



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Randy Edwards

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

KRUGER: OK, today is Tuesday April 15, 2003, and my name is Janice Kruger, I am interviewing Randy Edwards at the Naval Lodge at 330 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE in Washington. And first I wanted to ask Mr. Edwards, or Randy, if I may, which...

EDWARDS: Fine

KRUGER: Fine... What—how long did you live on Capitol Hill? You said—you lived here...

EDWARDS: I was born on Massachusetts Avenue SE.

KRUGER: Where on Massachusetts Avenue?

EDWARDS: About the 17—1800 block in 1931.

KRUGER: Uh huh. And were you—were you born at home?

EDWARDS: Probably.

KRUGER: Probably, you don't know?

EDWARDS: Probably, yeah.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: And then we moved to 1200 block of Potomac Avenue, 1212 Potomac Avenue.

KRUGER: How old were you then?

EDWARDS: About 8. And then we moved next door to my grandfather's house, at 1210, and we lived there until I was 16.

KRUGER: Then what happened?

EDWARDS: Then we moved to Alabama Avenue. Beck Street, right off of Alabama Avenue.

KRUGER: Still in SE?

EDWARDS: Uh-huh.

KRUGER: And why did you keep moving?

EDWARDS: Well, my father was promoted to captain on the Police Department in 1948, so he moved out of my grandfather's house and bought his own, on Beck Street. And then he moved to—he stayed there, I went in the Navy while they were living there.

KRUGER: How old were you when you went in the Navy?

EDWARDS: 20.

KRUGER: 20?

EDWARDS: 20.

KRUGER: Yeah?

EDWARDS: Got married the same year.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: [laughs] But...

KRUGER: So that was 1951 you went in the Navy?

EDWARDS: Yeah. Uh-hmm.

KRUGER: Now, did you go to school on Capitol Hill?

EDWARDS: Went to Cranch/Tyler.

KRUGER: How do you—can you spell that?

EDWARDS: Cranch was...

KRUGER: Oh, well you don't have to spell it now. Cranch, OK, I'll ask you later about the spelling.

EDWARDS: It was two different buildings, one was—one building was on 11th Street and one building was on 12th and G.

KRUGER: Oh, that's still there, isn't it?

EDWARDS: It's combined now, the building is on 11th Street now, they built a new school.

KRUGER: Tyler school. Uh-huh. And when you went there, why were there two schools, why was it called two different names?

EDWARDS: I really don't know.

KRUGER: You don't know?

EDWARDS: I don't know. But I know it—it was two eight room schoolhouses is what it was.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: There were four on each floor.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And it went from kindergarten to sixth grade.

KRUGER: And was it segregated?

EDWARDS: Not then, no.

KRUGER: No? There were, there were black kids there, too?

EDWARDS: No. No—oh yeah it was segregated, I'm sorry.

KRUGER: It was segregated. Not integrated.

EDWARDS: No, it wasn't integrated. Not then, it was early. That didn't come until the early 50's.

KRUGER: Uh-huh. So you were out of school by the time it was integrated?

EDWARDS: I was, yes.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: I had two younger brothers that weren't. [laughs]

KRUGER: Uh-huh. And how was that for them?

EDWARDS: I—I went to... From there, I went to Hine Junior High School.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And I, when I finished 9th grade there I went to Eastern.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: I finished—went to Eastern for 10th, 11th, and 12th. And graduated from there in February of 1950.

KRUGER: And all of these schools were all for white children?

EDWARDS: Mmm-hmm. Yeah. They didn't, they didn't—they didn't integrate the—the schools in DC until '53 I think was the first, and I think they started in the—in the high schools.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And they had a problem. There's no doubt about it. They had a problem in Anacostia especially, because it was—it was—that neighborhood had turned quite a bit of black over there now.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: But when I was in school we had no—had no problems. But I know my brothers had problems. [laughs]

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: But everybody had problems, not only the whites, but the blacks too. They all—everybody had a problem.

KRUGER: And when you lived in these different places on Mass Avenue and Potomac and Beck Street, were they segregated then. I mean, where there just white people who lived on those blocks?

EDWARDS: Mostly.

KRUGER: Mostly? Yeah.

EDWARDS: Mostly.

KRUGER: Do you remember any black neighbors?

EDWARDS: No.

KRUGER: No?

EDWARDS: When we lived on Potomac Avenue we had two black families that lived right behind us.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Potomac Avenue come here, and it was 12th Street, and it was two black families that lived there. Matter of fact, one of the ladies worked for my mother.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Taking care of the house.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: It was six of us, six kids there. But we didn't think no more of that. My brothers played with the—with the black neighbors. It didn't mean nothing to them, really.

KRUGER: Uh-huh

EDWARDS: [laughs] It was part of life, really.

KRUGER: Right.

EDWARDS: And I guess they couldn't understand it when they—when—when they changed the schools, and everything else. But it eventually turned out that way.

KRUGER: Yeah. Now you lived here during some important historical times, then, and—and I wondered what you remember of—of, sort of, the impact of World War II. Did a lot of people move into the city that you recall? Did it affect your neighborhood?

EDWARDS: Yeah. It was a lot of—lot of integration from—from the South, to come up here to get jobs, the government jobs. I mean, they—they were the best jobs around then.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And they didn't pay what they pay then, what, \$1,800 a year. That was the tops, I guess.

