a guard
204 who came and visited a number of times. And, of course, then there would be stories that would
205 come out when somebody had, had escaped, and everybody was out looking for the person –
206 whoever it was. So, yeah. We, we were aware of the existence of the place, and we knew it was
207 probably not a place you wanted to go to.

208 INTVWR: Mm-hm, mm-hm. So, you went to...? You think that was Douglas Road School
209 Elementary, and then when you moved to high school...? **00:24:02**

210 ND: At that time, they sent us off to Kensington Junior High School for a year, and then they
211 decided that from all the following (grade eight through 12), we could go to Burnaby Central. So,
212 that's what I did. So, I, I was at Burnaby Central for five years.

213 INTVWR: That was quite a new school at that time, isn't it?

214 ND: It, it was, by the standards of, of the time. Of course, Burnaby South was older; goes back to
215 the time of my mother, and I have friends whose fathers graduated from there, I think, even earlier.
216 So, yeah. I'm just trying to time... I think most of that time, we would've been over in Monarch.
217 So, there was just a trail that we would walk through to get to the school. **00:25:00** I think my
218 primary interest in high school was playing football.

219 INTVWR: Hm. Mm-hm. Was that earlier in elementary school, also very active in sports and
220 recreation?

221 ND: Yeah, yeah. With us, it was all baseball, ice hockey, and football. We played baseball at a
222 place called Richmond Park. I'm sure we were only eight or nine at that time.

223 INTVWR: Semi-organized or just you kids got together?

224 ND: Oh, yeah. No, no, it was semi-organized. We had uniforms and the like. There were a lot of
225 people from the community who oversaw that activity.

226 INTVWR: And you competed locally as well?

227 ND: Within a league of other kids of the same age. With the association of the Burnaby Winter
228 Club, I think I was one of the first people on the ice there, and that was the old small ice. **00:26:00**
229 So, both my brother and I (and I think one of my younger brothers) played there for a number of

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230 years. But as I got older, I got more into football, and that became my primary interest until I think
231 I finished with Burnaby Central after grade 12.

232 INTVWR: And on the academic side, do you remember subjects, teachers?

233 ND: I do, I do some... I, I remember some of the teachers. Names are a problem. My brother was
234 very artistic, and there was... I believe it was Mrs. Faulk who was an art teacher at Burnaby Central.
235 So, he would've studied with her. I was more interested in mathematics and social studies and
236 things of that sort. So, you know, I was always interested in those things. When it **00:27:00** came
237 time to go to Simon Fraser, I think in those days what they would do is not require you to write
238 the final exams if you have certain marks, and I was able to be in that group. But if I did write the
239 final exams, I could get a scholarship to go to Simon Fraser. So, I – I actually went forward and...

240 INTVWR: Sorry.

241 ND: ...did that.

242 INTVWR: So, before we get to Simon Fraser, though, I mentioned to you that we have a special
243 delight here. We have...

244 ND: Yeah, I've got a copy of that.

245 INTVWR: You've got a copy of that?

246 ND: Yeah.

247 INTVWR: So, if we open it up, somewhere on the page here we can find you. You're somewhere...

248 ND: Yup, there we are. Mm-hm. That would be grade 11.

249 INTVWR: Grade 11?

250 ND: Yeah.

251 INTVWR: Now, I have a question, too. I looked through the yearbook a little bit more, and there's
252 a comment in here... Well, first of all, do, **00:28:00** do you show up in any of the clubs and teams,
253 do you know?

254 ND: Oh, yeah. I'm in the, well... I'm in the football team.

255 INTVWR: Oh, you are. Okay because I scanned through it, and I thought, "Well, it's too much to
256 scan through."

257 ND: I think I'm 62 was the number, if I can find it...

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258 INTVWR: Reach for the top team... So, you haven't, you haven't picked up the, the debating bug
259 yet or the arguing bug.

