



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK  
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

---

**Interview with Bryan Cassidy**

**Interview Date:** April 30, 2003  
**Interviewer:** Ida Prosky  
**Transcriber:** Roxanne Walker  
**Edited Last:** February 23, 2006  
**Edited By:** Paul Cromwell

Material contained in brackets [ ] has been added by editors subsequent to the interview.

TAPE 1/SIDE 1

**PROSKY:** The interview is with Bryan Cassidy; the interviewer is Ida Prosky.

**CASSIDY:** Do you want to check for levels? I can see that I'm bouncing around all right—I'm in there.

**PROSKY:** I think you are alright. Okay. Shall we start?

**CASSIDY:** Sure.

**PROSKY:** How did you end up coming to Capitol Hill, Bryan?

**CASSIDY:** Well, we left Ireland in 1963. My wife—we had just been married a year and we had a baby just a year old—and my wife had got her Ph.D. in biochemistry. There's a marvelous picture of her in her cap and gown holding her two-month-old baby, and it made the papers and it was all very exciting. But she was a female and she was a mother and of course she belonged in the kitchen {Laughs}. We knew that she wasn't going to get very far in Ireland in her profession, and she dearly wanted to follow what she trained for as a biochemist. I had been to Canada, roaming around in my student days and I went home and extolled all the virtues of going to the U.S., so I told her parents that this is where we were headed. And my father, who was dying of cancer at the time, said "Don't change any of your plans, it's your life," you know, go ahead. He was just wonderful about it. It just so happened that the ship we were to sail on was the Holland America Line and had a strike onboard about the time my father died. So had we been on that ship we would have missed the funeral. So, as it happens we took the S.S. United States on the Friday and we left from the graveyard where we just buried my father. Shook hands with my relatives again, saying goodbye to them and took off. And we left from Cobh in the south of Ireland and we crossed the Atlantic.

It took about a week, with all out wedding presents in chests, which we later had to put out in Baltimore to pick up. Those were the days when Baltimore had loading docks and stuff, before Baltimore Harbor came in. And so my wife had arranged for a job at GW [George Washington University] teaching. It started off as biochemistry and then there was an opening in physiology and she taught herself physiology, sort of overnight, and she taught physiology there for more than 36 years.

And that's how we started off as being in Washington. We were told, incidentally, leaving Ireland, that we shouldn't bother even trying to live in Washington, D.C.—it was just so full of crime, nobody, nobody lives there. So we started off living in Riverdale, which is sort of out by Hyattsville somewhere. And that commute was far too much, and besides, Marie was already with her next, number two. And so we

decided to move into town. A student of hers was just going through a divorce, and at that time you had to be physically separated from your husband, for a period of a number of years. So we rented a house in Capitol Hill at Fourth and A NE. And that's what brought us to Capitol Hill. We just loved the community—it was marvelous. This was way, way, way before Metro, before any transport into town and all of that. It was close enough so that I could drive to work and get on to my place of work.

Which when I left Ireland, I had inquired at the embassy, where do architects hang out? Where do they work? Where is their block? I looked in the *Yellow Pages* and a lot of them seemed to be in a place called Silver Spring. Oh, and I thought, this is where architects should be—Silver Spring. [Said with a very lilting Irish accent] I thought of Frank Lloyd Wright and Falling Water and, ah, those cantilevered houses over the silver spring. This is where I want to be. {Laughing} So, unfortunately when I saw Silver Spring with row upon row of used car dealerships, I figured I would find something closer to town. So I found a job down on K Street and I used to be able to drive my wife to GW, and it worked out really well.

In those days it was not hard to find a babysitter. We had this most wonderful, wonderful black mama [Mamie] from South Carolina, I believe. She lived very near Union Station, in what's now a very fancy office building. So it was all very cozy. And that's where we started. For 36 years, my wife continued to teach at GW.

**PROSKY:** Now, the first house where you lived was where?

**CASSIDY:** Right around the corner from A Street, Fourth and A NE, it was actually on Fourth Street—110 Fourth Street. In fact our back yard looked out on what's now the African Museum. You know, in Robinson's [Warren Robbins'] day, it was the beginning of the African Museum.

**PROSKY:** Yes.

**CASSIDY:** So that's where we were. And I can recall a deep winter, I think it might have been... We arrived in '63 [1963], just a few weeks actually before President Kennedy was assassinated. And that was very sad for us because we had seen him in Ireland, in Dublin, greeting all the students and had said "Come on by the White House whenever you get to Washington," and we took that of course as an invitation. {Both Laughing} Along with thousands of other students, so it was a very great shock to us. Only being here a few weeks, to learn that he was assassinated. We felt like going home, it was a dreadful shock.

Anyway, to get back to where we lived, there was a very severe winter—I think it was 1966. I'm not clear on the blizzards we had, but I think it was the one of '66, which was a deep blizzard. And I used to put the car in the garage at the end of the alley—our house was at the end of the alley—and I said, "I can deal

with this, I've lived in Canada, I can drive in the snow." So I dug my way out of the alley {Laughs} past about six houses in the alley, dug my way out, and I wondered why no one else was moving. They were waiting for this dummy from Ireland to dig his way out. {Both Laughing} As soon as I had cleared my space at the end of the alley, everybody opened their gates and drove after me. That was how I learned to leave the driving to them—leave the digging.

**PROSKY:** You were talking yesterday about how many houses you looked at before you actually bought.

**CASSIDY:** Well, yes. We liked the house we were in. We liked it a lot. It was partly renovated when we got it, but there was plenty of room in it and we really liked big houses. We both come from the city so we decided we'd stay in the city. Since my wife was working in town anyway and I was working, there was no reason to commute. We decided that at weekends we would take off for the country. So we definitely wanted to live around the Hill. We had looked at it enough, it was beautiful, we wanted a big house. We had our eye on several houses along East Capitol Street, which were actually affordable to buy in those days. {Laughs} But every house we went to look at was chopped up into small rooms and we simply didn't have the heart to move all these people. But we looked—

**PROSKY:** You're talking about roomers? People who were renting rooms—

**CASSIDY:** Yes.

**PROSKY:** —in these houses. So they were rooming houses?

**CASSIDY:** They were rooming houses, yes. Yeah, they were rooming houses. And we did look at lots and lots of houses and we took our time. We looked at *60* houses. *Sixty* houses. {Proskey is laughing} And always, it was either not big enough or faced the wrong way. Being an architect, I wanted one that faced east-west, so you'd have the morning sun rising in your bedroom and all that. Of course we had our list to go by—we wanted parking, we wanted somewhere for the kids to play—we had our list. But finally, after 60 houses we settled on a house, down on Pennsylvania Avenue at Ninth Street [810 D Street SE]. There was a little park in front of the house, and I thought, oh this is marvelous, this is exactly what we need. A little park for the kids to play in and we bought the house. Am I supposed to say how much? I mean it's interesting how much...