KRUGER: For what kind of job would that be?

EDWARDS: Secretarial jobs, around 12—11—\$1,200 a year then.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Which sounds like not much, \$100 a month, \$25 a week. [laughs]

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: That's not much money. But my wife, she graduated from high school in Connecticut and come down here and we got married in '51 when I was in the Navy. And we still stayed in SE.

KRUGER: Did you have your own house then when you got married?

EDWARDS: No, we had a basement apartment off of—off of Minnesota Avenue SE. And then I went—went on a six month cruise and she—she went to live with my sister and that was still in SE. Over, further over. And then we got another apartment on R Street SE, when I come back from the cruise.

KRUGER: Did you work out of the Navy Yard when you were in the Navy?

EDWARDS: No, no. I was on an aircraft carrier for two years and then I went to Patuxent Naval Air Station for two years, and then I got out.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: But being on Potomac Avenue we—we saw a lot of people working at the Navy Yard. They would park there and walk—walk—walk to the Navy Yard.

KRUGER: Right.

EDWARDS: And it was no—no place to park down there. They parked all through the neighborhoods then.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Then it wasn't many cars, and there was plenty of parking.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: People didn't have cars that they have now.

KRUGER: How did they get there, if they didn't have a car?

EDWARDS: Bus.

KRUGER: They have a bus?

EDWARDS: Bus and streetcar.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: Good transportation.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: It was. It was excellent.

KRUGER: Did the streetcar end at the Navy Yard there?

EDWARDS: No, the buses run—run by there. Streetcar went down 8th Street SE.

KRUGER: H or Eight?

EDWARDS: Eighth.

KRUGER: Eighth.

EDWARDS: Right to the main gate.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: It was a car barn right down the street from the Navy Yard, as a matter of fact. So they turned around there and went back up. But the streetcars were great.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: I was sorry to seem them go, really.

KRUGER: Right.

EDWARDS: [laughs]

KRUGER: Did you use them a lot? Did you go around the city?

EDWARDS: Oh yeah. Yeah, sure. When we were kids, my oldest brother worked for IBM during the day, in a—in a funny place over in NE. And on Saturdays you could get a bus pass, he could get a bus pass, a weekly bus pass, for a dollar and a half. And on Saturdays, anybody on 12th, three people could ride on it.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: So we'd—we'd ride the buses and streetcars all over the place. Go to Glen Echo and every place else.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: For three of us.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: Yeah, that was entertainment.

KRUGER: Yeah, well what was up at Glen Echo then?

EDWARDS: It was an amusement park there for years.

KRUGER: Yeah?

EDWARDS: Yeah. And now, I think it's predominantly a dance hall, which was there then also.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: They had a beautiful swimming pool there.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: But it was—it was—it was one of the places to go. But, then they had the circus come into town right over where the Armory is now.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: The circus would put the tent up over there.

KRUGER: Yeah. Tell me about the circus.

EDWARDS: Well, it was all the animals would come into Union Station, and they'd have a parade down to where they put in all the tents.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: Actually, it was on Oklahoma Avenue where they had the tents. And that used to be the—the dump.

KRUGER: The dump?

EDWARDS: Yeah, and they—they graded it down and the circus would put their tents there every year when they came. And they'd come every year, too.

KRUGER: Was it—was it the dump except for when the circus was there? Or, it used to be the...?

EDWARDS: No, used to be. Used to be.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: They used to have a big incinerator and then incinerated all the trash.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: And they'd take it over there and dump it and then grade it down.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Fill in—and fill in—landfill, what it was.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: Really, but it was all—all burnt.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Matter of fact, my uncle drove one of those trucks that took the trash over there. [laughs]

KRUGER: Was the trash privately collected, or was it... Did he work for the city?

EDWARDS: No, they worked for the city. Trash was work for the city. Garbage was a separate pick up. And ashes, you know, you had coal. Most—most houses were heated with coal.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And you had to have ashes from them. And so they had—you'd pick up the trash, and they'd pick up the garbage, and they'd also pick up the ashes. And it was three different people picked it up.

KRUGER: Did you have coal heat in the houses that you lived in?

EDWARDS: Yeah.

KRUGER: Do you remember that?

EDWARDS: Yeah. I remember having to go out and filling up these two little buckets and bringing them in every day.

KRUGER: Where did—where did the coal get dumped for your house?

EDWARDS: They would dump it on 12th street and they'd pay a man, I think a dollar, a dollar and a half to put it in bushel baskets and bring it in and put it in the coal bin. And it was about two tons of coal at a time.

KRUGER: In each house? No.

EDWARDS: In—in the one house, yeah.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And that would last us maybe a month and a half. So, you'd probably get two—two or three loads in the wintertime.

KRUGER: Do you remember how much it cost for the coal?

EDWARDS: Oh, I don't know.

KRUGER: No?

EDWARDS: I know it was Griffith's—Griffith's Consumer's blue coal.

KRUGER: Oh yeah? Griffith's?

EDWARDS: Yeah.

KRUGER: Yeah?

EDWARDS: They was—they was around a long time. Now it's an oil company. I think they're still in existence. The coal actually had a blue color to it. I don't know whether they added it or what, but it was blue coal. [laughs]

KRUGER: Cool. Did you have telephones and all of that?