260 ND: No, no, not at all.

261 INTVWR: See there, is that football? There we go.

262 ND: Yeah, there I am. 61.

263 INTVWR: All right.

264 ND: Not very big for a football player.

265 INTVWR: Was anyone very big in those days in grade 11?

266 ND: Well, some of those guys were. Hank Grenda, who was the quarter back, actually played with
267 the Lions. Sadly, he died in 2008. He had been a teacher. I think a lot of these guys were bigger
268 than I. And I think this guy up here was Bob Diachuck *[sic]*, who was our big center. But it was...
269 **00:29:02** It was lots of fun and lots of great people. And over here is our coach who was Earl
270 Henderson, who I've seen a number of times since. He'd been a coach in North Vancouver as well,
271 and he... He was a very good friend, friend of mine who said he could remember the numbers of
272 all his players. That's, that's how much he was devoted to his teams.

273 INTVWR: Wow. And were football players held in high regard? Is that...?

274 ND: Um... Well, that's a good question. They, they were with us.

275 INTVWR: Okay.

276 ND: I think, at that time, it was really before the hippie craze had been upon us.

277 INTVWR: Right. **00:30:00** Now, there was something in here that also caught my eye, which I
278 think is very different from these days. There was a group referred to as the... Where is it? Oh,
279 you have the one-person pep band.

280 ND: Oh, yeah.

281 INTVWR: One person with a trombone.

282 ND: *[inaudible 00:300:17]*... He was probably pretty skilled, and they wanted him out for cheers
283 at the games.

284 INTVWR: What was it...? It was the... *[inaudible 00:300:30]*.... It was something like the
285 monitors' club. Did you have school monitors?

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286 ND: I have a very vague recollection of that. I think...

287 INTVWR: Where was that? I should've marked the page... Because I thought, "Well, we certainly
288 don't have monitors..." Prefects!

289 ND: Prefects.

290 INTVWR: So, what – who were the prefects? **00:31:00** It, it almost suggests the British system
291 where you have basically kids monitoring the behavior of other kids.

292 ND: I don't think it was like that. I guess, my recollection is that it was more like a sergeant who
293 was sort of overseeing things that are going on to make sure that everybody is behaving as they're
294 supposed to. I never saw it as something that I should be concerned about.

295 INTVWR: Okay. So... Okay, so moving to, to Simon Fraser University. What was that experience?
296 So, you're still in Burnaby for your, your university.

297 ND: Yup.

298 INTVWR: It's the new university in town.

299 ND: Yup. Still had Burnaby friends who were going there, as well. Of course, the learning
300 environment was quite a bit different in college than it was in high school. **00:32:03** It wasn't as,
301 oh, controlled, I guess. You go from class to class. I, I think a lot of us found favor in the fact
302 that we had a lot more freedom to do what we went, and when we wanted, and how we wanted
303 to, and... I think the social life was getting that much more enjoyable. So, still at a point where a
304 lot of people hadn't decided where they were going. I didn't know that I was going to end up in
305 law school at the time. It seemed like probably something very far. We were all mostly, I think,
306 doing arts degrees at that point. **00:33:00** But there was a, such a – I guess, a degree of enjoying
307 your sense of freedom that, for a lot of us at the time, the next thing to do was to leave school for
308 a year and to go to Europe and hitchhike for a year – which is what I did, all over Europe, before
309 coming back and going back to school. And I think that many of my friends and colleagues did a
310 similar type of thing. You know, whether it was here or some other place in the world. Probably
311 something we wouldn't have thought of two years before in high school. I guess, it was just
312 realizing that sense of freedom that we got in university. It seemed such a natural thing to do.

313 INTVWR: When you came back from your hitchhiking days in Europe, were you back at SFU as
314 well?

315 ND: No, I went to UBC. I went to business school.

316 INTVWR: **00:34:00** Okay.

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317 ND: And I, I was focusing on, you know, getting involved in business, you know, with my
318 father. But as it was, it's a very social place, and I ended up managing a fraternity house at UBC.

