

Goitom Fessahye

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Interviewers: Donna Coombs-Montrose, Colette Lebeuf, Don Bouzek. Camera: Don Bouzek

GF: I came in Edmonton 1983, June 24.

Q: Where did you come from?

GF: I came from Eritrea but I came from Sudan to Edmonton. I applied as a refugee in Sudan. I came with my wife. We were single at the time with no children. When we came here we started having children. There was not any... we have to find a job or just stay home and wait for the cheque from the government. The only job was dishwasher. When I decide myself to go upgrade my education, I went to the university. I'm too old for that, and the kids, I can't match with them, then I quit and went to NAIT.

Q: What did you take?

GF: Upgrade my university second year.

Q: Did you have some university back home?

GF: Back home is second year university, and I start here fresh. But it's hard for me. Maybe my age. Then I decided to go to NAIT instead of the university. I went to NAIT machine shop and get my certificate from NAIT and start working as a machine shop operator.

Q: Were you able to get employment?

GF: Yea I get job \$7 an hour. After a year, I injured my back and I couldn't work. I was on WCB for a year and the doctor said, "You can't lift heavy things so you have to find other way to help your profession." Then I start a computer career in St. Albert with new college start.

After one year I get a job in Alberta government on south side for completion delivery and supply service. I work there for three years and then when Klein comes he laid off so many government employees, and I'm one of them. On the side I used to work as a bartender here in Jasper Place with my friend. I start full employ with my friend as a bartender at nighttime.

Q: Where in Jasper Place did you work?

GF: Just across the street of my place. There was a small laundry and I working with him, then we open a bar called the Lou's Bar. It's tough, a very rough bar, very rough. I couldn't handle it and finally I decided to open my own small business, otherwise I couldn't go like this in a bar. They're aggressive people, they don't respect each other, then want fight.

Q: Were they from this area?

GF: Yea from this area and from reserve. Nighttime is so crowded and the police every night has to be there. Then finally I decided to buy that laundry across the street, the one we have now. Then I moved out and then I start my own business.

Q: When was this?

GF: 2003. Business was good, very good. Customer is good. There is no harassment, there is no disrespect. Everybody's respecting. So good with them and they liked me, I hope so. So if you go to the reserve they know me.

Q: The customers from the bar used the laundry?

GF: Well when they come to the bar, the laundry there is so quiet they are very nice. When they come to the bar, it's different attitude of they behave.

Q: Were people from the reserve a large part of your clientele?

GF: Most of them, yea. Some of them in the morning they wait for me in front of the door. At that time they don't have a dryer and washer on their site.

Q: Is that Enoch reserve?

GF: Not only Enoch – Alexis, Alberta Beach, what is that railway station. Some of them even came from Rocky Mountain. They wanted to go to Edmonton mall, and on their way they bring their stuff or clothes to wash. Until last year, but now they get old and they start to quitting come in maybe.

Q: You had a wide range of clientele.

GF: Yea. They come from Alberta Beach and Rocky Mountain, they don't care. On their way they do their laundry. There is a laundry in Rocky Mountain, but on their way they like my place maybe, maybe they like my washers. But as soon as Corona and Indigenous going, then under and never recover. Going down, down, down. Finally it looks like very low. Even sometimes I can't pay my rent. Not to pay for myself, because I'm retired and don't care about my salary, but for rent for that business I can't afford. Then I decided I have to sell it. The construction also kill it more. Then I started coming here to talk to town what I have to do. There is nothing to help me but I'm getting some information because in my place I never have any contact with the city or something like that, because business was good. When you are in trouble, then find here or there talk to people how to survive. I tried get a loan and buy new machines, but doesn't make any change. On the reserve they have their own washers and dryers, that's a big difference. Every household, every house, they have their own washer and dryer. So why do they have to come to us? They stay there. So that is a point. So the laundry industry is over, in my own idea. This is what I'm thinking. If I have my own washer and dryer, why do I have to go to the laundry? That's people now. There are a few people for blanket or when they get so dirty clothes they come; there are a few people. But as regular, no. Every week they used to come, but not anymore.