EDWARDS: We had a telephone. Of course, my father was a policeman, had to have one.

KRUGER: Oh, that's right. But not—did everybody have a telephone?

EDWARDS: No.

KRUGER: Or not too often?

EDWARDS: No.

KRUGER: And was your father a policeman for a long time?

EDWARDS: My—my dad, when he first got out of school, I think he went to work for the Mayflower, a Washington hotel as a bellhop. Then he got married and then he went in the police department in 1931 when I was born. And he was on the police department, he retired in 1962.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And my grandfather was the assistant superintendent of the police department.

KRUGER: Oh yeah? So you have a history of it?

EDWARDS: Uh-hmm.

KRUGER: Are any of your brothers or sisters or...?

EDWARDS: My youngest brother was on the police department for about 6 or 7 years.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And he got off and went to Arizona. Nobody else in the family were policemen. I was too short.

KRUGER: You were too short?

EDWARDS: Yeah. They—they had a limit of 5 foot 8.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: I'm 5 foot 7, barely.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: So, I was too short to even think about the police department. But all my brothers were tall enough. But my—my youngest brother was there for a while. My dad went up through the ranks, he was a Captain in 1948, and he was a Captain in the number 5 precinct right down here at 5th and E.

KRUGER: Oh yeah.

EDWARDS: See there used to be precincts.

KRUGER: Right.

EDWARDS: There was—12 precincts then. 13 precincts, excuse me. And he was Captain down there for a while, then they transferred him to number 11 which was across the river. It used to be Nichols Avenue, it's now Martin Luther King.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: That was 11 precinct over there, and that took in everything on that side of the river. And then they—that was such a big precinct they split it, and made the 14th precinct out of it on Benning Road.

KRUGER: Uh-huh. That's in NE, right?

EDWARDS: Yeah, that was a big territory so they split it and made two precincts out of it. Now they have districts and I don't know what in the world the districts are, but I knew where the precincts were.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: And they had a police Boys Club in the basement of number 5 precinct, too.

KRUGER: And what happened at the Boys Club?

EDWARDS: Well, all the kids, they had pool tables and they organized football teams and they played over at Anacostia. We called it Fairlawn, it's across the bridge. It's parkland.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm. Oh yeah.

EDWARDS: That's before they put in 295. Used to be a golf course over there. I played that golf course, Anacostia Golf Course.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: But, the road took care of the golf course.

KRUGER: So that's Anacostia Park?

EDWARDS: Yeah.

KRUGER: Just along the other side of the river, yeah?

EDWARDS: Yeah, I used to go over there, and roll Easter eggs, had a big hill.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Kids were there on Easter Monday and roll Easter eggs. But we used to walk across the bridge, 11th Street bridge, it was a wooden bridge. You'd walk across the bridge. And went over there, they had a lot of ball diamonds over there.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Get the kids together in the neighborhood and take them over there and play ball.

KRUGER: The police used to do this? The Boys Club?

EDWARDS: Yeah, my dad, my dad played with us most of the time.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And sometimes we went with the—policemen, had a team.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And so we'd play with them. But, everybody would walk, everybody walked. If you was going somewhere a good distance, it was—it was public transportation, otherwise you walk.

KRUGER: Did you have a bicycle?

EDWARDS: No. Wouldn't let us have bicycles. My two youngest brothers had bicycles but he wouldn't let us have them because he seen too many kids underneath trucks and cars.

KRUGER: Oh.

EDWARDS: From bikes in the city.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: So no, he—he wouldn't let us have a bicycle. I used to work at Penn Theater down here.

KRUGER: At where?

EDWARDS: Penn Theater, in the 600 block of Pennsylvania Avenue.

KRUGER: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

EDWARDS: They still have the façade for it, but I worked there when it was a theater. My oldest brother worked there too.

KRUGER: Well, when...

EDWARDS: We were ushers.

KRUGER: It was a movie theater?

EDWARDS: Yeah.

KRUGER: And what...

EDWARDS: They had ushers there then.

KRUGER: Uh-huh. What do you remember about that?

EDWARDS: Well, I worked there after school.

KRUGER: How old were you then?

EDWARDS: I think I started there when I was 16. And I worked there even after I got out of school. I went to work at Pepco as a meter reader and I worked there at night.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: But that was—people went to movies a lot then but before—or before or during the war, because there was no other entertainment around. And it was the only place you could get cool.

KRUGER: Oh, it was...

EDWARDS: Houses didn't have air conditioning.

KRUGER: Right. So the movie theater was air conditioned?

EDWARDS: Movie theater was air conditioned. To get cool you'd go to the movies.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: Or you'd go downtown to the movies.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Main theater was on F Street, and G Street, downtown.

KRUGER: Uh-huh. Do you remember what movies were playing? Do you remember any particular movies?

EDWARDS: I know I saw *Gone with the Wind* twice a day for five days.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: [laughs] Just about memorized it.

KRUGER: Right.

EDWARDS: They would only show it two times because it was five hours long.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: But I would go to work and it happened to be on Easter vacation...

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: ...and worked every day during the day. So I saw *Gone with the Wind* ten times.

KRUGER: Yeah. Now did it have an intermission with a movie that long?

EDWARDS: They had an intermission, a half hour intermission in the middle.

KRUGER: A half hour? What did people do then, did they sell food, or...?