**PROSKY:** Yes, it is interesting how much...

**CASSIDY:** It was a family sale. The lady who owned the house, survived her husband and she had turned the house again into rooms. She was taking care of it, but collapsed and was found in the house, dead. And her family sold the house, and we got the house for \$30,000. That's three oh.

**PROSKY:** Oh boy.

**CASSIDY:** Three-oh thousand dollars. {Both laughing in amazement}

**PROSKY:** She died in the house?

**CASSIDY:** She died in the house and was found at the end of the stairs, polishing... There's beautiful woodwork: it was chestnut paneling, it was beautiful hardwood floors. And she polished and polished and she was found at the end of the stairs. The house itself was interesting because when I bought the house, people said to me, where are you living now? And I'd describe where we lived. And they said, you mean you bought the convent? The house on the outside has arched windows, which are very peculiarly placed. And the whole architecture—being an architect I look at it—and it's asymmetrical. Nothing seems to coincide. It turns out that there are two canopies, one over each door. The two houses were built together as a project. We figured about 1928 or something, it was built. Very well-built house.

But, apparently it was built on the one lot—two houses were built on the one lot. So they have one yard, one huge yard, and one huge garage at the back, shared by both houses. Because one house was built for the mother and father, and the other house was built for the two daughters. There're wonderful stories about what the daughters were doing in their side of the house. There was a connecting door actually found between the two houses. Built-on of course—closed-in over the years. But while the two daughters owned the house, they say that they also had rented a room to somebody who came in and eventually fell in love with a girl and there was some “goings on” that were a little unpleasant. Eventually, he's supposed to have murdered one of the daughters, but her body was supposed to have been found, or been placed in Seward's Square. I'm not sure whether they put her in the sewer in Seward's Square or the square in Seward's Square, but this story lingered on for the longest time. And when they came to write stories about the ghosts of Capitol Hill by Tom Kelly, he researched it and he found it was just a rumor. {Both laughing} We were never able to figure that one out.

But having an open yard when we bought the house was sort of interesting because anytime we'd go to have a second look at the house, there were these people sunbathing, just in bikinis, in what was essentially our yard. But they turned out to be the next-door neighbors who were used to having this big open yard. It might be interesting to note that the people next door to us were the Rabbi and his wife and

daughter for the synagogue which is now across the street beside Distad's Garage behind there. It's now the Tri-Stone Church of Christ or something.

**PROSKY:** Yes.

**CASSIDY:** That was the synagogue in those days. But eventually they ran out of a quorum [minyan, minimum of 10 of men or a prayer service]. They didn't have enough people and they moved on. I think it was about that time the house next door was sold. We decided a fence made better neighbors and so we put a fence up. The garage, however, was shared by both houses, and everybody figured very pleasantly that, oh, we'd never use the garage for the cars, there's plenty of parking out front. Because of course, there was the park in front of the house and we could park on either side. And that was all very fine, and very neighborly, and very gentlemanly until Metro came and decided to put a hoarding [fence] around our lovely park. So there went our children's playground and from then on it became a gravel pit and a metal loading place, and there were bricks and dust and mortar. Not that that stopped the kids from playing in it, because they played in it quite a lot. The garage then became a little more useful as parking for cars. But I understand even today it's not used very much for cars. You know, you still try to park in the street.

**PROSKY:** Yes.

**CASSIDY:** Anything else? We had lovely neighbors. The Rossiters who were on our block from old photographs we had, were the original people on that block. If you look at the house from the street, it's the red brick house that has the green turrets on it, across from what used to be Miller's Furniture Store.

**PROSKY:** Uh-huh.

**CASSIDY:** If you look across at the green turrets, that was owned by the Rossiter family for years. By Dr. Rossiter, who was there for years and years and years.

**PROSKY:** How old were they when you knew them?

**CASSIDY:** Well, they would have been in their nineties. We used to look after them and take them meals and they got very ancient. I can remember my son saying that, yes, we went to visit them. I said, "Do you remember them?" He said, "Oh, I remember the Rossiters. I remember them well." Because when... First the wife died and then he died and we used to go visit him in hospital and take him stuff. He used to say to me, is there anything in the house you would like? I had been admiring this great ceremonial sword that he had. It was marked—stamped—on the back it was marked "Paris" and I thought this means something. Let's find an Antiques Roadshow [Television show on PBS in the 1990s, 2000s] to show us "what does it mean?" It turned out to be a ceremonial sword that they carried. I really liked that. So he decided he'd

swap that for a shillelagh. {Laughs} So that's how we have this sword and they got the shillelagh. My sons remember visiting them and they were quite neighborly even though they were very old. They were in their nineties and ...

**PROSKY:** Uh-huh.

**CASSIDY:** And they remember them.

**PROSKY:** You talked a little bit about—you mentioned Tom Kelly. I know that your kids were in Tom Kelly's plays. Can you talk about that a little?

**CASSIDY:** Oh, yes. Tom used to write these great plays that may or may not have had any basis in real fiction. But he wrote these wonderful plays for the kids, including the Proskys, the Parsons, the Atkins, all the local family kids. One was called "The Three Musketeers" I think it was called.

**PROSKY:** Yes—"The Three Musketeers."

**CASSIDY:** "The Three Musketeers." I'm not even clear whether that had anything to do with the original. But he certainly wrote it for them. And they paraded around with their little wooden swords and they had costumes. It was a great gathering—it was in their back yard. And they even had a little balcony there from the house. It lent itself a lot for various plays. The kids really enjoyed that. That's one of the things my kids still remember. Great. There are some pictures I'm sure, somewhere.

**PROSKY:** I remember the first play, that Grainne [Cassidy's daughter] was in—the first Kelly play that Grainne was in—was "The Ten Little Suspects."

**CASSIDY:** Oh yes.

**PROSKY:** Where she was the pig did it.

**CASSIDY:** Pig, yes.

**PROSKY:** She hid under the pig costume on the top of the grand piano. {Both laughing}

**CASSIDY:** He wrote wonderful stuff.

**PROSKY:** He did.

**CASSIDY:** That was—they were such great times. Those were the days when you made your own entertainment. You know, you just gathered what kids you knew around and you bring them together and you made your own entertainment. This is way before anything like after school programs...

**PROSKY:** Yes.

**CASSIDY:** I mean there was nothing for the kids to do. One of the reasons we bought where we did, across from the Miller Furniture Store there, that little park, was that there was a vacant lot on that corner for the longest time. I recall looking at pictures later on of that area—the Rossiters had pictures of the original farmhouse. That was like on Ninth Street—

**PROSKY:** Oh, my goodness.

**CASSIDY:** And it was a farmhouse there. And so those houses were fairly recently built. And when I saw Barrett Linde-type houses going up on that corner, I thought, “This is okay. This neighborhood is coming up. This is where to be.” But even then it was considered the fringe—I mean, we were considered pioneers to be moving out to Ninth Street. So that was the real decision we made to move there: there was the park in front of the house and then there were these new houses that were being built on the corner.

