

## **I Was Here**

### **Episode 4: Willowdale with Elva Barrowman**

#### **Please Note:**

These transcripts reflect a taped conversation and as such might not read as grammatically correct in every instance.

#### **Introduction**

**Catherine:** I Was Here was created with generous financial support from the Accessibility project at the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, Ryerson University. The views and opinions expressed in this podcast are those of the storytellers and are in no way endorsed by, or representative of, the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education.

#### **Disclaimer**

Hi, this is Matt, Audio Engineer and Producer for I Was Here. Just a heads up that we recorded this episode in our storyteller's apartment on a 30-degree day in August. Due to Elva's age, we were unable to turn off the air conditioning during recording, so you will hear some background noise during the interview. Enjoy the episode!

#### **Cold Open**

**Elva:** You do get old. Honest. You do get old. You fight it at every angle I guess. And you go to a doctor and they say, have you ever considered your age Mrs. Barrowman. Well, no. Never.

[music]

#### **Interview**

**Catherine:** You are listening to I Was Here a podcast featuring older adults who have interesting stories about, or long histories with, spaces and places in Toronto. I am your host, Catherine Dunphy.

[music]

**Catherine:** In this episode I am talking to:

**Elva:** Oh, this is Elva Barrowman. I am 103 and I'm living at a senior's place. And I am still upright and breathing. A necessary evil [laughs].

**Catherine:** Elva was born in June 1915. Yes, you heard right. 1915. She remembers coal

fires on street cars. Mail delivery twice a day. And the thrill of hot water coming out of taps. When she and John and the three kids moved to muddy Willowdale in 1956 she became a pioneer of the suburbs, forging friendships with other young stay at home moms. She lived in her two-story home until she was 97. By that time her new neighbors had taken to calling her the wise woman of Glenelia Avenue. Maybe it was because she was still alert and active and delighted by everyday things. Or maybe it was because of the poems that Elva writes. Just wait till you hear them.

[music]

**Catherine:** So tell me about that you were 16 and I know you told me you cried when you came to Toronto.

**Elva:** Well, sure you cry when you come to Toronto and then you move from Toronto back to London. So you cry when you leave Toronto and go back to London. Then you're leaving London and you cry when you leave London to go back to Toronto. So it's just life, you know. Because you make new friends but you also hate like sin leaving them. But no it was a big thing moving at 16 to Toronto and to Mount Dennis and it is the middle of the Depression. So money was basically nonexistent.

**Catherine:** But tell me about the Mount Dennis that you found. It was a company town.

**Elva:** I mean it was just another place to live. We lived on a nice street. I went to Garden Memorial School. Once you got there and made a few friends it was fine. It's like anyplace else. You're about as happy as you make up your mind to be so. Anyway the thing I remember about York was it had a swimming pool and of course we all had to take swimming. And there were cotton bathing suits. Have you ever been in a cotton bathing suit? If you haven't, you don't want to, trust me.

**Catherine:** Tell me why.

**Elva:** Well, they cling like cloth [laugh]. And this sounds ridiculous but in London we didn't have a bathtub. So you had your bath in the kitchen in a laundry tub. So when we moved to Toronto there was this bathtub. And you went downstairs and you lit the rad heater and you waited for a little while and then you went upstairs and you turned on a tap. And hot water came out. And then you got into a bathtub and you could sit with your feet out.

**Catherine:** OK. Happiness is.

**Elva:** Happiness is.

**Catherine:** A warm tub.

**Elva:** A tub with warm water. Yeah. Anyway.

**Catherine:** And was Saturday night bath night?

**Elva:** Oh it always was, but when you had the bathtub you didn't have to wait until Saturday night because you didn't have to heat the water in a boiler.