EDWARDS: They'd go to the candy counter.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: That's all they had then.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: In fact, maybe they did sell popcorn then.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: They had candy counters in most of the lobbies. My sister worked in the candy counter. [laughs] So yeah... [laughs] It's unbelievable.

KRUGER: Well, there's a lot of buildings around here that I know have, you know, changed over the years. Do you remember any other ones that, you know, used to be important buildings?

EDWARDS: I remember the five and dime store at 7th Street here.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Used to be Kresge's Five and Ten Cent store. And I think they used to have one on 8th Street also, I don't remember the name of it.

KRUGER: Now, the Kresge's was where Bread and Chocolate is now?

EDWARDS: Yes, yes, uh-huh. I used to have Sampan Chinese restaurant next to the theater. I ate in there many times.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Many, many times. That just—that just closed not too many—not too long ago.

KRUGER: Right now it's the health food store.

EDWARDS: But I know it was open until recently because one of my Lodge members used to—used to eat there quite often.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: He's from SE, you ought to talk to him.

KRUGER: What's his name?

EDWARDS: Walter Graham.

KRUGER: Grant?

EDWARDS: Graham.

KRUGER: OK.

EDWARDS: He lived on 12th and G Street for years and years, and he still lives in SE. He lives on 18th—18th Street I believe.

KRUGER: OK, well after the interview I'll get more information and pass that on to...

EDWARDS: Yeah, he could give you some information because he's lived here all his life.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: I knew him for—forever.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: [laughs]

KRUGER: Now you said you were a Pepco meter reader?

EDWARDS: Yeah, I worked with them for a year, then I went in the Navy for four years.

KRUGER: Uh-huh. Well, when you worked for Pepco, where was your territory? Was it also in...

EDWARDS: All over.

KRUGER: In SE?

EDWARDS: Used to read meters in SW, and that was when they was renovating—renewing SW.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: They tore all the rowhouses and everything down, so sometime I'd go into a block down there when they was just starting to—to tear things down. They moved people out. There might be only two meters in the whole block because they'd shut them all off. And sometimes people didn't pay their bill, they'd shut them off, too. So they only read the paper in the daytime, outside. But, yeah, I watched SE—I mean SW completely renew. All new houses.

KRUGER: And what were they like before the new houses came?

EDWARDS: Pretty bad.

KRUGER: Pretty bad?

EDWARDS: Yeah, you'd probably call it a slum area at that time. It was a lot of frame houses and they were—they were in bad shape. Really bad shape. Mostly black lived there.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: But my father and mother lived in SW at one time. Earlier. But they tore that all down and rebuilt it. Put some high rises down there. Made a pretty nice area of the town.

KRUGER: Yeah. What made you join the Navy?

EDWARDS: Well, the Korean War made me join the Navy. [laughs] When I come out of—when I came out of high school there wasn't too many jobs. You could get a job downtown in a—as a stock clerk in a—in a—one of the stores—Woodies, or Garfinckel's, or one of them, for fifty cents an hour. I went to work for Pepco at a dollar an hour. And I went in the Navy because I—I—I was a musician when I was in high school, and so I auditioned for the Navy School of Music and I went in as a rated musician. So I was in a fleet band the whole time I was in the Navy.

KRUGER: What instrument did you play?

EDWARDS: Trumpet.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: But, I was in a band two years on a carrier and two years at Patuxent Naval Air Station. But they asked me if I wanted to sign over, I said 'No, I don't think so.' So I come out and I bought a home on the GI bill in Oxon Hill, MD. And stayed with reading meters. I didn't want to go back to that job, but I stayed with reading meters for a couple of years. And then I transferred to the power plant. I worked at the power plant in Alexandria for 13 years. Shift work.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Changed shifts every week. But I got out of there and—and went to work for—downtown for Charles E. Smith, the management company. I was a building engineer in an office building. And then a couple of years later I was made a building manager. And I worked for them for, I guess, 12—13 years.

KRUGER: All downtown?

EDWARDS: Yeah.

KRUGER: Were they office buildings?

EDWARDS: Yeah, I was managing three office buildings when I left there in 1981.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Went to Florida for 10 years, opened a gas station down there.

KRUGER: Where in Florida?

EDWARDS: Port Charlotte, it's a little town between Sarasota and Ft. Myers. It's right about in the middle.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And I stayed there for 10 years, and then I come back here. Come back here to—my daughter was going back to work and she just had my granddaughter and she needed somebody to watch the baby. So we came back to watch the baby. Now she's going to be 13 next week.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: [laughs]

KRUGER: Where does your daughter live?

EDWARDS: She lives in McLean.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: She lives in McLean. Her husband works—works for—can't—can't remember the name now—works for a real estate company. He's a commercial real estate agent.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm. So you've been at the Naval Lodge then for 13 years?

EDWARDS: I've been a member here for 37 years.

KRUGER: OK, so you're a member as well as...

EDWARDS: Uhm-hmm, yeah, I've been a member here since 1966.

KRUGER: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: I managed this building in 1976, the first time, and then I left in '81. I managed it—I was a master three times, '66... '76, '77, and '78, and then I went to Florida and I come back. I was master again in 2001, and probably be master again next year.

KRUGER: What are—what are the duties of the master of the Naval Lodge?