**PROSKY:** What did you do about schools for your kids?

**CASSIDY:** Well, we had been members of St. Joseph’s when we lived on 110 Fourth Street NE—in the Northeast section. And then we moved Southeast, so we hooked up with St. Peter’s. That’s where we sent our first, Grainne—she went there. But it was at a time when there was what shall we say—“transition.” We were reaching out to the majority of the population at that time, they, of course, were black children. So we were reaching out to get them involved in the school. It got to be a little top heavy—it was uncomfortable. And Grainne really didn’t learn an awful lot there. After that, then a group—I’m not going to mention names because I’m sure to leave people out—but certainly it was Ida Prosky and we mentioned them yesterday... I’ve forgotten their name already...

**PROSKY:** Marilyn Bell.

**CASSIDY:** Marilyn Bell, of course, yes.

**PROSKY:** Nancy Rigby.

**CASSIDY:** Rigby, yes. And the other people, on North Carolina Avenue, their boy Jonathon Rafuse, Pat and Jack Rafuse were the parents. All these people just got together and decided that there were enough young people in the area now to start the little school. So we started off at—didn’t we start at Christ Church?

**PROSKY:** Christ Church.

**CASSIDY:** Christ Church is where we started, in their hall. And that's where we started. I remember designing partitions to divide this huge room, into various little areas, which was then an open concept. Kids were supposed to learn with all this noise around them. This was pretty new at the time. I remember going there, being horrified at the level of noise and wondering how on earth these kids could learn! {Chuckling} It was very interesting to put that much effort into something which is now Capitol Hill Day School.

**PROSKY:** Right, with its own building.

**CASSIDY:** Its own building and its own playground out front of it and everything.

**PROSKY:** And we could *never* afford it today.

**CASSIDY:** No, we couldn't afford it today. [Both laughing] We came to have... eventually we had four children, so, certainly we couldn't afford beyond one or two going to Capitol Hill today, as a start. So that's when we moved to Holy Trinity in Georgetown. That's where they went, there. And from there then, the girls went to Visitation, which was just up the street in Georgetown. They did very well there. The boys, like most Capitol Hill boys, went to Gonzaga [High School]. It was a nice draw for them to go to Gonzaga. Our kids today still thank me for living on the Hill, bringing them up on the Hill. They got so used to public transport. They were able to use the subway, the buses—they know their way around. And they are very grateful, as most people will tell you who grew up and brought their kids here, of that experience of urban living. They're able to now be in the biggest cities, travel wherever they want, and they're very comfortable with that. They made us feel glad about that.

**PROSKY:** Yeah, that's great. We talked yesterday about your house being broken into.

**CASSIDY:** Oh, yes, the one here on the...

**PROSKY:** Yeah.

**CASSIDY:** Well, Fourth Street is one-way, and so it was kind of a noisy street for traffic. But you would always notice that "clink" of glass that didn't belong in your dreams. {Laughs} There was the clink of glass, and I thought "Where is that? It's not my windows, now where could it be—it's close. What is it?" It turns out, we discovered the next day, that it was the basement windows which somebody had kicked in. They got into the basement and they were coming up the stairs. Now we were in the front of the house—my wife and I were in the front of the house and the kids were in their rooms at the back. And we thought "What are we going to do!"—because you could hear the creak of the stairs, and somebody coming up the stairs, creak by creak by creak... And so I said to my wife {whispering} "Get under of the

bed—get under of the bed!” I thought, well at least that’s a safe place—one of us is out of the way. And I was going to be very brave and just hope that the kids didn’t wake up. And I was going to be very brave, and I took the blanket off of the bed, and I went to the door and I was going to throw the blanket over him and I was going to be the hero of the night and I was going to smother him and... And then my wife said “Let’s call the police.” So she picked up the phone and said to call the police in a very loud voice. That was enough to scare him off, so he ran!

Another story, living on Fourth Street, there was a fire a few doors down. People all came out. Of course the fire engines were there and we came out. We were wondering what we could do. So the neighbors, the people affected in the house—again it was a rooming house—came out in their various bits and pieces of night attire and we noticed that people were offering rooms, you know the neighbors were offering to take them in. There was one middle-aged lady who was there with nobody offering her any help. So we went over, asked her. And we could see from the looks of the other neighbors throwing their eyes to the heavens that, oh... It turns out that she was the one who started the fire. {Both laughing} She was smoking in bed and she started the fire. So we took her into our house, and we gave her a spare room that we had at the back. But the awful thing... Christian as we may have felt that night taking her in, we didn’t realize that we could not get rid of her.

**PROSKY:** Oh, so you had her.

**CASSIDY:** Yes, she stayed and stayed and stayed and stayed. She wore my wife’s clothes and borrowed my wife’s cigarettes and borrowed money to do this and do that. It didn’t occur to us to ask her, doesn’t she have any relatives to call, or people? So, I wanted her to do so. Finally I said in conversation to her... She kept talking about somebody in Arlington. I said “well, call you friends in Arlington because we are leaving.” We are going to the beach this weekend. I announced, we are going to the beach this weekend. The kids were all delighted. So we got out beach stuff ready—our beach balls and our buckets and spades and put them all in the station wagon—and I told her to leave, that we were going. So she left. We went around the block, went to a park, played for a while and came back. {Both laughing} The kids were very disappointed we didn’t get to the beach, but at least she had moved. We had got rid of her. {Laughing}

**PROSKY:** That’s great.

**CASSIDY:** It was a pretty drastic measure to take, but she would have stayed and stayed and stayed, you know.

I used that same tactic when I went home to visit my mother in Ireland. This has nothing to do with Capitol Hill history, but if the tape is long enough we could... {Both laughing} Do we have to switch over?

**PROSKY:** No, no. This is as good of time as any. We talked a little bit about what it was like to live here during the Martin Luther King riots. We can talk about that.

**CASSIDY:** Well we bought our house in '67 across from the Miller Furniture Store on Ninth Street [D Street Southeast between Eighth and Ninth]. And that left us with that park, that lovely park in front. And during the riots, all like Eighth Street, the shops were broken into. We could see these kids and people running by with parcels, and bicycling by on brand new bikes, you know. {Laughing} But the interesting thing was they would sit in the park with boxes and boxes of shoes. Eighth Street had many, many shoe stores on it. The kids would sit in the park with these boxes of shoes. They would try them on and then just scatter them if they didn't need them. The next day the park was littered with shoes and stuff that they didn't need.

But they did focus on Miller Furniture Store, which was right across from us. A car drove up, like a station wagon thing drove up, and I can still to this day hear the way that glass broke out. "Kuh" first and then a "crunch" as the glass fell on the pavement. And there they were unloading the furniture out of the store into the back of the station wagon. A police car drove up and apparently the whole idea was not to have any personal, physical injury to people. I mean, the property you could recover or whatever, but you did your best, or the police were told apparently, not to have any injury, not to cause any physical harm. So they let the looting continue on a certain scale. I could hear the policeman say, "Okay, okay. Move along. Move along." And a voice from the back of the station wagon said "Just a minute. We're not finished yet." {Both laughing} And they stuffed another lampshade in there and another end table came in, and they crammed this car and took off. They were weird times, because we could see the smoke from H Street, up in the Northeast as we went upstairs to our third floor. Up there at the roof level, we could see the black smoke from H Street. We kept getting these calls from the University and places in the suburbs telling us "Come on, leave it, leave it. Come on out of town." The tenant we had at the time decided to put a sign in her window. {Laughing} She said something like "mojo" or something which she thought would indicate she was on their side, and please leave her alone.