319 INTVWR: Oh!

320 ND: For a couple of years – which was an interesting experience. But you had a much broader
321 source of kids (young people) who you encountered at that stage, and I think I still have
322 relationships with a lot of them from business. And I think during that time, I started thinking
323 about law school, and I think it was even in my second year there at UBC that I applied to a
324 number of law schools. **00:35:00** And I ended up in Toronto for the next couple of years in
325 Osgoode Hall, which was a great place. But it's Eastern Canadian weather. I think one of the
326 things I remember is that it was a much more onerous climate than we have here. I was able to
327 convince UBC to bring me in for the third year, and I finished my law degree for Osgoode at
328 UBC – which I have to say was the year that I learned how to ski.

329 INTVWR: Oh!

330 ND: Which I still do a lot of. So.

331 INTVWR: And when you graduated, you went into practice locally?

332 ND: Yeah. The practice here is that you have to article. **00:36:02** And we went, and we were
333 interviewed by a number of law firms. The firm that hired me was a firm called Russel &
334 DuMoulin, which at the time was the biggest litigation firm in, well, British Columbia and
335 Vancouver. It's since become a part of Fasken, which is an international firm. And I was there
336 for, I guess, seven years.

337 INTVWR: And what sort of area of law?

338 ND: Well, I did a lot of things. I actually... They encourage you to, and I guess they want to pit
339 people to go into certain types of practice. My background had always been in real estate,
340 whether it was framing houses or doing budgets or stuff like that.

341 INTVWR: You grew up in that atmosphere.

342 ND: And so, I, I grew up in it. So, that was, that was a natural place for me. But one of the things
343 that, that was there... **00:37:00** We're talking 1973-74, is they brought in a new landlord in
344 Tenant Act, and they established a rental splint in a whole office to manage rental relationships
345 in British Columbia. And I was just a young guy there, and I got sent off to court to deal with
346 judicial reviews. And I ended up doing it for the next eight years because I got into a very good
347 relationship with the people who were running the office. And there were a couple of them who I
348 could remember. There was Barry Clark, and there was a Jim Patterson. I think Clark moved to
349 Kelowna, and he died a couple of years ago. He had been an Alderman in Kelowna. And I think

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350 that Jim is still in Bangkok. He left Vancouver. **00:38:01** But these were people with the British
351 Columbia bureaucracy, if you will. And we were also involved with the firm in Redding, the
352 Landlord & Tenant Legislation that was in effect for some time. So, from there, I'd worked with
353 different firms. I always wanted to be independent. With my father, I think his primary wish in
354 life was to be as independent as he could. So, you want to do your business, but you also want to
355 not be part of a big organization that imposes their requirements on you.

356 INTVWR: **00:39:00** And so, you were living in Vancouver, I presume.

357 ND: I, I'm living in Vancouver now. I'm still practicing law, but it's really mainly real estate,
358 corporate and real estate. I've been through a very large project with my siblings building
359 condominium in Squamish, a project which we've just completed – happy to say successfully.
360 And but I still have ongoing clients in Vancouver who have been involved in a hotel and rental
361 business in Vancouver. So, it's something that I continue to do because I enjoy doing it.

362 INTVWR: And over the course of your career, did have you have opportunities to be involved in
363 Burnaby activities at all?

364 ND: Not... Not really. By the time I was to that stage, we were involved a great deal in
365 Squamish. My dad had some extensive holdings out there, so there was always a great deal of...
366 There was a lot to be done in dealing with the people in Squamish. And I think most of that,
367 which we continue to hold in this part of the world, was in the west end of Vancouver. So, it's
368 just over a period of years that those buildings were sold. So, yeah.

369 INTVWR: So, just then thinking back, you're – your formative **00:40:00** years were growing up
370 in Burnaby. When you sort of reminisce about those formative years, what sort of thoughts come
371 to mind?

372 ND: Well, I, I think I was very lucky in that respect. I was lucky in that it was a place where
373 there were a lot of people from a lot of different backgrounds, people of different colours (if you
374 will), different religious backgrounds. Because we were all basically individuals, we were able to
375 interact with one another and to appreciate other people for the people they were, not for where
376 they came from.