EDWARDS: They are responsible for the operation of the Lodge for a year.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Only I ended up in it three years. [laughs] Three years in succession was unusual.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: But it seems like the person behind me—one dropped out of line and the next one the following year—he got sick, and he couldn't take it. So there I was. Once you are elected master you—you are still the master until your successor's been elected and installed.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: And that just didn't happen. [laughs] But I've managed this building—my brother had started managing it in 1990 and I was in on complete renovation of the building with him. And he died two years ago, and so I—I took it back over. So I'll probably be here for quite a while. [laughs]

KRUGER: And what did they do with the renovation of this building?

EDWARDS: Well, did all new electrical, all new plumbing, all new heating system. Some of the old radiators but we put in a lot of air conditioning also. That it didn't have.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: I put in the first air conditioning in the Lodge room in 1976. They didn't—they kept voting it down every year, I mean, that—that room gets hot.

KRUGER: I'll bet.

EDWARDS: On this floor, in the summertime...

KRUGER: Right, on the top floor of the building here.

EDWARDS: Yeah, and they kept voting it down. It wasn't that they didn't have the money. They had the money. [Laughs] They just kept voting it down. This Treasurer—he was, he was good with the money. He wouldn't let anybody spend it. So I got three estimates on air conditioning and gave him the price, when I was first year as master. And he finally come around and—and voted for it, because he asked me where the money was coming from for the air conditioning, and I said from the interest—from the \$100,000 certificate you've got in the bank. So he agreed with it then, because I was spending interest and not principal.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: But that was the first air conditioning. We've redone that system also in the last few years. But it's got, right now, about thirteen air conditioners in this building.

KRUGER: Are they on the roof?

EDWARDS: Quite a few of them are right up on this roof.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: We've got steel girders across. It's eight or nine of them up here.

KRUGER: So you must have had a big crane to put them up?

EDWARDS: Oh yeah, we had a—we had a crane put them up. That stove in there, we had to have a crane to come in the window.

KRUGER: Oh, in the kitchen, the big stove?

EDWARDS: Yeah, that stove weighs a thousand pounds.

KRUGER: Wow.

EDWARDS: It came through that window there.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: But the wall wasn't there then.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: So they brought it in before they put the wall up.

KRUGER: Now do you have—why do you need such a big stove here in the Naval Lodge?

EDWARDS: We cook dinners. I cook the dinners for the meeting.

KRUGER: How many people come for the meetings?

EDWARDS: Anywhere from 12 to 20...25.

KRUGER: Oh.

EDWARDS: All depends.

KRUGER: And do you cook—I noticed down in the lobby when I was waiting there, there's a list—like a schedule of different groups who meet here.

EDWARDS: No, I only cook for my lodge.

KRUGER: Oh you just cook for your lodge. OK. OK.

EDWARDS: [Laughs] Each one has a cook.

KRUGER: I see.

EDWARDS: One lodge has a policeman—a policeman that—he's on the Metropolitan Police Department, and he cooks for one lodge, and his—I don't know who cooks for the other ones, but they—they have their own cooks, most of them.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: And it's quick meals, always find something easy to cook.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm. And do they eat in this room where we are?

EDWARDS: Yeah, we eat right here. And we've had as many as a hundred people at installations or something like that. We would just—people would come in, they'd eat, and go in the lodge room, and the next group comes in and eat. And so everybody ate.

KRUGER: And can you—I don't know about the Naval Lodge and—like what you can share about what you do, but if there's anything that you can tell me about the activities, that would be interesting, I think, to note.

EDWARDS: Well, the basis of Masonry is you take good men and make them better. There are requirements—it used to be you'd have to be 21, now it's 18. And you have to believe in a—in a—in God, or somebody of that nature. It could be Mohammed or whatever.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: But you have to believe in a—in a—in—in—something of that order. Other than that, and not have a criminal record, that's about the only obligation—only—only requirements.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: But they—we—it's not a religious organization. But we do have an open Bible at the opening and the closing, during the meetings. But it's not religious. Two things that are not—that are not allowed to be spoken about in a lodge meeting, is religion and politics. Saves a lot of arguments.

KRUGER: I bet. [laughs]

EDWARDS: [Laughs] So it's—they think it's a—a lot of people think it's a religious, because of—because of the Bible. But it's not. It's based a lot—based a lot on the Bible, but some of our ritual is based on—on books in the Bible. Our third degree is based on—on a story in the Bible. And...

KRUGER: What story is that?

EDWARDS: The one about Hiram Abif. I don't know whether you're aware of it, but our whole third degree is based on that. It originated—Masonry originated in the—in the—in the years when the—when the stone masons were going around building cathedrals. And they were the only ones that were allowed to travel around the country.

KRUGER: In the Middle Ages?

EDWARDS: Yeah. Yeah. And it goes back that far. Matter of fact, our—our—our dates are dated back 5,000 years past our calendar. I mean, this—this year is 2003, so we—we are looking at 7003.

KRUGER: And why 5,000 years ago?

EDWARDS: They figure it was—in existence in Egyptian times. This is—there's signs of it in Egyptian. This whole room is done in Egyptian hieroglyphics.

KRUGER: Right, right.