Q: Did you ever live in Jasper Place?

GF: Live in Jasper Place? No, but I work here for 35 years.

Q: So your children didn't grow up in the area?

GF: Yea.

Q: Are you aware of any other Eritreans, Ethiopians or Sudanese living in the area?

GF: I think at this time there are Sudanese, Ethiopian, Eritrean, so many black American. But before I can say only me and a very few in this area. Even I can say I'm the only black in the Jasper, and Shirley too, Shirley hairdresser. We are only two, [and Eritrean Sammy's Mini Mart]. Hair dressing was there, last week the one that get burned down, it was so close to that. That was hair dressing. It was nice in Jasper, quality people. In Jasper bank area there was six or seven bank from 156 to 151st Street. In between, there was seven banks. All the banks in Alberta were here, one of their branches. Then when it get start building the bridge on 170 Street, all of them they move over there and it's empty. Those employees who used to live around this area, they move with the bank. They left this area, so Jasper became empty. So 170 is the first [inaudible] for the Jasper Place. There was only pawnshop, small pawnshop in that area. His name is Stan. I think he's too old now; I don't know whether he's alive or not. He's only one small pawnshop. There was not any pawnshop before. Now he's turned it to pawnshop.

Q: Did you know Stan for a long time?

GF: Yea I know all of them from this area, Jasper. They know me, I know them.

Q: I notice a sign for cash loans on 153 and Stony Plain. Is that his pawnshop?

GF: Just across the street of my place, just across the street.

Q: How did the Klein cuts affect you?

GF: It discouraged my life. I was scared. I thought that once you are in with the government employ, you stay for your life. That's back home in my mind. But here no, it's like a private – they can kick you out, they can hire you. When I get my paper, my notice that is not anymore, what I going to do then? I had one daughter at that time, she was five or six years old. My wife wasn't working, she's taking care of my daughter. Then I planned to move out from Alberta to go to States or to Toronto. Then after look my financial for transportation. I had a friend, Dr. David, at Mennonite Centre. He open the Mennonite Centre. I don't know where is he now. He's a nice guy. I gave my plan and he say, we'll give you for transportation free. My wife she says, 'Well, we are here, we have friends here. If we go to Toronto it will be starting [over], difficult to get friends even.'" I found then the school, training, information about seminars, how to establish, how to start business. I don't know how to explain it, when you get laid off and financially it's not enough, it's scary. What to do. Any immigrant when they come here they think this is a fortune, and everything. But when they don't see that, they get angry. They want go back, not to go back but another plan. Better to go back; why do I have to stay here? That's their emotion. But they don't want to go because already they here and there's no place for them to go back. So that was in my emotion. But slowly, slowly then I became calm and resettle rethinking. Then I start.

Q: Why did you call it Lou's Bar?

GF: My friend, he open it. They call him Lou's "Mulugheta Mebazione". So by his name, he open it.

Q: Was he Indigenous?

GF: He's from Eritrea.

Q: So you had a partnership.

GF: Yea, partners. He's the top owner. He's a good businessman. He's good communication with people. People they like him. He's a good communicator, that's why he opened the bar.

Q: People would come from the community to support your business.

GF: Yea. It was a good friend of Shirley that one, too. He's a good friend. She knows very well Lou's.

Q: If I ask about Lou's, she'll know who I'm talking about?

GF: Oh yea very, they were so close friends.

Q: What is his other name?

GF: Mulugheta.

Q: Did Shirley come to the bar too?

GF: No.

Q: Where was the bar located?

GF: The first laundry? Just across the street. Always everything's across the way. My life start there and it end there.

Q: Jasper Place is where your heart is.

GF: Yea. I am the only Black one there. They call me black. When the black comes, I'm not a black. They are thinking if you are different colour you are black. When other black comes, no you are not a black. South Sudan, they're real black. American black, oh there is another black? African is a multicultural race – semi-white, semi-Arabic. Centre is real black; Sudan, Uganda,

Congo, Kenya, Tanzania up to South African is black. We call them Nilotic, the Nile. Even Sudan, if you don't look like them you're different.

Q: How do you feel about Jasper Place today?