But that was a scary time. That was a scary time. Prior to this... Following that St. Peter's church to which we then belonged, having moved to the southeast of Capitol Hill, St. Peter's had organized this sort of "return it if you've stolen it and nothing will be said." So people brought back televisions, sides of beef, turkeys, and stuff. It was brought back to the basement. The reason I mention that is that prior to

that, myself and another guy from St. Joseph's who was artistically-minded too, decided that we would try to entertain the kids in an after-school kind of engagement. There was nothing like that available for kids. So every Saturday, we ran an arts and crafts class at St. Peter's in the basement. People donated items like egg crates and you know, pieces of leather, pencils, crayons, and stuff. We really did entertain a number of kids for a certain time. But it was funny to go down and see our regular class for arts and crafts, to go down to see this class, and go down and find the basement full of televisions and returned items. You know, turkeys, and sides of beef, and whatever.

They were the days that this is what you did—you went out and entertained the kids and gave them whatever little entertainment you could give them. It was very interesting times.

**PROSKY:** Apropos of that, you want to talk about the soccer league, the Capitol Hill Soccer League [Soccer On The Hill] and how that started?

**CASSIDY:** Well, we went home to Ireland on a sabbatical. My wife taught at the University over there and I got a job as architect with the airlines over there. It was a wonderful swap: we got a family in Ireland to take our house on Capitol Hill and we took their house over there. And while I was over there, I'm thinking, my kids are old enough now to be doing something. So we got them involved in various kids games and things. When we came back to the Hill, we decided, there's enough kids on this Hill now to be doing something organized, some kind of organized sport. So I said, there's nothing around here. Let's see, what's the simplest thing for them to get into? There was your softball or baseball thing, but then, not growing up with that background, I thought, I've heard too much arguments about the parents getting involved and the baseball stuff and not speaking to each other because their kid did something wrong. To me, I said, let's try soccer—or football as we call it in Ireland. Soccer. And that's when we didn't know if there was enough kids in the area who'd be interested. Thanks to Ida Prosky who had a friend Bob in Arlington... Was it Arlington?

**PROSKY:** Alexandria. [Walter Barbash, President of the children's Alexandria Soccer Association]

**CASSIDY:** Well, Alexandria. We actually were able to chaffer our kids over to join [play] some of his teams in Alexandria, already established by the Alexandria Soccer Association. So the interest in that grew and we began to gather more and more kids and we played in whatever piece of spare ground we could play in. And we basically played for the Alexandria Soccer Team. They were very nice to us—they became the mother team that had fostered us and encouraged us. That was 1971 when the idea first came about. [The older SOH teams played in Alexandria while the youngest formed their own league.] By the time it got to 1983, we had enough kids in a particular age group, called the Brazilians. When we took them to Alexandria, we won the trophy from Alexandria in that age group—in the younger age group.

{Laughing} And that was when Alexandria said, “Hey, start your own club.” [Both laughing] We thought, hey well why not, you know? So from then on it just grew and grew and grew. So now, what is it, thirty years later? I’m glad to see that kids are still playing soccer.

**PROSKY:** Yeah.

**CASSIDY:** So it’s been wonderful, because as you know, it’s got very little outlay. The uniform is a simple, you know, t-shirt and shorts and sneakers. It progressed then to fully-fledged uniforms and all of that sort of thing. So it was very inexpensive. We did have to travel to pick up kids—it was open to anybody and anybody. If they couldn’t afford it, then we organized a scholarship for them and would absorb them into it. And I can remember driving up to K Street Northeast, to bring those kids, you know, into our program. A lot of black kids lived along that strip there, which is now, you know, quite an expensive area to live in. Those houses are turning over. So we drove quite a distance to bring kids in. We drove out to Kenilworth Park, you know, to have kids involved there. The Dunbars—you remember that family?

**PROSKY:** Oh yeah.

**CASSIDY:** All of those people. So we were very involved in that. And the only thing was, it took years and years and years and years to get the District Department of Recreation... I don’t think there even was a Department of—maybe I’m wrong. But we couldn’t find anybody with any kind of permit stamp that says, “Yes, you can have kids play here or kids play there.” And of course soccer meant nothing to... So for a long time, for many years, it was a struggle to get permits, to have kids play. We used to play [practice] in the lovely space below the Capitol, on the Mall, which is now the Museum of Indian Affairs... What’s it called?

**PROSKY:** It’s the new Indian museum.

**CASSIDY:** The new Indian museum... yeah. And that was our prime spot for kids to play. I mean they just loved that. So getting it started took many, many, many hours and many weekends. I think I once calculated twenty years of weekends. {Both laughing} Are we running out of tape?

**PROSKY:** No, it’s still going.

**CASSIDY:** Okay. But to this day... Both my boys and my youngest daughter played soccer and they were so grateful for the people that they met. They’re still friends with these friends they made in that era. {telephone is ringing} Do we cut it off now or have someone answer?

**PROSKY:** Oh.

[Interview interrupted by telephone]

**PROSKY:** Okay, here we go.

**CASSIDY:** So, Soccer On The Hill got together kids from different schools, that went all over the city to various schools. But on weekends they came together. And, like I said, they're still friends. They've made long relationships—long-lasting relationships. And they met at weekends and had a great time. There's this wonderful story of—I don't know if I should mention names—but Avril Shipman was from the Isle of Man. She used to come to the games that I would referee, and of course my son would play in some of these games, but I would referee and she had the marvelous idea... Not only was this a great social occasion for the kids, but it would also be a wonderful social occasion for the parents. And she always brought a flask of hot tea. We had tea and cookies {both laughing} English-style at the games. And it was very civilized, it was very civilized. What went on the field wasn't necessarily civilized, but we had great times. It was a wonderful time for families to get together. And neighbors cooperated in driving their kids to the practices and for driving them to the games and whatever. We did find that the District at the time was very slow in acknowledging that this was a sport that was going to catch on. That kids could...

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

**CASSIDY:** [tape started mid-sentence] ... with the District was, that we're looking for places for kids to practice. They didn't understand that any patch of land would be good enough. We could make do with whatever—it didn't have to be any particular size. They said, well we can offer you lots of space east of here—in other words across the river. They were ready to push us across the river to any kind of space there. But to recognize that this could be a city-wide youth organization if it got started here, another branch could get started there. I was appalled at the one of the meetings I went to where there was a gift of Dutch bulbs from the Dutch embassy given to the District with a specific indication that they were not to be placed east of the river.