EDWARDS: And that's one reason, it was in Egyptian times. Actually, the formation of it in this—in this country was in the early 1700's, and—see, it was—well, in—in—not in this country, it was in—in Scotland, was where it started. And in the new world, what they called the new world then, it was in the 1700's—that they actually date back that far. But the date—the dates go back 5,000 years. Of course, you can't prove that, but—but—a lot of the stories and everything, or of the basis of it, goes back that far.

KRUGER: And, how do you make a good man better? Is that what you said? Or...

EDWARDS: Uh-hmm. Well, they—they—they—some of the principle tenets are—are—you help other people, and you help your own, you help your—you take care of your own people. I mean, Masons help Masons.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Always have, and always will. Used to be a strong organization. And a lot of utility companies in this town, there was a lot of Masons in the top of those companies. And if you were a Mason you did pretty well.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: [Laughs] Now, it's not true, because—the membership in Masonry has gone downhill. One reason is because the younger generation now, they don't—they got too much—too many other things to take their time up. And they're just not interested, really. And, it's hard to get somebody interested in something you're not going to tell them about until you get in it.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: [Laughs] And I—I don't blame them, either. But that's—that's one reason they've gone downhill. I know the grand Lodge in this city, first year I was master, was well over 14,000. Now it's around 5.

KRUGER: 5,000?

EDWARDS: Yeah. It's losing. That's through death.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: Through death, and no—no—no replenishment. Very little of replenishment. It used to take—it used to take three months to get—get a first degree. And then you would memorize whatever you went through for that degree. That was—that was—you had to do that in order to go to the next degree. So it would take you three months to get from the first degree through the third. And, of course, now they have what they call the Grand Master's class, they have it in two days—two nights. They—first—first and second degree on a Friday and the third degree on a Saturday. Makes it easier, and it makes a lot of people will come into it quicker that way. Because they just don't have the time. They don't have the time to—to give to it at that then.

KRUGER: How do you feel about that then, the speediness?

EDWARDS: I don't like—personally? I don't like it. I don't like it because it made the fact that you had to memorize what you did in each degree—it gave you a basis. This way, they don't memorize anything, so they have nothing to base off of. And it's—I guess it's just—it's something you have to do to make it worthwhile, really. But there's a lot of good Masons that come out of these Grand Master's classes, also.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: I mean, I can't fault it, but it's got us more members, but the quality of the members, personally, I don't think is as well as it was.

KRUGER: Yeah. Now did you bring any people in?

EDWARDS: My family had nine members.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: My father, myself and four brothers, and three of my nephews. There was nine of us from our family in this lodge. There's only seven now. Six. One dropped out, and my father and my oldest brother died. But we had enough to fill all the chairs in the lodge. As a matter of fact, we did one night. [laughs] I think one of my nephew's was getting his third degree and we filled all the chairs with members of the family. So I told them before, 'Be careful, because we can run your lodge.' [laughs]

KRUGER: I'm just going to check on this tape now. I think it's time for me to turn it over, so let's just stop a second.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

KRUGER: Starting side two of this tape 1 at number 461 on the tape recorder. OK, Randy. Where were we? We were talking about your family.

EDWARDS: Uh-hmm. My dad came in 1948, and my next oldest brother came in I think around '51 or '52. My youngest brother came in a couple of years after that. And then my oldest brother and myself and my youngest brother come in—next to youngest brother—come in in 1966. And then the two—my oldest brother's three sons, they come in a two year period apart, I guess. I think I was master the whole time when they—they came in, all three of them. But it was—it was nice. It was...

KRUGER: How often did you meet?

EDWARDS: We meet the first and third Thursdays every month except July and August.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: July and August they would call off because they didn't have any air conditioning. And now we got air conditioning and we figure well they'd go the whole year. No, they won't. [laughs] They got used to it, and they won't do it.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: But they used to have people at third degrees, they would have 300 people in here.

KRUGER: Wow.

EDWARDS: And it's overcrowded. They would have people on the stairway going up to the choir loft, people in the choir loft. All the seats, it would seat about 120 then, in the seats that are in there. And they have three rows of seats on the floor all the way around the lodge. The night I was raised, my brothers were raised, there was—there was over 300 people. They had them standing on the stairway, and they would raise one and let some people out and bring some people in. So everybody would get to see it, but—yeah. And they had to feed them all. Now, downstairs where Inter-America is on the second floor...

KRUGER: Uh-hmm

EDWARDS: ...there's a room the size of this one that they've got divided off into—into offices.

KRUGER: The size of the lodge room?

EDWARDS: Yes. That's where the Eastern Star met, down there.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And that's—they had a—they had a...

KRUGER: What is the Eastern Star?

EDWARDS: That's the women's section of Masonry.

KRUGER: Oh, OK.

EDWARDS: But they had a kitchen and everything. They had a commercial kitchen and everything down there. They would be 300 people easy down there.

KRUGER: And what happened to the Eastern Star? Is that no longer...?

EDWARDS: They've kind of gone along the wayside. They don't have but maybe one or two chapters left in—in DC. They have several around Maryland and Virginia, and the country. But not too many around here. Lack of interest, I guess. The daughters didn't go with the mothers. [laughs] I guess, I don't know.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm. Yeah.

EDWARDS: But, that's what they used to have down there. And that's where we used to feed those crowds.

KRUGER: Now, when you had those big meetings here, were women allowed to come in...?

EDWARDS: No.

KRUGER: ...or just men?