**Catherine:** [laughs] So I suppose this helped you learn to love Toronto a little bit quicker.

**Elva:** Oh yeah. It's like anyplace else you when you move at first. Because you've left all your friends behind. It takes a little time, but when you're this age you've forgotten what it was like [laughs]. But you just got along with the people on the street. And we always had good neighbors. There was a fruit store and they used to come round with a wagon with the fruit on it so you could buy strawberries. I can remember we used to buy strawberries two cents a box. I go back a long time [laughs]. And then there was a fish man. And the milk was delivered, and it was horse wagon. And bread was delivered, and it was horse and wagon. And Eaton's delivered, and it was horse and wagon. And you never thought anything about it because that's just the way it was. And then you're trying to remember when it changed but you don't remember. It's just like anything else. Change just sort of comes.

**Catherine:** So when you were growing up, you were telling me that you were part of the church and there was a young people's group there. And I think this is where you met your husband. Is that right?

**Elva:** Well, no not in Mount Dennis we moved from Mount Dennis to Fairbank.

**Catherine:** Oh Fairbank. Right. Which is another area in the current city of York.

**Elva:** Yeah, Vaughan Road and that area.

**Catherine:** Yeah. Vaughan Road and St. Clair?

**Elva:** Vaughan Road and Eglinton. But the thing was, the war came along and my father joined the army. So that meant we had to move from Fairbank. So we moved over to Vaughan Road and Clair. I wasn't sure which church I would go to if any, but anyway Wychwood Church was there and they had a big young people's group. So I joined Wychwood Church and that's where I met my husband. We had a group of about 12 of us who just happened to get along so we used to go to each other's houses and play Whist. Yeah. And the strongest drink was Ginger ale. Yeah. There's just two of that group left. Yeah.

**Catherine:** And you being one of them?

**Elva:** Mmhmm.

**Catherine:** So do you still see the other person?

**Elva:** No, the problem is that when you're older you can talk by telephone but you can't get to see each other because they used to drive. I never did drive, but they did, but now they can't. And there's always something.

**Catherine:** And so when you're describing this young people's group that you met at Wychwood Church, you were working at the time?

**Elva:** Yeah. I guess I was 19 or 20 and I worked downtown.

**Catherine:** And what was it that you did?

**Elva:** I have such a wonderful background. I worked at the church office. Yeah.

**Catherine:** But you talked about how you bought your house. Your husband had just come back from the war and it was the soldier's dream wasn't it, to buy a home?

**Elva:** Yeah, well I remember we thought we might like to go to Leaside. And he looked at this house, and the lady said, now it's a real bargain because it's only \$20,000. Really? \$20,000 may just well have been \$200,000. Anyway we found out about these houses Glenelia, and they were \$15,500 and so we bought the house. And I think we had a \$9,000 mortgage, which we didn't know how we would ever pay.

**Catherine:** Really? Many sleepless nights.

**Elva:** Mmhmm. But John had a steady job. He was with Bell when Bell was a good company to work for.

**Catherine:** [laughs]. Now come on [laughs]. He was with Bell when we all needed Bell. Bell was the first. They brought us our telephone. They kept us connected.

**Elva:** Yes, they did.

**Catherine:** Was he a lineman?

**Elva:** No, he was an engineer.

**Catherine:** An engineer.

**Elva:** Yeah.

**Catherine:** So you lived the life then that you could live with you at home. You had three kids.

**Elva:** Yeah.

**Catherine:** And he left for work with a wave and a whistle. And you were at home. You didn't drive.

**Elva:** No way.

**Catherine:** There was no TTC for 11 years when you were there, correct?

**Elva:** Mmhmm.

**Catherine:** Yet, you call it utopia. Tell me about it.

**Elva:** Well, I didn't know I said it was utopia. It was just a good place to live. And you had really good neighbors and you were friends and your kids could just play. We didn't have to worry about them. And you know, you didn't have to lock your door. And if your kids would leave a trike at the end of the street, somebody would either bring it back or say, you left your trike down the end there, you better get it. And I remember with Grant I had tried to teach him to bring his toys in and this one night he came in and said, mom is it true if you leave your toys out somebody will steal them? I said, well it can happen Grant. And he said, oh because David left his out and I stole it.