GF: Well what I'm going to say? I can't say the dead.

Q: Are other businesses along Stony Plain having the same experience? There was a Jamaican restaurant that caught fire and never reopened.

GF: The restaurant? Which one?

Q: It's painted yellow and green. I used to buy food there.

GF: The Jamaican one? Yea, it's in a fire.

Q: Yes, now there's no more business.

GF: Yea, it's not good to even open back now at this time. But in the future after, I don't know how long it take the construction, but when the construction is done I'm sure it will be fantastic city street. It's good for the people if they buy now, cheaper now, but after the construction it will be expensive I'm sure.

Q: The construction is affecting everybody.

GF: Oh yea, it affect everybody.

Q: I hope it survives.

GF: But time is long, for five years. I can't wait for that. I'm already retired, so it's not good future for me. But for the one who want to buy it.

Q: You look too young to retire.

GF: I'm retired now. It's enough for me. I can't work all my life, and then finally to get crippled in my work and then in wheelchair. That's just not good life. I have to get out. But I'm fortunate it's not in a good time what's happened to my business. But for me I want to relax, mental relax.

Q: Are you thinking of selling it?

GF: Oh yes, already I put a notice. But I don't think the buyers are coming soon, because they have to wait for two or three years for the construction. Otherwise I'm going looking just to pay by my land property, that's it. Then when good time, the children have to sell it. But for me, my time is over.

Q: Is there anything more you'd like to add at this time?

GF: No. I'm from Jasper, I'll die in Jasper. That's it, 35 years in Jasper.

Q: Have you heard of Johnny Bright?

GF: Johnny Bright? He was a businessman?

Q: No, he was a football player.

GF: What kind of business?

Q: Football, he was a footballer. He played football. He was from Jasper Place area.

GF: Oh just he's famous but not business. No, I know only business people because every morning say hi, hi, hi.

Q: Which other business people do you know?

GF: All my neighbours, from 156 to 151st Street. That's limit area. I don't know those after 156 down there, I don't know them.

Q: Have you seen a lot of change along that strip?

GF: A lot of change. Everything changes, what can I say. I can't say change, it's dead. Klondiker after hundred years, kaput, dead. It's just a circle by fence now, they're going to sell it maybe. Howard Johnson used to be called Saxony, we so busy hotel. What is now? It's a hotel for the homeless. They're dead. I don't know what to say. But I pray for good time to come for Jasper. I know we're in a good time, I know we're in a bad time.

Q: You've seen a lot of businesses come and go.

GF: A lot of them are still there.

Q: What kind of people have owned businesses in your block?

GF: There was laundry equipment selling and buying, Chinese guy, my neighbour. He retired and sold it, then it became warehouse for luggage. The second store was a glass store, then they left because there was no business. The rest is just office. There was another for using vacuums, and I didn't think he making business and he left it, he sold it I think. That Jamaican guy restaurant used to be a MacDonald's. Then MacDonald's sold the property and move it to 178 and 111 at the corner. So there are good business there. It was too small in the area to expand for them. The whole revolutionary cycle, bicycle, the whole building I think somebody bought it.

Q: Do you think that when the construction is finished, businesses will come back to the area?

GF: The location is the best location, Jasper Place. But the City, I don't think they playing good role. They don't want help the business. If they don't help them, how are they going to survive? A businessman looks for profitable business. If not profit, he move somewhere else. Other territory, he move somewhere. But if you give him for stay, then he will stay, he will wait, because he can survive and pay the rent and pay the employee. But the City, I ask them. They don't say no but they send you a bill to pay property every month; they never stop, never. I don't have income. They don't care. So why don't come and buy it? So for me then I have to decide my own.

Q: Has your block gone up or gone down?

GF: At least for me they give me a chance. It's open, I have space open going to main street and the back alley. So they don't want that, the City don't want that. Because of the train start, they don't want open alley. What they said, if you build retail at the front and two story on top, then we'll give you \$200,000. But for me I'm too old, I don't want another mortgage.

Q: Oh it's a mortgage, not a grant.