EDWARDS: No. No women are allowed in—in a—in a—in a Masonic meeting. No women allowed in—in Masonry, as a matter of fact. Except for the Eastern Star.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: They are trying to change that now. And it—it might help. We've found in the past that if you get women interested in—in the lodge—in the lodge, what—what they are doing—and going to dinners and different shows and everything, they get a better turnout. Much better turnout. We have a lodge that meets in the daylight—daytime. It's called Daylight Lodge. They meet at 10 o'clock on the third Saturday of every month. And they have maybe 25...30 people every meeting. The fact that it's a Saturday morning.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: And they don't have to go out at night. Because the age has caught up with us and a lot of people can't drive at night.

KRUGER: And do the members live on Capitol Hill or around the city?

EDWARDS: Not necessarily, most of them probably live outside the city.

KRUGER: Do you think that has anything to do with it? I mean, afraid to come into the city at night?

EDWARDS: That, and the age, and they can't drive at night, and other—other things like that. But, you know, a lot of them just don't like to go out at night when they get—get up—up in years.

KRUGER: Yeah. Now, I was just—that made me think about crime, and—and your father being in—in police work.

EDWARDS: Well, my daughter asked me, 'Why—why do I come down to this building at 4 o'clock in the morning?' I said, 'I never had any trouble down here'. I said—this neighborhood has never changed.

KRUGER: No?

EDWARDS: Not in this immediate area. It hasn't changed that much, as far as white and black.

KRUGER: Mmm.

EDWARDS: The people never moved out. They never sold their houses. If you look around, there're a lot of white families that live in this area. It's never changed that much. I've—I've never had any problem, really. And I've been coming down for a long time at those hours. [laughs]

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: And she says, 'I think you're...'. You know, you say 'DC' and as soon as somebody says 'DC' they're scared to death. And I said, 'well, it never bothered me.' I worked downtown for a lot of years, and sometimes I used to have to work all night. But never had any problem down there.

KRUGER: What about when you were reading meters?

EDWARDS: Well, that was all in the daytime. I never had any problem with that either, because that was in the—in the early 50's, and you didn't have the crime that you have now. Or have had. I think the crime went down in the city.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: But this area has—personally, I don't think this area has changed that much as far as the businesses and everything, I don't think it's changed that much really.

KRUGER: What about the businesses across the street here in the 300 block of Pennsylvania?

EDWARDS: They've been there for—they've been there forever.

KRUGER: Forever?

EDWARDS: Tune Inn's been there since 1947.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Hawk and Dove's been there probably as long or longer. And there used to be a...

KRUGER: That Poli-Tiki one changes names every few years.

EDWARDS: Yeah, that's—that's changed. Poli-Tiki I think used to be a funeral home, I believe.

KRUGER: [laughs] Maybe that's why it has trouble.

EDWARDS: I believe it was a funeral home. One of them was a funeral home over there, because we used to have Masonic funerals and if they were being buried from there it was lucky, because we could just walk from here to across the street for the funeral. And in the early days when they had funerals most

of them were buried at Congressional Cemetary and they would walk from where ever the body was, or usually in the neighborhood, because most of the members were in the neighborhood.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: And they would—they would walk down to the Congressional Cemetary for the funeral. Anybody's who is a Mason can have a Masonic funeral. And it's our own—own ritual, but they don't have the—most of them are out of town now.

KRUGER: What, the...the funerals?

EDWARDS: Yeah. The last one—last one I did was in Cedar Hill. And it was right after the snow. I'd like to froze to death. But, the brother that died happened to be master of the lodge the year I came in. The year I was raised as a—as a master Mason, so—I—I had to do that funeral. But I've done a lot of them. In the three years I was master, I did over a hundred funerals. But that's when they had—we were losing 35...40 people a year. That shows you how many we were losing.

KRUGER: Right.

EDWARDS: Because in 1976 we had 1,140 members, and now we have about 265. You lose—lost that many. And that's not too many years, either.

KRUGER: No, no.

EDWARDS: So you know, the ones coming in are not taking for the ones leaving. And the average age is well—well over 65. I'm 72.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: I'll be 72 in August. That gives you and idea how old the lodge is.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Very few young members. If you get a young member, grab him and hang onto him. [laughs] He's your salvation, really. But, a lot of—they used to have 50 some lodges in the city and now they only have about 28. Most of the lodges have merged with each—each other.

KRUGER: And...is this lodge integrated racially?

EDWARDS: No. They have what they call Prince Hall?

KRUGER: Prince?

EDWARDS: That was started by a Prince Hall. A man named Prince Hall.

KRUGER: OK. Who...?

EDWARDS: And he was—he went into a military lodge, I believe. And then he...

KRUGER: Was he a black man?

EDWARDS: Yes. Yes. He started black Masonry in this—in this—in this country.

KRUGER: And when was that?

EDWARDS: I don't remember when he started it, but we just recently recognized them. We didn't recognize them for many many years. And it was in 1999 or 2000 that we recognized them and now they come to our meetings and we go to their meetings. The only restriction they have on it is they can't join our lodges. And I guess we can't join theirs, because they would probably black ball us. See, what they—in order to get into a lodge you have to pass a—a—a vote. And it's by ballot box. You have white balls and black cubes.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: The white ball elects, the black cube rejects. One black ball—one black cube, you don't get in.