**PROSKY:** Oh. [Laughs] Nothing in Anacostia.

**CASSIDY:** I mean word had got out that “You live in the southeast?” [Asked in an incredulous voice] I said, yes, it's a wonderful place to live. “You mean Anacostia?” Anything east of the river was like, don't touch it. I was very, very appalled to see that even in the, you know, higher ups that this was accepted, that you simply did not cross the river. Anyway, we did cross the river. We got people from across there, and now I'm glad to say that there are soccer fields galore over in Kenilworth Park, which was then a landfill. Do you remember the landfill there?

**PROSKY:** Oh yes. Yes, the Kenilworth landfill.

**CASSIDY:** The Kenilworth landfill.

**PROSKY:** People were always dying there.

**CASSIDY:** Right. We would go over there and they even had victory gardens. Do you remember the garden plots?

**PROSKY:** Yes.

**CASSIDY:** They had garden plots. You could take your kids out there. I mean, now-a-days where can you do that? Where can you take your kids out to show them how a tomato plant grows? You could sow potatoes or whatever you want in the soil there. [Both laughing] And now I'm glad to say it's a whole series of great soccer fields and athletic fields. It has really blossomed. I'm very glad it got started and that it's still going.

**PROSKY:** You told me something about that a real estate agent had said something to you about that...

**CASSIDY:** Well, yes. Way, way, way back when we first came here, as we stood outside St. Joseph's, we got to meet some neighbors who asked us how long we were here for. We said, we're here on the Hill. We've come to live here. And the neighbor said, "Oh, don't bother making friends with anybody. Everybody leaves after two years. People come here to work for the government, then they change; nobody's going to be here. So don't bother making friends. Nobody stays here longer than two years." And it was true that families didn't stay because there was nothing for their kids to do. They felt uncomfortable with young kids here and there was nothing for them to do. So when soccer got started—it was called "Soccer on the Hill" after "Antiques on the Hill". When I saw "Antiques on the Hill", I said "Soccer on the Hill", why not? So that's how that got started. When people did find that were places for their kids to get involved in, they began to stay here. And the real estate people told me that they were able to sell the idea of a house in a neighborhood in which their children could be involved. It was really a good boon, a good selling plus for selling a house. Especially if they had a family, or were going to have a family, that there would be something they could get involved in. I think that's part of the reason that the Restoration Society gave me this lovely award. Not a cash award, but a nice framed award.

**PROSKY:** What award is that?

**CASSIDY:** It's the award for—I should have brought it today. It's "for your efforts to involve the community in the youth of Capitol Hill." It was involving the youth of Capitol Hill. It's a nice placard and it's got a picture of our house.

**PROSKY:** Oh, wonderful.

**CASSIDY:** So that was nice to have.

**PROSKY:** That's great.

**CASSIDY:** Anyway, I couldn't have done it without all the neighbors! {Both laughing} They did pitch in. I will tell you that I used my house on D Street, across from Miller Furniture, I used that as a kind of registration place initially before we had a fully fledged financial arrangement. The registrars. I did the whole thing. And people used to come to my house to register. So there was a knock on the door one day as a listing was going on for the spring program. Somebody came to the door, and Padraic my second boy, opened the door and let this nicely dressed black man in. I'm half-way down the hall to meet him, between the hall and the kitchen, and he pulls a gun on me.

**PROSKY:** Oh. [laughing]

**CASSIDY:** I said, "What's this?" He said, "I'm here to take a census." I said, "A census?" I thought he was here to register one of his kids for soccer. And there he jammed me between the stairs and the wall with this gun at my forehead. There's two of my kids in the kitchen and one of my kids upstairs and one on the stairs going up. And they're all shouting, "Don't shoot my dad! Don't shoot my dad!" I said, "What do you want?" He said, "Give me all the money you've got." It turns out it was a Friday, and don't you know, I had *just* got my paycheck and I didn't have a dollar in my wallet. I didn't have anything in my wallet! {Laughing}

**PROSKY:** No money.

**CASSIDY:** No money. So I said to him—as quick as a flash, I said to him—will you take a check? {Both laughing} Thinking at least I'd have his signature. He wasn't going to buy that. Then, I don't remember, he gave me a whip of the gun, smack in my head and he said, "I must have some money." And then I remembered, we used to put a twenty-dollar bill under a cup in the china cabinet, just in case the baby sitter suddenly needed money for anything. I went, followed by this guy to the dining room, and took the twenty-dollar bill and handed it to him. He said, "That's not enough!" {Laughing}

**PROSKY:** Yeah, right.

**CASSIDY:** And I'm at my wits end. By this time he had taken my wedding ring and taken my watch, and my twenty dollars. I said, "That's all you're getting!" {Laughing} I said, "come out to my car, I've got some more." I'm thinking all the time, I have got to get rid of this guy. He told me to lie on the floor with

my hands over my head, and the kids are all screaming... He left. And that was the last time I ever had kids coming to the door unannounced.

**PROSKY:** Um hmm. Did you ever get your wedding ring back?

**CASSIDY:** No. I never got the wedding band, nor my watch. But they did find him because this was a trick he had used on other neighbors. We did find that he was caught. He would come in on the pretense of taking a census. Pretend to take a notebook out of his pocket and it would be a gun. He was apprehended. The interesting thing about it is that Padraic, my son, was on the stairs looking over his shoulder at me, looking over at this guy, and he was the one who remembered most what this guy looked like. I could only remember the gun. I could only remember looking at this gun and the muzzle in front of my face. When the police asked me for a description I brought Padraic down. He could remember everything! It's no wonder he grew up to be an investigative reporter. He could remember, this guy had on a dark brown jacket, leather jacket, very shiny, well-dressed... But he remembered there were dandruff on his collar. [Both laughing] That was probably the scariest time we've had in our "new" house. We didn't really have anything that was after that. But it was the last time I had open registration! {Both laughing}

**PROSKY:** That was a little too open!

**CASSIDY:** Yes, a little too open for me. We had wonderful people after that, wonderful people.

**PROSKY:** You got money from the Kiwanis Club.

**CASSIDY:** Oh, yes. I must say the Kiwanis Club heard about my program, asked me if I would join. There was somebody at church who was in the Kiwanis Club and he asked me if I would join, and I did. They gave me—I believe it was our first gift—of a hundred dollars. Now, in those days, that bought quite a bit. So with our hundred dollars, we put that towards a scholarship fund and things that we could use. And that was our first real gift—the Kiwanis Club got us started.

**PROSKY:** Was this a Kiwanis Club of Capitol Hill?

**CASSIDY:** I believe it was.

**PROSKY:** Because I've never heard of it in any other context.

**CASSIDY:** Oh really? Oh, Yes. We used to meet in Saint Mark's church. For breakfast, I remember that. That was my first introduction to grits.

**PROSKY:** {Laughing}

**CASSIDY:** We could have scrambled eggs and or grits. That was my introduction.

**PROSKY:** {Laughing}

**CASSIDY:** That was a great organization. We were introduced to that by somebody, whose name escapes me now, from Capitol Hill. From St. Peter's, he used to live on Massachusetts Avenue. I've forgotten what his name is now. That was Capitol Hill Kiwanis Club.