GF: It's a grant, from the City it's a grant. But \$200,000, what you going to do with that? Only for the retail I can add something and I can build, but you have to build two story on top for office or for residential. That's the condition to get those \$200,000; you have to fill this. Ask the construction about that, they say it's going to be \$1.8 million or \$2 million. I say no, I keep quiet. It's only for the rich people.

Q: So you're currently waiting for a buyer?

GF: Yea. This is not good time for me now, too late for me.

Q: Do you wish you had come to Jasper Place sooner?

GF: If we were 10 or 15 years younger, probably I'd take the chance. But mortgage, okay, so much interest for \$2 million. A lot.

Q: It's a good spot.

GF: If you are young, yea. Business is business. You can succeed, you can fail; you have to know that.

Q: During your years in business, did you have any negative experiences based on your colour?

GF: No, all of them are good friend for me. I have never had any, well sometimes I've had very aggressive Native: go back home, go back home. But I don't mind about that, whatever. Okay, tomorrow if you buy me a ticket out I'll go tomorrow. It's fun for me. If you get mad, they say whatever they say. You don't think that it hurt somebody, but you say it. You don't have to respond, you don't have to be angry. It's okay, part of business. Even white to white, they do the same thing, they give a name each other. It's human being nature, behave. Then the next day they come, can you give me \$5 for hamburger? You don't have to say no – give them. Once you give to him, he'll tell the others that you are a nice guy. Don't say no -- \$1 or \$2 for coffee, give them. It's not going hurt to me. But I bring in other customer that bring me love, kindness, be friends. So that way I stay here long.

Q: There used to be a restaurant at the corner of 156 and Stony Plain. Do you remember Sit and Chat?

GF: A Chinese restaurant?

Q: No, it was owned by some people from Trinidad. Sit and Chat at 156 near the Orange Hub just out here on the corner. Then it became an Indian restaurant more recently.

GF: No, I've never been in that restaurant but I remember there was black restaurant somewhere around that area.

Q: Sit and Chat, friends of Shirley. Then it became an Indian restaurant called Namaste.

GF: On the corner facing this way, yea. So many different owners of that restaurant. Now they have 162nd Street Namaste restaurant.

Q: And there's a Jamaican restaurant a couple blocks up 156th as well.

GF: A new one?

Q: In an old house they converted.

GF: I don't go that much to restaurants.

Q: Is there any Eritrean restaurant in the area?

GF: Downtown, yea. . . . Eritrean and Ethiopian is the same.

Q: So you wouldn't open a restaurant in this area?

GF: No. There was a lady, she open a restaurant here 156 and 101 or 102 Avenue. But she close it because she couldn't get business, I don't know.

Q: What was it called?

GF: It was called Ethiopian Restaurant.

Q: But it's no longer there?

GF: No. Some of them, they want more big profit, some of them small profit. Those are small profit, they stay. But those who are looking big profit, they don't stay. There's no good income; they leave it and go somewhere.

Q: What attracts people to Stony Plain?

GF: Maybe in the future they're going to open an Ethiopian restaurant or Eritrean restaurant in Jasper Place. But you have to have some of your community around that area. Then when they come in and out, other community also they follow different kind of restaurant they want taste it. But there is not that many people Eritrean and Ethiopian in the west end. On the north side, lots; downtown lots. Those Eritrean and Ethiopian restaurants, they go after them. But there is one grocery open here, Eritrean guy, two doors from my place, a small grocery.

Q: Does he have Eritrean people coming to his store?

GF: At the beginning he opened it for Eritrean grocery, but nobody's coming here from the north or from the south to buy from him. Now he changing it for anybody: shirts or shoes, every kind for any community.

Q: What's his name?

GF: Sammy. Just two door from my place, toward downtown.

Q: What's the name of his place?

GF: Mini-Store.

Q: What was your reason for opening a laundromat, as opposed to any other kind business?

GF: Because I was working across the street and an East Indian guy owns laundry across the street, so we know each other. He asked me to buy it. It's good, I'm looking for business, and I bought it.

Q: Do you remember the bar you worked at as a bartender? Was it the Jasper Hotel?