**Catherine:** [laughs] And you responded?

**Elva:** No Grant, it doesn't work like that. But it's just really hard to put it into words because it was just good neighbors, and you knew you could call on them at any time. And none of the women at that time worked, but then of course it changed.

**Catherine:** It did change a little bit later, but at that time, were you close, you and the women?

**Elva:** Yeah. It was great. We put fences up, but we didn't need fences. We'd be in somebody's backyard and the kids would all be playing and you'd be having a coffee. And you knew you needed each other. Because there was nothing. If you had to go shopping, the closest was at Finch. That was the only one. And then you lose track of how many years it was before they put up a shopping mall at the corner of Yonge and Comer. But you did your shopping on a Friday night because John worked on Saturday morning and it was open on Friday night and they weren't open on Sunday.

**Catherine:** And he had the one car.

**Elva:** And there was one car. Yeah. But you were able to do that and not starve to death you know? And have just a really good life. Yeah.

**Catherine:** I think you were telling me that the women would sometimes get together and have a women's night out.

**Elva:** Oh yeah. The men would drive us to the theater which was just across the road here.

**Catherine:** That would be Yonge.

**Elva:** The Willow Theatre, yeah. And then you could walk back down to Finch and get the Baldwin taxi. It was 10 cents each because it was 50 cents to go home.

**Catherine:** Wow.

**Elva:** And if we could either do that or walk, but you had to walk from here to Bayview. So we were better off having a ride at night.

**Catherine:** How long of a walk would that have been?

**Elva:** Well, what's a concession? About a mile and a quarter?

**Catherine:** Yes, it's a mile.

**Elva:** Yeah.

**Catherine:** OK, it's a good 20 minutes.

**Elva:** And it was fun. Yeah.

**Catherine:** But you would go as a gang?

**Elva:** Yeah. The five of us.

**Catherine:** Five of you. So there were five of you living in this cul de sac street, and you were neighbours.

**Elva:** Yeah, just neighbors. You know, and everybody had kids. Yeah.

**Catherine:** Did you go to any special movie showings or any big openings?

**Elva:** Oh, I remember when O'Keefe Centre opened. We went down to that.

**Catherine:** Oh the women went down to that?

**Elva:** Oh a whole gaggle of us. My sisters and everybody.

**Catherine:** Tell me about that night that the O'Keefe Center opened. The O'Keefe Centre which has been named so many different things. I think it's called the Sony Centre for the Performing Arts now, but I may be wrong.

**Elva:** All of the celebrities came and they were all dressed up. And the women would all be in long dresses and the men were really nicely dressed. So when the grunge scene came and people were coming to the theater in jeans. Oh! [gasps]. But anyway, at least they were at the theater.

But as I say I was so lucky because the Royal Alexandra was there and you could see so many phenomenal people. I saw Helen Hayes and Alfred Lonton and Fontaine. And I saw Katharine Hepburn and Bramwell Fletcher and all kinds of them.

And we went to the opera at the Maple Leaf Gardens to see Renata Tebaldi in Aida and it was \$2.50 for the Grays. But the man ahead of me was buying good tickets. And his were \$12 a piece. And he bought five. \$60 was a lot of money. And you think of it now, and you think, oh my goodness. But yeah. I remember when the Canadian Opera started. And when the ballet started.

**Catherine:** And did you try and save your money and go and see these?

**Elva:** Yeah, you went to that.

**Catherine:** And were you there for the opening? You remember when the Canadian Opera started? And the ballet?

**Elva:** Yeah.

**Catherine:** Tell me about it.

**Elva:** Well, it's kind of hard to remember because it's been a long time.

**Catherine:** I know, but you're good at remembering.

**Elva:** At some things [laughs]. I'll say the biggest lie I ever told myself was, I don't have to write that down. I'll remember it. And you know I don't.

I did very well until I was 97. I used to go downtown. No problem. Just bus and subway. And I went to the ballet or I went to the opera or whatever I wanted to do. Whatever. And unfortunately you move into a place like this and in all fairness I was getting older, and I was still looking after a two-story house and my kids were moving north, which is why I decided to move in. I still went downtown for another year or so, and then a friend and I used to go to see the metropolitan at the theaters.