**PROSKY:** Uh huh.

**CASSIDY:** And the *Hill Rag* I should say, afterwards, when Soccer on the Hill got going and they recognized that we were on the hill to stay and we were a good organization for the youth, they gave us a trophy to be awarded to the best player of the year.

**PROSKY:** Uh huh.

**CASSIDY:** I certainly was very grateful to have it, but it was my idea not to elevate any one team during the year, not to elevate any one kid as being the best. Because what happens is then, a historically correct fact is that any one team that's promoted to be top of the list gets all the attention and kids will not join any other team. So it was my idea to sort of even everything out. But that trophy was passed off from year to year, and I have a funny feeling it ended up in somebody's thrift shop or somebody's garage sale. {Both laughing} It was a time to thank the *Rag*, the *Hill Rag* as it was known then.

**PROSKY:** You did a lot of work on your house yourself, didn't you?

**CASSIDY:** I did. When we bought the house for thirty thousand, it was basically a three-story house with a huge upstairs, open space on the top floor. It was ideal for making it into another two rooms up there. I put a bathroom up there and made two rooms where the boys had their room and then their living room, a separate room. The basement itself was one of those domestic basements, where the maids used to stay. It wasn't quite full height, but by digging it out eight inches I had a great apartment. I put another thirty thousand into the apartment and our first tenant, while I was still cleaning out the closets and polishing the nice parquet flooring I had put in, was a Senator from Alabama.

**PROSKY:** Oh, my goodness. What was his name—do you remember?

**CASSIDY:** No. {Laughing} I was saying Senator from Alabama to give me time to remember. Senator... Oh gosh, I can't remember his name.

**PROSKY:** It's okay.

**CASSIDY:** It'll come to me. I was so pleased, I was polishing it and he said, "Well, when will it be ready?" I said I'm just cleaning out the closets and it's basically ready. He said I think we can talk business. He found again that having a little park in front of us made some extra parking space. And he stayed for a number of years. They were very jolly people. In fact, we entertained a lot in those days and he used to come upstairs and it was great to be introduced as our Senator in the basement. {Both laughing} Senator Heflin, I've thought of it!

**PROSKY:** Heflin?

**CASSIDY:** Yes, [Howell] Heflin from Alabama. He and his wife stayed there and they really enjoyed it.

**PROSKY:** You must have got a lot of stuff from Frager's hardware?

**CASSIDY:** Frager's in those days was a wonderful place. It reminded me of my grandfather's old shop. He was a woodworker, a cabinet-maker, and he had these great drawers, wooden drawers with little round handles. You'd pull them out and there were like every conceivable size and shape of nail and screw that you'd ever want in all these little wooden drawers. And then there were great buckets, like if you wanted galvanized roofing nails, you simply put your hand in it and you took a bunch of these nails and put them on the weighing scales. It was like a country store in the middle of the city. It was a great place for a kid to go in. I would take my boys there and they'd love to root around, pulling the drawers open. You could spend hours in there, just foraging around all the little wooden drawers and chests. It was wonderful exploration you could do there. Of course, they had to go with modernization. They now have their very crisp wire shelving and it's all neatly done and labeled and you can find things.

**PROSKY:** Have you ever been to the basement in that store?

**CASSIDY:** I was once in the basement because that's now where they have their glass cutting I think. When you went down there before it was like a maze. You could hardly see with the lighting, but the owner's knew exactly where everything was. He'd make a right here at the tarpaper, make a left here at the paint shop, and then he went and he'd find whatever you were looking for. It was a wonderful store.

**PROSKY:** Yeah.

**CASSIDY:** I often asked them, as an architect, why they didn't kind of redo things and they were able to tell me that because of regulations and the restoration wanting to keep the façade and wanting to keep all that original there, they were too tied into all of that. They couldn't expand, and they couldn't do this and they couldn't do that. But they have kept the original store, the façade and it's certainly very much more

organized now as you go in. It's a nice place. They have a great garden center now, which they didn't have years ago.

**PROSKY:** Did you ever work with the Restoration Society on Capitol Hill? [Capitol Hill Restoration Society]

**CASSIDY:** I was part of the zoning board, with the planning and zoning board they called it then. I was part of that. I dealt with all the variations people wanted in their housing. Whether the lot was perhaps not wide enough to put a house up or they wanted to put a terrace on the garage or whatever they wanted to do. I was there at the time that Beau Bogan took down those twenty-odd houses on Pennsylvania Avenue, down what's near the Potomac Avenue Metro station now. He took all those down and he had the brilliant idea that he would put up a five-story office building right on that corner. This would have been ideal for Metro, because that's what Metro needs is a high concentration of people right at their station so they will use it. However, the Restoration Society in their wisdom, decided that it was out of scale for the two-story character of the neighborhood.

**PROSKY:** {Laughing}

**CASSIDY:** So that never got built and it was an empty lot for twenty years.

**PROSKY:** Oh my goodness.

**CASSIDY:** So in absolute insult, in revolt, Beau Bogan put up a car wash there. Can I say "screw you, guys?" {Both laughing} He put up a car wash there just to spite them. And that lasted for a while and then it became an office block. I happen to know all that because that's where my house is now. It's right, edge-on that lot. And now today, in spite of all the confrontation, in spite of all the argument, we now have a beautiful development there of Boys Town houses. [This project subsequently was cancelled over zoning questions.] Whether it's used as group homes or houses is still to be determined. But those houses are beautiful, done by the Capitol Hill's best architect, who did the Ellen Wilson housing redevelopment. Beautiful—I mean they are true gems. And it deserves to be there. I say that because I have lived on that corner—vacant lot across from it for years. Twelve, thirteen years, and it's been nothing but a dump for old cars. It's been a nuisance. It's beautiful to look out on now. And I hope it gets resolved.

**PROSKY:** Yes, I do too. Did you ever take your kids to the movies that were here?

**CASSIDY:** Well, there were two great movie theatres, right there very close on Pennsylvania Avenue. One was the Grand Cinema [Avenue Grand, renamed Capitol Hill Theater, at 645 Pennsylvania Ave. SE], which was next door to Kobre's Liquor Store [Kobre Wine and Liquor, 643 Pennsylvania Ave. SE]. Does

anybody remember Kobre's Liquor Store? Very nice. Very nice. Well anyway, the Grand is now the mini mall. Do take time to go down there, because when they took down the old theatre they found a mural on one wall, a Coca-Cola mural, and they have preserved now it because it has a spelling error in it. It's wonderful. You look up and it says, "Cool, Refreshing"—they left the R out, and it's "refreshing" Coca-Cola. {Both laughing} If you go by there now, there's a narrow window which when properly lighted, you can look up there and see.