GF: The Lou's Bar. Owned by Lou, his name is Lou.

Q: Did you work as a bartender in another bar?

GF: No. I used to work in the government and then at the same time I get laid off. So I left that and I continue fulltime working nighttime.

Q: Did bands or musicians come in to play at the bar?

GF: We used to rent every Friday a band, Friday and Saturday there was a band. Then in my place once a year I think they were making a movie on Jasper, and they was at my place. They hook there electricity, they use everything. I give them the key of the laundry because they stay longer nights and I have to go home, I don't have to wait for them. Then I trusted the lady, I gave them the key of my laundry, then tomorrow morning the next day she will get for me. Once a year. I don't know this year, but every year a new movie they make.

Q: Who made these movies?

GF: I don't know, the City maybe. I don't know. Or the community? I have no idea. It's a big movie.

Q: Have you ever seen it?

GF: No.

Q: But you helped with it.

GF: Yes, they came and asked me for the community, and okay I will help you. They use electricity, well I don't know how much electricity they can use for five or six hours. Then okay don't worry, and I give the key. But don't allow anybody to wash and dry. You control it, because I have to go to sleep. Because they stayed till 11 or 12 o'clock.

Q: Do you remember what year that was?

GF: Every year they used to come, every year. They want something before Todd for the Small Business Association in charge, Diana before Todd. I don't know if she show it already. Diana I think, she's the one organize it and she comes to my place.

Q: Was that with the current business association or was it with the Jasper Gateway Foundation? Were you part of that business association? In the 1990s there was another business association.

GF: I don't know, I sat in 2003.

Q: The bands that played at Lou's, what kind of music was it?

GF: I can't specify. Lou do it by himself, the owner.

Q: At the time you left Eritrea, were there things going on in the country that made you want to leave?

GF: You meant the situation in Horn of Africa? It is a very important strategic for the whole war. The Red Sea is the main for the trade from Asia to Europe, from Europe to Asia. Second, the Horn of Africa is rich in mineral, very rich. They have everything. The situation is interference from outside. Anyway, the problem is from outside. They don't let them do by themselves or they don't let them run their own affairs. They wanted them depend on Europeans. They give you loan. Well you get the loan because you get cash money, but you don't know the

consequence behind it. It looks like honey, but what is behind it? You are in trap. You can't move anywhere. If you show a dog a bone or a meat, every morning, it comes to your place. That's the same thing they do for Africans. Those corrupt Africans, they don't share that money with their own people. They put in their pocket and then deposit in Switzerland, so the people see nothing. I hate them. That's the anger of the new generation. The corrupt government, they don't think that the new generation think, but the children start to think it against you. But they don't care. They take their children to Harvard University or Europe to study there, and they pay for them. But the poor people stay there; they have no choice where to go. Then one strong guy or military start to overthrow the government. If he's not pro-west, he's not going to stay long. Either they're going to assassinate him or they're going to overthrow him. You have to be pro-west because they give you loan, they give you food, even though your own land is fertile. Sudan and Ethiopia is very rich country. Ethiopia, all year is rain. They can feed the whole Africa. But they don't allow it in time of Haile Selassie. The Americans, instead of developing the country, just developed the military. There was only one university in 25 million population, one university of only 3,000. So, it means it's better to say there's no university. To get into the university you have to work hard. Out of 25 million people, who is the lucky guy to participate? Finally, Haile Selassie, they kill him, the military. This military, then he became friend of the Russians. From the kill, it started then, up to now; it's not settled in the Horn of Africa. The only small country called Eritrea, no aid from the west, no money from the west. We can dig our own, we can plow our own, we can feed our own people. In America they don't want that bad spoiled man. They call him spoiled man, because if Africans learn about that, they going to be self reliant. Then America put sanction against a small country, 4 million population. What they going to gain? It's not allowed to get food from outside, not allowed medicine from outside, not allowed ship to harbor in the ports.

Q: Who decided that?