377 INTVWR: Did you grow up thinking that you had this Lebanese background?

378 ND: Well, yeah, but it was never anything that was sort of imposed upon us. When people are
379 younger sometimes, among **00:41:00** friends, we make jokes among ourselves and... Somebody
380 might joke about Lebanese when I was around, and I would joke about them being Italian or
381 whatever they were. But that was the nature of the thing, that it was not a criticism; it was sort of
382 the fact that we were able to be quite open in our dealings with one another. So, to me, I think I
383 was very fortunate living in that environment and, of course, being involved in sports. There was
384 a lot of people we were interacting with. And on different levels. In dealing with my friends who

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385 I got to meet at UBC, I became aware of the fact that there's kind of a line in Vancouver between
386 East Vancouver **00:42:00** and West Vancouver. And there is... I hate to say it, but there's a bit
387 of a class distinction that goes on between people. So, I think I was playing football at certain
388 points in east Vancouver, going back and forth between there and Burnaby. But I, I think... It
389 left me with a sense that as you get on with life that you really don't judge people of where they
390 came from. It's more about who they were, if you were going to get along with them or do things
391 together, etcetera.

392 INTVWR: Did you ever get a sense that Burnaby was somehow different from Vancouver?
393 **00:43:00**

394 ND: I think when I got to UBC, and I got to know some of the guys whose families were pretty
395 well-off. And I thought we were well-off when I was growing up because I always had a job, and
396 there was always a place to work. And I think when I was old enough, I think, it wasn't much of
397 a car but it was still a car, so all of that meant that was good enough for me. But obviously, there
398 were people there whose families were much better off. So, I was... I became **00:44:00** more
399 aware of that as I went on and, of course, you get into a place like a major law firm, and they
400 have relationships with people. Often, some of them who are, you know, sort of at the core of the
401 community, if you will. And when I left there and started on my own, getting just about anybody
402 walking in the door.... Those assumptions you made about people didn't hold true anymore. You
403 had to sort of revisit your ideas about your relationships with people, and how you do things, and
404 try and understand what people expected of you. So. But I've always thought that I was fortunate
405 in growing up here because I think if I had grown up in a place which was very class-oriented, it
406 probably would affect you **00:45:00** much more later, later in life.

407 INTVWR: Now, we also have yearbooks that have your brother – is it Bruce?

408 ND: Bruce.

409 INTVWR: And Kathy, Mike, I think, here.

410 ND: Yup.

411 INTVWR: Did you – are they still here?

412 ND: Oh yeah. They're all here. We're – one week ago, we had a 70th birthday party for Kathy.
413 There were five boys and one girl. She's been the president of the family company for the last 15
414 years, and she's very good at her job. We just finished... I won't say how much money it is, but
415 it would be a lot to most of us – project in Squamish. And I think, the people – one of the things
416 that I can say to people is that, when I look at the capital budget of the buildings my father built
417 in the west end, **00:46:00** and I look at the amount that we went over budget on certain things in
418 this project, they're about the same. So, it's just how capital intensive the real estate business has
419 become. Bruce, the oldest, had a very successful career. He was a graduate of Vancouver Arts

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420 School. A number of years ago, they gave him an honorary doctorate because he was probably
421 one of their most successful commercial graduates.

422 INTVWR: Wow.

423 ND: He made TV commercials in Toronto and New York. I, being the lawyer in the family,
424 insisted or was involved in setting up a company in the States, and we made TV commercials in
425 the States for, I think, 17 years we were based in West Hollywood. **00:47:00** And he's now left
426 the business, but of the course the business has changed because technology has changed, but he
427 has, he lives in both London, England (where he married), and he still has a house in Los
428 Angeles.

429 INTVWR: Oh.

430 ND: Michael, the next one, he was more involved in charity work, and he spent a lot of time in
431 India. And he was involved in the organizing and administering a charity in Ladakh in northern
432 India, which was largely focused on teaching computer skills to girls. I think, as he put it, that if
433 we don't do this, they're going to end up picking peas for the rest of their lives. **00:48:00** Phillip
434 worked most of his career (all of his career) with KPMG. So, he was a chartered account, and I
435 think he's just retired. And Tom, Tommy has his own property interest. I think he's got a large
436 property up in Christina Lake. So, we've all done our own things. And I think, for each of us, it's
437 been a matter of doing what was close to your heart and, you know, being who you wanted to be
438 in your life.