But, that was the theatre in which we saw "The Yellow Submarine." I remember taking my kids to see the "The Yellow Submarine" there. Unfortunately, there was a bunch of really, really dedicated beatniks in front of us who were into all of these style songs. But my kids just wanted to sing all through the movie. They wanted to sing "The Yellow Submarine", so we were not too popular. But we liked going there. Our kids liked to go to the Penn Theatre [646 Pennsylvania Ave. SE], which was across the street from it. But at that stage it was beginning to turn the corner from children's movies to advertisements for films of a more "adult" nature. Then they began to mix them, which got to be a bit of a problem when you brought your kids there. And then it began to be like all adult movies. Then it disappeared. But I'm very glad again that the architect for that did keep the façade and the canopy. That's there. And it still reads "Penn" so you can at least know where it was.

**PROSKY:** Yes.

**CASSIDY:** They even had half-price—I've forgotten what day of the week it was. It might have been on Monday. I think it was like a dollar you could get in there.

**PROSKY:** Yes, there were dollar movies there. I remember because Monday was Bob's [Robert Prosky] night off. {Both laughing} You talked a little bit about car pooling on the Hill and how...

**CASSIDY:** Well, my wife as I said, joined GW teaching in the physiology department and it was full-time. And I worked. So we were both working, and it was rare in those days for both mother and father to be working and have kids and have a babysitter and have the kids get to school. I was the only driver in the house and I did what I had to do in the mornings and evenings. I could do that. But other families would join in when they had to go to practice, when they had to do this, or violin or music lessons, or guitar lessons or whatever it was. Actually neighbors got around and there was car pooling.

We were not able to contribute to that because both of us were working full-time. Even getting kids into school was a problem. We were with the car pooling people for a while, but because we couldn't reciprocate in the actual car pooling, we offered gas money, we offered other incentives. We would bake or do whatever. We were the beginnings, we think, of the days in which both parents worked full-time

and kids have to be taken care of and babysitters have to be arranged and car pooling back and forth. Now of course, you have after-school care, where kids can go to. You have all sorts of arrangements for kids to be entertained while the parents are still at work. It was different in those days. As we've talked about before, you had to make your own arrangements. I mean, those were days when you had to pull things together and do things that weren't there. You just simply had to find an arrangement to do these things. So that was a little uncomfortable, but we managed.

We were very fortunate to have a very jolly South Carolina black lady [Mamie] who loved the kids and she could bus it from... She lived near Union Station. She was very jolly. One of the reasons we were looking for all these 60 houses, by the way, was so that we could be on a bus route for Mamie. That was one of the conditions on our list, you know. We wanted to keep her so much. She was adorable. But those were the days in which you could get people like that. That has all changed.

**PROSKY:** Can we talk a little bit about how you got involved with the Folger Theater?

**CASSIDY:** When we rented on Fourth and A, that is practically around the corner from the Folger Theater there on East Capitol Street. I would go by there longingly, having trained as an architect years ago in Ireland. I thought, Ooo, I'd give anything to carry a spear on any of those shows. I would love to carry... You know, bringing up kids and stuff, there wasn't too much time for those kind of dreams. So eventually I did get to be usher there. I thought, well that's a good way to see shows. I became usher there. Later on, my daughters got involved in theater. My youngest daughter finally got an internship at the Folger. She went on from there to get a scholarship to the National Theater in London. From then on, moved to New York and has been on soaps [Television soap operas] and now does...

**PROSKY:** Would you like to mention her name?

**CASSIDY:** Her name is Orlagh. Orlagh. And although she's married, she still carries her name Cassidy. Her professional name is Orlagh Cassidy. And she can be seen, as most actors can be seen, on one or other episode of Law and Order.

**PROSKY:** Law and Order. [both laughing]

**CASSIDY:** Everybody gets to be on Law and Order.

**PROSKY:** Well in New York, yeah.

**CASSIDY:** In New York. And from there on, I branched out to the Washington Stage Guild. I was on their shows. Then the Washington Shakespeare Company, I was in that. Somebody asked me, if I was ever in the same show as my daughter. I think I said this in the eulogy for my daughter when she died.

[Grainne]. People asked me, were you ever on the same show with your daughter since we were both actors. And we actually were. I was understudy at the Shakespeare Theater in “All’s Well That End’s Well,” and she was playing...

**PROSKY:** The Michael Kahn Shakespeare.

**CASSIDY:** Yes, sorry. The Michael Kahn Shakespeare, downtown. She was a courtier or something, she was a lady in waiting—she was something, anyway. During the rehearsals I was understudying and I was to be also one of the Courtiers coming in. And she would come in on my arm as she crossed the stage. I have to make this grand entrance with my daughter on my arm. I turned to say something to her and I looked at her and thought to myself, “Wow, I’d forgotten what lovely green eyes you had.” She dropped her head to one side and her mouth, and she said, “Dad, you have a line here.” {Both laughing} I had the opening line for the scene and I was busy admiring my own daughter. So we have appeared on occasion.

Another time, for auditions, we would show up for auditions. Somebody said, do you ever audition for the same part? I said, actually we did. Thinking this was a joke—you know, do you audition for the same part. Yes, it was to be voice consultant for Translations by Brian Friel.

**PROSKY:** Oh my.

**CASSIDY:** Up at Catholic University. And we were both on the list as voice consultant. But how she got it, damn it, because she had all the degrees behind her. {Both laughing}

**PROSKY:** But you did voice work at Arena.

**CASSIDY:** Oh, I did voice work for Arena Stage when they played Brendan Behan’s “Hostage”. I went down to give them the real Dublin accent, the real Irish accent. I enjoyed that and enjoyed being down there.

**PROSKY:** Mary’s Blue Room. What happened to Mary’s Blue Room?

**CASSIDY:** Well, Mary’s Blue Room goes back to the sixties again. Maybe the late sixties, early seventies, when somebody in their wisdom in Congress decided, well obviously they have increase the office space for the House and the Senate. Obviously, all those houses east of the Capitol, they can go. There’s nothing there but St. Mark’s. Apart from that, everything else can go. So the neighborhood got up in riot and fortunately, more influential people than me were able to arrange for them to stop this. These were good houses, people were living there, they were family houses. You know, they dated way back and were historic, and they belonged. And “Mary’s Blue Room”, which I think was at the corner of Fifth and A—maybe I’m wrong—but it was Fifth and East Capitol... Somewhere around there.

**PROSKY:** Fifth and East Capitol. [northeast corner]

**CASSIDY:** Yes. I think it was there. But it got to the point that they were going to tear down “Mary’s Blue Room” and I can remember the neighbors coming out with placards and sitting on the bulldozer. That was the thing to do. {Both laughing} To sit on those bulldozers to block their way. But that was, I think, the era of when we were deciding that Capitol Hill was worth saving. There was enough people who had now made it their home with their families that darn it, this was a good place to be and they were going to save. And they did. But as I say, it was thanks to the Restoration Society and people like Peter Powers. I don’t know if I should mention any other names, but he’s one that comes to mind. People like that, you know who were very influential. Names don’t stick with me so I don’t... I can see their faces but... They were the days we decided Capitol Hill was worth fighting for. [“Mary’s Blue Room” and the adjoining building were demolished by the owner – the Capitol Hill Baptist Church.]

