



KENSINGTON MARKET HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 1, no. 3. April 2016

Message from the President, *Dennis Reid*

THREE YEARS AGO we launched the Kensington Market Historical Society to the public. Last March we partnered with a couple of Museum Studies students who formally launched our oral history project online, and hosted a terrific event at the Lillian H. Smith library featuring a ‘human library’ of Market regulars who made themselves available for in-depth discussions of life in Kensington Market. It was a great afternoon of talk and food. You can hear excerpts from our oral histories on our website (kmhs.ca) by following the ‘General Eclectic’ link. Many thanks to **Marianne Williams** and **Rachel Leaton** for this inspiring addition to the website.

To date, we’ve conducted 12 interviews. These will be made available to the public by the Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario. Have

3 INTERVIEWS *Conducted by Kensington Market Historical Society*

EXCERPTS ON THE SUBJECT OF WAR

1 Wilfred Horwich talks about his father Moses who served in both World Wars.

Interviewed on April 22, 2014



MY FATHER LEFT, I can’t remember when he left. All the kids remembered their father, but I can’t because I was too young. He was an orderly; he was in the British Army in World War I for one year towards the end of the war. And the Canadian

army, he went overseas in 1940.

He would do odd jobs, unskilled labour jobs. We called him Pa. We never heard the word mother, father growing up; my parents were Pa and Ma, not being disrespectful at all. He a very intelligent gentleman.

Finished grade 10 around WWI time, and the guy had a variety of interests. He liked languages.

a look. A short selection from three interviews is included in this newsletter.

We have been invited by Heritage Toronto to design and deliver the tours they provide of Kensington Market. This is an exciting opportunity for us and we’re working hard to produce content that will give participants a sense of the Market’s complex and rich history. We’re calling it ‘Layers of Kensington’ and we hope you’ll consider joining us this spring for the tour. Two of our members, **Bruce Beaton** and **Cyrel Troster**, are experienced tour guides, and **Ruth Grossman** has incorporated fascinating and little-known facts into a new route. The 2016 schedule isn’t up as I write this, but you can find information at heritagetoronto.org/program/tours/. We expect the first tour will be May 15. Even if you’ve been on a Kensington tour in the past, this one will be different!

Last June our AGM and Spring Event consisted of a panel discussion on a literary theme. **Amy Lavender Harris**, **Sean Dixon** and **Michael Albert Ross** discussed Kensington Market as inspiration for their own work and in Canadian literature generally. It was a lively evening, as was our November event, a tribute to the television program, ‘King of Kensington’ featuring **Fiona Reid** and **Ardon Bess**.

With our ongoing oral history project and preparations for the tour, we decided not to host a March event this year. We will be involved in the discussions around the designation of Kensington Market as a Heritage Conservation District and we will continue to do our Pedestrian Sundays Kensington ‘Pop-Ups’, when we can.

Our AGM / Spring Event is in the works. Mark your calendars for June 14 when we will present ‘Bootleggers, Bookmakers and Brothels’, featuring **Ellen Scheinberg**, **Harold Troper**, and **Bob Bossin**. Bob has recently published a book on his father, *Davey the Punk*, a highly successful bookmaker in mid-20th century Toronto. There will be copies of his book, and also *The Ward* for sale. The program will be preceded by a brief AGM at 5:30; the program will start at 6:00.

If you haven’t renewed your membership you can now do so on our website (kmhs.ca). Get in touch if you’d like to be involved, or if you have ideas for programming or interviews—we welcome your feedback and we’re grateful for your support.

He spoke Italian because he had been on an Italian campaign, he happened to like opera. He picked up the language and he would talk to people, guys who were working on the sewers on the street. We had a big Italian influx after the war; Little Italy is not far off. He would talk to them in Italian because he felt quite comfortable



Horwich *continued*

using the language. I'm sure it scarred him but he never complained.

They took him on in WWII because I guess they were desperate for volunteers, and he was in his early 40s at that time.

They took him on as a medical orderly, he worked in the hospitals or behind the front lines where the injured or the deceased were brought back to, and he would be with the ambulance driver for example, took the guy to morgue or to the hospital to get fixed up. So he was doing these kinds of jobs. He was a people person.

He probably had some problems as well when he was in Italy, but he came back at Christmas '44. The train arrived at the food building at Exhibition, which was a military base. I remember Salvation Army had a canteen there, you can get an ice cream and coffee like for a kid, I got all the ice creams.

2 Zolly Zimmerman remembers his father talking about the First World War.

Interviewed on July 28, 2014

B: So he used to tell you stories about the First World War?

Z: Yeah.

B: And what did he tell you about the First World War?

Z: The First World War, well you know it's ehh, well, he said it wasn't so easy, they had a lot of walking, not like today with the cars and trucks.

B: Right, march, march, march.

Z: Yeah. We was always laughing from that, we think it's only a story, only a joke you know.

B: Right so he had a sense of humour about it? So tell me about him, was he a funny man by the sounds of it?

Z: He was a very nice man.

B: Hardworking I'm sure.

Z: Hardworking, yeah.

Zolton (Zolly) Zimmerman in front of his store on Augusta Avenue in the early 1960s



Marie Fujta–Yamashita aged 8 in 1946 with her mother Sumi and father Gengo.

3 Marie Fujta–Yamashita talks about moving to Kensington Market during World War 2

Interviewed on May 19, 2014

WHEN THE WAR broke out, we were in Vancouver. Actually, December 7th, my dad was on the golf course and he came back home, muttering to himself, saying, "They're so stupid," referring to the Japanese. Then the RCMP said, "You have to go someplace else." My mother had the forethought to store the furnishings.

We were located in Kaslo, and it seemed like all these ghost towns were oriented with your church, because Kaslo was United Church. A lot of the people lived in one place at Kaslo, but my dad, he found this cottage near the lake. He asked the owner, Penny, enclose the summer kitchen so there'll be indoor place for me to play. There was a curfew; you couldn't be out after seven. If you had a job to go to, the RCMP would let you come out east. We were on the train, said goodbye to our relatives in Lethbridge, and we took the long train ride to Toronto. It was January and a really snowy, I think it was forty-two or forty-three. We walked up to the Ford Hotel that was at Bay and Dundas.

A lady at the—there was a church, the United Church near St. Mike's, Miss Burg, she would help to relocate you. She found a family on Walmer Road, just north of Bloor Street. They needed a housekeeper, cook, and they could use a handyman. My mother piped up, "But I don't know how to cook," and she really didn't. She certainly got to learn how to cook, and next door was the Convalescent Home for the wounded soldiers, and I would pry the bushes to take a look. It was really interesting there but after a while my dad says, "There is not that much for me to keep repairing."

Then we had gone several places in the city, eventually my dad got a job at a munitions place, which burnt down in the city, and they relocated to Georgetown. We stayed there during the winter, then—I don't have a clue how my mother found this place [and] on Augusta [Avenue]. At that time, \$8000 might have been a million bucks, but somehow, we went there and it was just the three of us; that was in 1947.

Edited from the original interviews by Bruce Beaton.