439 INTVWR: Mm-hm. And you all seem to be doing a very good job at your respective lines of
440 work.

441 ND: Yeah.

442 INTVWR: When you collect together, do you talk about the good old days growing up in
443 Burnaby? Is that...?

444 ND: Well, we have lots of memorability. My mom has done a great deal of work, and with her
445 own family (the English side of the family), she's been back to **00:49:00** the start of the 1700s.
446 And I have a great deal of material that she's acquired from trips to England and the like. She's
447 now getting older; she's 93 now, and she's given it all to me, and I'm actually trying to find
448 somebody who's going to acquire this stuff when I go. The oldest son of Bruce, who graduated
449 with his PHD, the History of Art from the University of California Berkley is now a professor at
450 Northwestern University in Chicago. So, that, that's something which is of great interest to him.
451 I think Bruce has two other kids who have now graduated, **00:50:00** one who is working at being
452 an actor in Hollywood, but we don't think that's going to last too much longer. And the other,
453 who is actually on the management side in the film business, and she's in London, England. I

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454 think Kathy has two grown boys and a grandson and a granddaughter. I think Bruce's son just
455 married in the last month or two. So, you know... I can't think of much else.

456 INTVWR: Well, when we first got in touch, you had already done quite a bit of family history
457 research.

458 ND: Yup.

459 INTVWR: Why is it important to you?

460 ND: Well, I've always had a historical interest, and it's taken on different forms. **00:51:00** A
461 number of years ago, I discovered that Archives Canada was making available records of
462 soldiers in the First World War. So, I actually got some copies that I'm going to take one of my
463 cousins at hand, who has come from England who would not have seen this. He's been doing
464 research in England. There were different stories for different people of that generation, but they
465 were all quite interesting in the way that they all played out, and how it all affected our lives.
466 Having figured this out, I was able to acquire such records for a number of other people, which I
467 passed along to them – on their request, of course. And it was... **00:52:00** It was a very good
468 way of sort of looking at the views that have affected people of my father's generation and of my
469 grandfather, who had all been through all of that. And, of course, their views were quite different
470 than the views (the political views) that we grew up with in the late '60s and the '70s. So, I've
471 been to Europe, to many of the places that Canada was in most – in both the First and Second
472 World War. I've been to the Canadian War Museum. I initially had tried to get some material
473 about my father while he was still alive, and he thought, "Nah, maybe not." But after he died,
474 we, I think... **00:53:04** We used the power of the executors to get the information. I think
475 I've got some of it at hand. And it was all very positive what they said about him. And what they
476 would do is they would take each soldier or sailor, and they would interview them, and they
477 decide, you know, if they should put them into some sort of occupational training or the like.
478 And what they said with Wilf was that he was a very bright, young guy who was interested in his
479 father's property business, and... And that this guy's going to do well. That's what he said. Now,
480 I'm not even sure my father ever saw that, but that's what he put, and that's what we were able to
481 obtain.

482 INTVWR: And he caught the wave of Burnaby and rode it well.

483 ND: **00:54:02** When I spoke at the service when he died, I said, when I was growing up, I think
484 all the people of his generation had all been in uniform, whether it was the Air Force or whether
485 it was the Navy or whether it was the Army. So often, you know, and people didn't talk about it
486 a whole lot, but there were lots of legions around which people did go to. And I'm sure those...
487 There were lots of those conversations. I have a very good friend, his name is Steve Adams, his
488 father grew up and graduated from Burnaby South. I'd be happy to refer him to you because they
489 were in Burnaby here. His name was Frank Adams. He was at Burnaby South. **00:55:00** He went
490 on to fly Lancasters. And at one point, he had four sons who I played rugby with here with the

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491 Burnaby Rugby Club. But at one point, they went back east and actually went up in a Lancaster
492 with Frank so they could see it again. But I think – well, I’ll let him speak to his father’s
493 experience during the Second World War, which weren’t always all that positive. But he would
494 know a lot. They were a real Burnaby family, in my experience, and I will probably be playing
495 golf with him the day after tomorrow. We, we play golf a lot, and we’re both well into our 70s.