**Catherine:** Yes.

**Elva:** So we went to that. I went to that until last year or the year before. And I bought the tickets and then you suddenly realize there comes a day. I guess I was about 100.

**Catherine:** What happened? What was the realization?

**Elva:** Well, you just haven't got what it takes. You do get old. Honest. You do get old. You fight it at every angle. And you go to a doctor and they say, well did you ever consider your age Mrs. Barrowman? Well, no. Never.

**Catherine:** I was making the point to you that at age 100 you didn't stop going anywhere you've simply stopped going anywhere on your own. And now you're actually accepting kind offers of rides, but you're still going places.

**Elva:** Oh yeah. I go up north. When the kids are going up north they take me up north to Gravenhurst. My daughter's moving up there. And my son already lives there. So yeah I'll go there. I go anywhere in a car. But it just happens sometimes you just don't have what it takes to sort of get over and climb the stairs to the theater. And you have to face it when it comes to a fight between the mind and the body, the body wins. Really it does. And I say my favorite one is, you know you're getting older when your mind says I think I'm going to do this today and your body says go ahead but start without me. Which mind does on many occasions.

So what would you like to know [laughs] about the proposal?

**Catherine:** So there you are. You are at Wychwood Church. You've met the man of your dreams. The man of the hour.

**Elva:** So I had paid my income tax, which was \$6 and I got a notice to say that I hadn't but fortunately I kept the receipt. So I was going down to the income tax place and he phoned to see if I could go for lunch which I said yes. So we are at the corner of Queen and he said, oh by the way I thought maybe we should get married before I go overseas.

**Elva:** Really? So I swallowed twice and said pardon?

**Catherine:** So after you said yes the first thing you did was go up and get your tax receipt?

**Elva:** No dear, I forgot about the tax receipt and went up and got a diamond ring.

**Catherine:** [laughs] Where did you go? Did you go to Birks?

**Elva:** If you'd asked me a week ago, I might have been able to tell you the jeweler. But anyway I was on Young Street someplace and we went to Diana Sweets for lunch.

**Catherine:** Aww. How nice.

**Elva:** And he could eat but I couldn't.

**Catherine:** You were too excited?

**Elva:** Yeah.

**Catherine:** Did he take you by surprise?

**Elva:** Did he ever.

**Catherine:** And you got married how much later? Because he was shipping off.

**Catherine:** Oh that was funny. Could we get married in one week? I said, no I would need two. So it was amazing what you could do in two weeks. You got a dress. And a bridesmaid. And a place to have it. And a wedding cake. And you sent out invitations. And you had a nice wedding. And then I think we went to Ottawa for a week. We came home on Friday and he left for the Horse Palace on the Saturday. He was in the Air Force. He was down at the Horse Palace for a time and then he went to Maltin and he was there until he went overseas.

**Catherine:** And he was overseas for two and a half years?

**Elva:** Yeah.

**Catherine:** So tell me about this experience that so many people went through being a young bride whose husband is overseas fighting.

**Elva:** Yeah. Not fun. But it was amazing because there were so many people in the same boat you know? But then this happened. John was going from Holland into Germany and the kid that was driving the lorry swerved on the wrong side of road and ran into a truck. And John was flung out of the truck. And he had three vertebrae in his back broken and a big gash in his head. Anyway I get a letter saying, I'm still in hospital. And I'm thinking, really? So then the first letter came about a week later and that's when I found out. So he was in hospital so when he came home he came home on the 18th of July and he walked in tall and handsome. Straight as could be. But he was in a cast from here to here. So no wonder he looked so tall and handsome [laughs]. And then he got the cast off. And so you had to shake the sheets to find him you know? [laughs]. But then life got back to normal.

**Catherine:** But it was a tough time for the women left at home wasn't it?

**Elva:** Oh yeah. And I was lucky because my brother-in-law was in the Air Force, my brothers were in the Navy, and my dad had been in the army, but they all came back. We were just lucky.