GF: White House. Even Barack Obama, we don't like him. We thought there was feeling of Africans of Barack Obama; he's black, maybe now Africa is going to flourish. It's a black man, but the worst. No. Myself I like Trump; whether you don't like him, but I like Trump. You know why? Trump said, "Feed yourself; I am not going to give you aid, I'm not going to give you

money. Search for your own how to survive.” That’s good for Africans, then they open their eye for self-reliance. We are in a good peaceful country, education everywhere, women’s rights everywhere. But still Obama said, oh this is small Korean country. Why did he say that? Okay, I’m proud to hear that. He compare us with a big nation. I don’t know what to say even. But we are still third world. North Korea is not third world, it’s a nuclear country. But we have small country, we didn’t have even enough food. But we are self-reliant, we have enough land to plow, we have enough mineral to sell. We don’t want to depend on any country. But Americans say, if this country is not overthrown, it’s going to spoil Africans, so the sooner the better. Either they have to assassinate him. . . He’s the first president of that small country walking on the street of New York. No president can walk on the street of New York. That American was shocked. They don’t like it like that. Why? Because his people, they love him. They love him. We want to be friend with everybody. Don’t tell us don’t be friend with Russia or don’t be friend with. . . We don’t want follow what your policy. We are everybody our friend. We’ve got to make friend with the world. If you are following the news, the Zambian president said for the Vice-President of the United States, Kamala Harris, “They are not going to teach us about democracy.” The German foreign minister last week went to Southwest Africa and met the president. He told him... because there are about 50,000 Germans living in that area, but now the China is double. So they are not happy and maybe they inform the German government and then he sent that guy. He said, “How can you be friend with China? They are not good.” “Are you going to teach us who is a good guy or bad guy? We are not colony anymore.” It used to be German colony. He ignored him. Another one in Chad, 24 hours he kick out the ambassador of Germany. That is a problem. People now, because of the Internet, they learn so many things – what is going on in the world, what is good what is bad. I know just from the Internet. So people is not like 50 or 40 years ago, the only news I remember is from BBC or German radio. That’s only in Africa broadcasting from outside. But now with Internet. . . So that is a problem in Africa too much depend. If you are too much depend, there is crisis in your country. Let your own people listen to the people. Military have to be military, stay away from the politic of the country.

Q: Have you ever returned for a visit to Eritrea?

GF: Yea, every three or four years I go there, because I have brother and sisters, family there. It's a peaceful country. Now Sudan is our neighbour. We don't want to continue that war, because it's going to affect us. Refugees will come, which is not good. It's 25 million population; the war is in a city, not somewhere out of the capital city. I was shocked when I see airplane bombarding. That's African behaviour.

Q: Why did you choose to come to Edmonton?

GF: It's not my choice.

Q: When you are a refugee, do they tell you where to go?

GF: Yea. It is the decision of the foreign immigration system they have – how many people go there, how many refugees to Toronto, to Montreal. They decide themselves. So you take your fly ticket and then the plane will land you what they say. When we came here there was good reception.

Q: Who received you when you came?

GF: The agent was waiting for us in airport.

Q: An agent from immigration?

GF: From airport. Then already they have the immigration who is coming there already on the list. When you come to airport, then the agents came and took us by taxi and we're put up in a hotel. We stay in a hotel for three weeks. It was a good welcome, a good reception. Then they rent apartment for us.

Q: Immigration?

GF: No, once you are landed here the Alberta government is responsible. So the Alberta government make plan which hotel you have to go, and then somebody would take care of you, take you to the Manpower, make an appointment. They give us a bus pass and a map of the city. That's it.

Q: So you looked at the map and decided where you wanted to live?

GF: No.

Q: They decided for you?

GF: Well everybody like to close living, they don't separate you one is north side one is south side. No, everybody downtown.

Q: They brought everybody to the same place?

GF: Yea where they get apartment. Most of it was downtown and close to the Manpower, government office, healthcare, hospitals. So close that's it, so downtown, so you don't have to be problem where to go. The hospital, Royal Alex is beside you. Manpower, government office is beside Jasper. You walk there. At that time it was called ABC College, now they call it . . . Those are for English learner, they send them there. It was a good time.

Q: Did you go there to study English?

GF: No, I didn't go for language. My wife, yes.