496 INTVWR: **00:56:00** Very interesting, and... That is a theme that we run across a lot is that post-
497 war group of people, they were ready to go, and they were organized and knew what they wanted
498 and got things done.

499 ND: Yeah. They did very good in the insurance business, Adams Insurance. I think a lot of
500 people were not unlike me, who work because they like to work. You know? As long as you
501 don’t have to do it all the time.

502 INTVWR: Sure.

503 ND: You know? So, you can do what has to be done, but it’s not an 11-hour slog five days a
504 week. So.

505 INTVWR: Now, I’m mindful of the time. Is there anything that, that you wanted to put on record
506 here that we haven’t covered?

507 ND: Just thinking here, there was something that I was going to show you. **00:57:03** This is from
508 Sam. And in 1940, they had a national registration program that everybody (every adult) had to
509 apply in, and they wanted to find out who had the necessary skills. And you can get the records,
510 and I was able to get them for Sam, and this is what they sent to me. And it refers to the time he
511 was in Langruth. He would’ve been a farmer. I can send you this stuff if it’s of any interest to
512 you.

513 INTVWR: Sure, we’ll keep a little file on the family.

514 ND: I think that’s just been typed out, as well. He’s – he calls himself a rancher. He says he
515 knows how to drive, and we think it’s funny because he never had a driver’s **00:58:01** license
516 until about 1948 or ’49 when the cops pulled him over in New Westminster.

517 INTVWR: And he says here, “Not immigrant.”

518 ND: What does this mean? I’m, I’m guessing that somebody else filled this out for him.

519 INTVWR: Yeah, and, and I would – you would never use a term like “Semitic” here under racial
520 origin.

521 ND: Yeah. If you go into the census, you will see sometimes Syrian, sometimes Turk... I guess
522 the person who filled this out, he was probably going around to people.... And if you look at

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523 what he sent in, it's – this is how Sam signed his signature. But I think this fellow probably filled
524 it in. I think the other thing I was just going to show you was just some of this stuff I got for Wilf
525 from the Navy. **00:59:10** So, this is the Department of Veterans Affairs that they... So.

526 INTVWR: Yeah. Employed by father in a grocery store, worked as a gunner.... And this was
527 with the Canadian Navy, would it be?

528 ND: Well, they called it the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve. And what they did was
529 they had merchant ships, and I think they put a 15-cal machine gun or whatever it was on the
530 deck of it, and they take about three or four guys. And their sole job was to operate the gun. So,
531 in case German ship or a Japanese ship showed up, they were... **01:00:03**

532 INTVWR: That's something, too.

533 ND: And I've got a book, and it's about the – they're called "defensively enabled merchant
534 ships." So, he was on a number of ships, and he went all the way across to Europe, and all the
535 way across to Australia and the like. But that's what they were doing. So, I guess, other people
536 were doing other jobs in the ship to keep it going, and their job was just to be there to defend it.

537 INTVWR: Do you think he actually saw combat?

538 ND: No. I think by the time he got out there, we had controlled the submarines in the Atlantic
539 and also the Pacific. You know, I mean, you hear lots of stories about both the Americans in the
540 Pacific and, of course, the Canadians. 1943 was a very bad year, but I think by '44 and '45, we
541 were basically in control of that. **01:01:00** So. I'll send copies of this to you.

542 INTVWR: Sure. Sure, why not? Okay. Super. Okay, well, Norm, unless you have something
543 you'd like to add, maybe we should wrap it up now. That was excellent to get your, your
544 thoughts and views and your family history. It's, it's very interesting. I'm glad someone is
545 working on the history! A lot of people, I think, think too late, "should've taken a look at my
546 own family history." So, thank you very much.

547 ND: And I'm pleased to have been able to provide this. Thank you very much.

548 INTVWR: Very good. Okay, bye-bye. **01:01:37**