**Catherine:** That is almost a miracle to have a family come back from the war intact.

**Elva:** There were a lot of your friends that didn't come back. Which is what makes us so angry with Mr. Trump thinking war is a good move, but anyway we won't go there.

**Catherine:** [laughs] Were you working at this time?

**Elva:** Oh yeah.

**Catherine:** You hadn't started your family?

**Elva:** No. The thing was that you had to get permission to work.

**Catherine:** Did you?

**Elva:** Married women couldn't work. My sister was a teacher and she got married and because she got married she couldn't teach. So yeah. Things have changed.

**Catherine:** Did you get permission to work?

**Elva:** Yes.

**Catherine:** How did you do that?

**Elva:** Well, the lady in charge at the church, we went to her house. And she interviewed John and she liked him. So that was a good thing for me. She figured that yes, I could keep on working.

**Catherine:** And this was you working for the church?

**Elva:** The church office, yeah.

**Catherine:** Because she like your husband.

**Elva:** It was just the times. And it's funny because when you're living through them you don't think anything about it because that's just the way life is.

**Catherine:** So here you were in this brand new house which I'm sure your family thought you might as well be in North Bay, you were so far.

**Elva:** Oh my sister lived in Mount Dennis and she thought I'd moved to the end of the earth. And we couldn't get a telephone for six months and one neighbor had it. But sometimes I had to walk down to the payphone at Comer.

**Catherine:** So you walked a mile to use a telephone?

**Elva:** Yeah.

**Catherine:** Because it was such a waiting list.

**Elva:** Yeah.

**Catherine:** Because the suburbs were booming. Everybody was building.

**Elva:** Yeah.

**Catherine:** And so your sister thought you were at the end of the world?

**Elva:** Oh yeah. But as I say there were buses.

**Catherine:** Not yet. There were no buses.

**Elva:** There were buses down Yonge street. So you walked out to Yonge Street and took the bus to Eglinton and then got off and took the bus to Western Road.

**Catherine:** How long would it take you to get from your house to your sister's house?

**Elva:** An hour or so.

**Catherine:** Not bad. So this was the fifties and you're into the sixties now. You're raising three kids and you talk about how all of a sudden the game changes for women.

**Elva:** Mmhmm.

**Catherine:** And all of a sudden being a stay-at-home mom isn't quite as accepted. How did you feel? Tell me about that.

**Elva:** Oh you were the lowest form of animal life. Absolutely. What do you do? I stay at home with my kids. Yeah, but what do you do? I would say, I'm raising three good citizens.

**Catherine:** And did you lose some of your neighbors? Did some of your neighbours go back to work?

**Elva:** Oh they went back to work but you were always friends you know. And I looked after their kids if they needed it.

**Catherine:** Were you the one left?

**Elva:** Yeah.

**Catherine:** Just you.

**Elva:** Just me. But then a friend moved in close by and she stayed-at-home too. Yeah. But it is funny. I didn't think too much about it except when you were out and somebody said, what do you do? Well I work darn hard. One of my favourite cartoons that I liked was about a lady on a chesterfield and her place is a mess and her husband comes in and she says, well you ask me every day what do I do all day, well today I didn't.

**Catherine:** [laughs]. Was that on the fridge?

**Elva:** No, I had on the fridge: dull women have immaculate houses.

**Catherine:** [laughs]. This is it. But it was an interesting time though for you.

**Elva:** Yeah I guess it was, but it's funny when you're living through it you're kind of not aware of it if you know what I mean? It's just your life and you don't think anything really about it. You're enjoying it but it's not all beer and skittles. I mean there's always something. My son was in a very bad accident when he was 18. There are funny things

that are funny in a macabre sort of way. We hadn't any idea of what had happened. Anyway there was one of the young doctors there and he said, now Mrs. Barrowman they're working very hard to save his leg but if they can't we have wonderful prostheses. He had a phenomenal doctor so he did save his leg.