**PROSKY:** Um hmm. Is there anything I haven’t asked you that you’d like to talk about?

**CASSIDY:** No. {Pause} Watching Capitol Hill develop has been very interesting when you consider that at one time, when we first drove in from New York, to this city, coming on Pennsylvania Avenue East. You come down there, there’s that rise—what’s that called there? That hill, outside of Washington?

**PROSKY:** Oh, Hillcrest Heights.

**CASSIDY:** Hillcrest Heights. I thought, this was a gorgeous place in those days. You know. And today there are lovely old houses there.

**PROSKY:** There are, yes.

**CASSIDY:** You drive in and you can see the city lights. That’s what really struck me as being beautiful about Washington when we first came. I thought, this is really where I’d like to be, overlooking the river and the town below it and all of that. So at some stage they really must have been really nice homes, because of the big yards. And now to see how it’s developed and how the city has moved out to that direction. Everything has moved out and things have changed hands again. But I like the idea of the Hill being a great cosmopolitan mix. I mean, to go down to Eastern Market now on the weekends and see the great flow of people and the flea market there. The flea market, before it was the flea market, was where we ran those weekend games for Soccer on the Hill. You remember that?

**PROSKY:** Oh really?

**CASSIDY:** Yeah. We used to run little kick balls and little miniature games for kids to play in.

**PROSKY:** That's right. That's right.

**CASSIDY:** We'd have a Soccer on the Hill weekend where we'd have kicking a ball or throwing a ball, or whatever it was, to get our interest going on that. It's a great community gathering place, you know. But I wish they would decide what to do with the market itself. I mean, I was on the board for the rehabilitation not twenty years ago!

**PROSKY:** Yes. [Phone ringing] Still talking about the same thing.

**CASSIDY:** Still talking about the same thing. You want to put this on pause?

**PROSKY:** Yes.

[Interview was interrupted for phone call]

**CASSIDY:** St. Joseph's, this was our first parish when we got here in '63 [1963]. So that will be like 40 years on the Hill. But in '68—the riots were in '68—right?

**PROSKY:** I think so.

**CASSIDY:** Yeah. And '68 [1968] was also the anniversary of St. Joseph's Church. 1868 it was built, so it was a hundred years old. But I got to give a lecture on that occasion. That was a January evening and I got them to turn the lights out and it was pitch dark and the church was filled with people. This was just about the time that we were deciding to turn the altar of faith to the people.

**PROSKY:** Yes.

**CASSIDY:** And I had designed the altar for that. It was like a temporary altar, but it was like a long, basically a long card table with an arch in front. It looked okay. But I was one of the first lay people to get up in the pulpit and to give a lecture on the architecture of the church. But the church was darkened and I had a strong flashlight—torch—and I just went [he is apparently shining the light around]. You know, showed them the architecture of the church and the ribs, the gothic arches. People were in awe of this. It was a great occasion to be able to renew the architecture, to tell them that it was built on a three-quarter-scale model of a church in Cologne, in Germany—which it was. It was a German church at the time. To this day you can still go in the basement and see the foundations of that church. They didn't have money to finish it, they didn't have money to put a belfry on it. That's why it today still doesn't have a belfry on it.

**PROSKY:** Uh huh.

**CASSIDY:** But it was a great occasion for people to get there and have a feeling for the architecture of it. I had told them there were a few jokes about the builder that I'd come across, about not finishing or walking off because he wasn't paid, and there was dead silence from this congregation out there. Because they were like in awe of this person up in the pulpit, you know. {Laughing} All I can remember is Monsignor Awalt.

**PROSKY:** Yes, I remember him!

**CASSIDY:** Monsignor Awalt in the back of the church telling me to move it on because they were taping it. {Both laughing} Now, there is that tape around somewhere. They taped me...

**PROSKY:** Hidden somewhere in the chancery.

**CASSIDY:** Somewhere in the chancery.

**PROSKY:** You make fun of that altar table, but that was a beautiful table. I remember that. It did not look like a card table.

**CASSIDY:** Well it was quite simple.

**PROSKY:** It was simple but it was beautiful.

**CASSIDY:** Yeah, thank you. It was nice to see that Father Gallaher I think was his name, the carpenter type, and he built it. So it was a really home-grown altar. They did honor me by putting a brass plaque on the back of it. I have no idea whatever happened to it. I think it wound up as a card table. {Laughing}

**PROSKY:** Oh stop. {Both laughing}

**CASSIDY:** Or a ping-pong table. {Both laughing} That was the only thing I didn't touch on was St. Joseph's. People from that era might remember St. Joseph's. There were great things that occurred to me when we talked about Mary's Blue Room. There was Mike Palm's restaurant...

**PROSKY:** Yes.

**CASSIDY:** Ahhh, great. Great gathering place.

**PROSKY:** He was a football player.

**CASSIDY:** That's right, he was a football player. I didn't frequent it myself with a lot of kids to take care of, but there was a great watering hole for lots of people on the Hill. Good name. Mike Palm Restaurant [231 Pennsylvania Ave. SE]. [Myron H. and Lillian S. Palm lived at 300 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SE]

**PROSKY:** Yeah. And Lil Palm was a, she was a...

**CASSIDY:** A beauty queen of some kind?

**PROSKY:** I don't know, but she was one of the organizing parents of St. Peter's [School] when our kids were there. I think that's why we trusted it as a school, because she was a very effective woman.

**CASSIDY:** Yes.

**PROSKY:** She just couldn't control what was going on.

**CASSIDY:** No, no. She wasn't at the top.

**PROSKY:** St. Peter's is better now than it was then.

**CASSIDY:** Oh yes, absolutely. Absolutely.

**PROSKY:** Well thank you, my dear. This was great.

**CASSIDY:** Good, good, good. Has anybody hit on Providence Park? Remember the hospital that was there?

**PROSKY:** Oh, where the hospital used to be. No.

**CASSIDY:** Well, maybe somebody else knows more about it, but I just remember being on the building committee for St. Peter's and they asking me what we could do with that space, which was a pile of rubble. And I said, well leave the pile of rubble—the kids love that. {Both laughing} Kids love running up and down. But in those days I think they were afraid it was going to be turned into the page school, the school for pages.

**PROSKY:** Oh yes. Yeah, that idea was around for...

**CASSIDY:** There was a big long fight about that. Nothing really ever happened about that. But I do remember St. Peter's was very much more open than it is now. Because it owned all those, which are now houses, along that strip, you know. Along...

**PROSKY:** Oh, across from the...

**CASSIDY:** Third Street.

**PROSKY:** Oh yeah.

**CASSIDY:** You know. From the schoolyard it went all the way up there. But it's now houses. So it was a bigger kind of establishment in those days. But it's a very well thought of school now. Very well thought of. That's all I can think of right now.

[Pause]

**PROSKY:** Okay. Thank you.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

END OF INTERVIEW