Q: There are a lot of apartment buildings in this area. Is that where many of your laundry customers would come from?

GF: Some of the customers, because small machine, it's not a big washer. The blanket, they can't wash there so they have to go to where the big washer is. They come there and they wash there a blanket once or twice a year. It's not good for business.

Q: Did you notice any change when MacEwan University moved out?

GF: No, I don't know that much about Grant MacEwan.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

GF: No.

Q: Did you do the laundry for hotels or other businesses in Jasper Place?

GF: Yea I had for Saxony, I used to wash their clothes. But now the big laundry in the west end is so huge, not just for one load, maybe for 100 load at the same time. It's a big company, so instead of bring it to my place they go there. It's better washing, better everything.

Q: That's in the west end?

GF: Yea for the hotel, for the hospital, for everything they do that, they wash. . . . I'm asking only what is the future of Jasper, what is that? Do you think the City is going to help us? Anything grant? I'm looking for the grant.

Q: You're concerned about the future?

GF: Exactly. I don't get any information what they're going to do. They access the building and the train come by, or are they going to demolish it, and build something? I don't know.

Q: Did they hold any orientation sessions in the area?

GF: I don't have any information. But they have to demolish so many buildings, that's my idea.

Q: Did they compensate you for that?

GF: Of course they have to pay for, they have to buy it and then demolish it. That's the system of the City. They're planning Jasper Place will be the same like Whyte Avenue, that's their dream. Some of the cities, they talk about it. But unless it's [by themselves], the City build it for their own... something here. For example, Grant MacEwan now is part of the City. But I don't think it influences Jasper Place, because it's a little bit is hidden from the main street. Anything on the street people can see it, it's a view, but this is not in view. Just the name. When they finish it maybe; I don't know what they are building now; they demolish something and they are building; we'll see how it's going to look. But what we want, for example, the Jasper...

Klondiker Hotel used to be, demolish it and make for the seniors house maybe or something. It can change – the Klondiker. And there is another block that had a fire four, five years ago – that lot where they're parking cars now. This is a big lot, so do masterplan good for attraction – retail at the front, business on top or residential, so it can be attractive. I remember Whyte Ave was a ghost in 1984 when we came. But now it's wonderful. Even Jasper Avenue was a ghost when we came here. After 5 o'clock nobody was going walk over there. You have to go to your home, not on the street. But now it's different. So, do something. It will come for Jasper here too, it will come. I believe it's not going to be empty like this. But something the City will have to start, then the land will be expensive and investors will come and demolish it and [build] it themselves. Because it's too old, everything is old. Jasper itself at the hotel, I remember they celebrate... 20 years ago it's a hundred years old, maybe 120 years old now. When Alberta started to be Alberta, they started that hotel.

Q: Do you have any Indigenous or Metis friends in the area?

GF: I have lots. If you go to Enoch, if you ask them, "Do you know Tom the Laundry?" everybody tells you. Just not Goitom, but Tom the Laundry. I have lots, more than any. Even those homeless here, if you ask them, do you know Tom the Laundry, the homeless pushing cart, "Where is Tom?"

Q: Do you remember fires along the avenue?

GF: I used to know the owner of that adult store. I don't know the new one, but the previous one he used to come to the bar, so I remember it. But I don't know, I don't have any connection with them.

Q: There was the Jamaican restaurant there too.

GF: I don't know what happened. The Turkish guy, the parking lot now, poor guy he spent \$600,000 for the grocery. It's new, just three months. You see there's a parking lot here by this Jasper Place? The fence, that used to be a store when the Chinese restaurant was at the corner and IGA, big store used to be. One Turkish guy, he bought it and then he opened a new grocery and the restaurant. After three months a fire. Maybe it's the restaurant beside it where start the fire. Why is fire everywhere in Jasper Place? I don't understand. Romano, then this and then that. I don't know, let the experts find out. But five stores on the same street. I don't know. For me it's scary why there's fire, fire, fire. Romano was very nice restaurant, good breakfasts. Then fire in there.

Q: Romano's?

GF: Used to be on 156, you know that bus station? At the corner, used to be Romano Restaurant.

[END]