**Catherine:** Wow. Well, I guess you do remember something like that don't you?

**Elva:** Oh yeah. And I was supposed to go to England and Scotland with John and his dad but then we were in the hospital and they were just taking Jim down to ICU and I thought, I guess I'm not going.

**Catherine:** You were literally supposed to leave the next day?

**Elva:** It was within the week. And so I phoned his sister and said, get your passport ready because I will not be going. Which is what happened. But then people felt very sorry for me which they shouldn't have because Elaine was at camp and Grant was away and Jim was in hospital. And so I was there by myself and I didn't have to do anything I didn't want to do. So you know I wasn't as bad off as they thought I was. And they had a good time in Scotland.

**Catherine:** Did you ever get to Scotland?

**Elva:** Oh yeah. We were lucky. We traveled a lot when John retired. Yeah.

**Catherine:** So when he retired the two of you travelled?

**Elva:** We went across the country two or three times. My sister lives in Vancouver so we went out west. And we went down to the east coast. And we went to England and then we went to Switzerland and France and bits and pieces. So we had a good time.

**Catherine:** When we were on the phone you talked about how when you were younger you've always enjoyed all sorts of Toronto. You used to go to the island.

**Elva:** Oh yeah. And we used to take the boat go over to Port Dalhousie. Those were great trips.

**Catherine:** Really?

**Elva:** Yeah, and there were lovely homes on the islands.

**Catherine:** And you were also down at Sunnyside when they had the rides.

**Elva:** Yeah, it was a small version of Canada's Wonderland. There was a ferris wheel and merry-go-round.

**Catherine:** And the Palais Royale where all the big bands played like Duke Ellington.

**Elva:** Oh yeah.

**Catherine:** Somebody told me, and I think it's a reliable source that Walt Disney bought the merry-go-round from Sunnyside.

**Elva:** That would not surprise me.

**Catherine:** Do you remember the merry-go-round?

**Elva:** Oh yeah. Everybody remembers the merry-go-round. It was fun when you were young, getting on a horse, but when you're a little older, getting on a horse is not so easy.

**Catherine:** So you did that. You also used to hike in Sunnybrook Park.

**Elva:** Yeah.

**Catherine:** Before there was a hospital.

**Elva:** Oh yeah. That was a big park. You'd take the St Clair streetcar to the end of the line and then just walk up to Sunnybrook Park.

**Catherine:** So you really have utilized every corner of the city practically.

**Elva:** Well within hailing distance [laughs]. Yeah.

**Catherine:** And the Exhibition?

**Elva:** Oh, Exhibition was wonderful. And you got a free ticket when you were a school kid. And you'd go into the food building. And you could get samples of everything. And there were those little tins of syrup. That's what I remember the most. I mean you can have your meal in there just getting samples. And six Neilson chocolate bars for a quarter because chocolate bars were five cents. So you got one free. And then ice cream was five cents and you get a double dip for 10.

**Catherine:** Now going back a bit, you mentioned that you went to celebrate your engagement at Diana Sweets.

**Elva:** Yeah.

**Catherine:** Which was a restaurant.

**Elva:** Right next door to Lowes, which is now the Elgin.

**Catherine:** So it was just up on Yonge Street, just a little bit north of Queen. So was that sort of a special place for you?

**Elva:** Well, no. We liked Diana Sweets, but it just happened to be down the street.

**Catherine:** I was just wondering if there was a special place where you would go to celebrate family occasions or anything like that.

**Elva:** No we usually did that at home.

**Catherine:** Oh really?

**Elva:** Yeah. Because you think now the whole family is reduced to about five or six. But we used to have a big family gatherings. You'd have 20 or 25 people. And then you'd look

at your stove and you had four burners, and you'd think, how did I do that?

**Catherine:** You remember when the subway opened.

**Elva:** Oh yeah. We were back in London.

**Catherine:** Oh you were in London then.

**Elva:** But we drove down so we could get a ride on the subway. Yeah. And we used to come down here to see the Santa Claus Parade.

**Catherine:** Oh really.

**Elva:** Yeah. That was a must.

**Catherine:** And where would you have camped to see it?

**Elva:** Well, John's mom and dad lived here so we stayed with them.

**Catherine:** Did you have a particular good viewing spot?

**Elva:** I think we probably went down Davenport but you just went wherever you could get a spot.

**Catherine:** Yeah, it was a big deal. And the other thing I think I need to ask you about is you must remember the Eaton's catalogue.

**Elva:** Oh my goodness. I should say so. Yeah. The Eaton's catalogue. Yeah. And the Wish Book.

**Catherine:** What did you lust after? You were 16 by the time of the catalogue.

**Elva:** Not very much. I don't remember ever really wanting anything that much. But it was good to see it. And it was fun to look through the older ones because of the stuff that was in it. When you looked at the underwear. Oh my God. And I remember a friend of mine for her wedding present her aunt gave her a Spirella corset. And Spirella was really expensive. But oh my God [laughs]. We went from the ridiculous to the sublime or the sublime to the ridiculous. I'm not sure.

**Catherine:** When you see Toronto now do you see what was? Do you see what is? Or do you sort of see both at the same time?

**Elva:** It's a long time since I've been downtown. I used to know it like the back of my hand. But it's all changed. There isn't a great deal of the old.

You have to build up, what I used to call a wall, so that things won't really reach in. Then when you try to build that wall you wonder if you're removing all the real feelings that you have. Because two people just died. One of the ladies from this floor and another lovely lady. Just two days ago. And the number of people that have died since I came in here. Or those who have lost their minds and have been moved. You know, you have to start to rise above that somewhere other. How? I don't know.

And I say I get headaches. I don't get headaches. That's a lie. I get dizzy. I'm sure my kids are so sick of me complaining. So you try to think well you're very lucky because I can still get up and get showered. I can do everything for myself and that is a big thing. So there are days in my life when I write down: I can walk. I can talk. And I can get myself showered. You know, I don't have to ask for help, yet. So you're very grateful for that. You may not sound it, and you may not like it, but you really are. Yeah.

[music]

## Closing

**Catherine:** Special thanks to today's storyteller: Elva Barrowman. Stay tuned. After the credits Elva is going to read us some of her poems or as she prefers to call them, her pithies.

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## Credits

**Catherine:** Time for the credits. Today's podcast was made possible by Project Supervisor: Darren Cooper. Audio Engineer and Producer: Matt Rideout. Project Coordinator and Producer: Melanie Santarossa. Our theme music was also created by Matt Rideout.

Finally, a very special thank you to programs for 50+ and Community Engagement at the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, Ryerson University, who supported us in our endeavor to give these storytellers a much needed platform and audience. I'm Cathryn Dunphy and on behalf of all the storytellers thanks for listening to I Was Here.

## Last Words

**Elva:** Do you remember a few years ago that young generation that worried us so? Well now they're all married and settled poor things. Be calm worried critic for time clips all wings.

And when pompous men annoy me with lofty attributes it cheers me to imagine how they'd look in bathing suits.

**Catherine:** [laughs] I'm sorry. I like that.

**Elva:** [laughs] Whenever I look in a mirror it isn't my face that I see. That I should grow older like everyone else is quite surprising to me.

**Catherine:** Amen.

**Elva:** I think that I shall never see a billboard lovely as a tree. In fact unless the billboards fall. I'll never see a tree at all.

And I like this one. The house is quiet now. The rooms are clean. No music blaring on the radio. Is this the quiet time of which I dreamed when I was busy dashing to and fro? This one to hockey. That one to ballet. Another one to baseball practice. Now the peace I dreamed of seemed light-years away. Well now that time has come and now I dream of noise and toys and sleepless nights and sometimes wish I had them back again. And then the children come and stay a while and bring their children with them. Then I know I've earned my tidy house and quiet times and I'll enjoy the silence when they go. [laughs]

I don't know. Sometimes it just comes out that's all. I wish I could explain me. My kids have been trying to do that for a while.