KRUGER: Now it...

EDWARDS: Nobody knows who puts the black cube in...

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Nobody's allowed to ask, even, who put the black cube in. It's un-Masonic to ask 'How did you vote?'

KRUGER: So is the origin of the term 'to black ball' come from Masonry?

EDWARDS: Exactly.

KRUGER: Really?

EDWARDS: Yeah. It's actually a black cube.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: But that's—So, then they—you have to get by that vote first. If you don't get by that vote, you don't—not even considered. You put in a petition and they read out everything about—about where you came from and if you had a criminal record of any kind, been to court as a defendant in a criminal case, they don't even consider—the petition.

KRUGER: Even if you're not convicted?

EDWARDS: Nope. If you were charged with it, and were in court for it...

KRUGER: There's no presumption of innocence in Masonry?

EDWARDS: Nope.

KRUGER: No.

EDWARDS: Not at that point. [laughs] They ask on the petition. 'Have you ever been a defendant in a criminal case in court?' It's 'yes' or 'no'. No, they don't even consider it. They don't ask whether you were convicted. I guess if you pushed it, you might be able to get it—get it through, if you weren't convicted. But I don't think anybody's ever—ever pushed it. Not to my knowledge, anyway. But they're strict. Maybe, maybe that might be the reason they have a hard time getting members, too. But, they're particular. Maybe that's good, too.

KRUGER: Now when you were a boy living on Capitol Hill and you went to school, did you go to school all day long?

EDWARDS: Went from 9 to 3.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Walked to school. Closest school was only about 4 blocks.

KRUGER: Right. You said that one—Cranch/Tyler.

EDWARDS: 12th—yeah.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: It was only about 4 blocks. And went to junior high school at Hine. That was a little further but you still walked to school.

KRUGER: Right. Did you eat lunch at school? Or did you go home for lunch?

EDWARDS: Went home for lunch when in elementary school. Ate lunch at school in junior high school and—and senior high.

KRUGER: How did you get to Eastern High then?

EDWARDS: Walked or bus.

KRUGER: Yeah?

EDWARDS: They had what they call bus tickets.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Cost eight cents. Little purple tickets.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: You bought—you went to car barn or where ever and—and bought them. It was for school kids—kids going to school.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: So it was—I think the fare was 15 or 20 cents anyway, but we got them for 8 cents. So you had a choice, you could walk or ride the bus. And of course, you could transfer from bus to streetcar, whatever.

KRUGER: And, you—did you start taking music lessons in high school or earlier?

EDWARDS: In—just before junior high school.

KRUGER: And who taught you the trumpet?

EDWARDS: I had a teacher instructor from the Navy band.

KRUGER: Oh.

EDWARDS: They—they rehearsed at the sail loft in the Navy Yard. And he lived in Cheverly.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: And he would come to my house once a week for a music lesson, and it cost me two bucks. And I paid for all my music lessons.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Because I served papers and everything else and from the time I was 11 I worked.

KRUGER: You were a newspaper delivery?

EDWARDS: Yeah, I—I—I served the Star, the Evening Star.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And I studied with him until I got out of high school. And then when I got out of high school I said I didn't want to go in the Army, because I didn't want to go to Korea. So I went in the Navy and fortunately I got in the—got in the band, so—I had a racket, it was a good—it was—[laughs] it was a good profession in the Navy, I'll tell you. Because on—on the aircraft carrier we rehearsed twice a day and if they were loading supplies—they had to bring on supplies at sea—everybody's carrying potatoes and everything and we're sitting there playing music for them. You think that didn't have some hard feelings? [laughs] Lot of them—lot of them enjoyed us. And they would have, you know, I don't know if you've ever been on an aircraft carrier, but a hangar bay on an aircraft carrier or the flight deck is three football fields long, and they would have movies every night if they didn't have flight operations. And so we would play a half hour concert—dance music—before the—before the movie. And they got so they—they liked it. But they didn't like it when we were sitting there playing music for them while they were working their butts off. But that was our job, and they were doing their job.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm. Do you—or after you got out of the Navy, did you continue to play the trumpet?

EDWARDS: No.

KRUGER: No?

EDWARDS: I found out in the Navy that I played with enough good musicians while I was in the Navy that I found out I wasn't going to make a living at it. [laughs] You have to be good at it to make a living on the outside, believe me. You have to be an excellent musician. And I knew I wasn't good enough to be a professional musician. I guess I was considered professional when I was playing in the service, but different thing. And I played with some real good musicians.

KRUGER: You didn't ever jam with them after or...?

EDWARDS: No, not really.

KRUGER: No?

EDWARDS: No. They—they were some good people there.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm. Were there music clubs in Washington that you went to?

EDWARDS: No.

KRUGER: No?

EDWARDS: No. No. I was in the Police Boys band. The Boys Clubs had a band. I was in that for about three years. And I used to go to Ernest W. Brown, boys camp, in Scotland, MD. They would take kids down there, they'd take a group of kids every two weeks, they were members of the Police Boys Clubs in the city, and they would take them down there for two weeks, no cost at all.

KRUGER: Where was that?

EDWARDS: It was in Scotland, MD.

KRUGER: Scotland?

EDWARDS: Almost to Point Lookout.

KRUGER: OK.

EDWARDS: And they had that camp down there since 1939. It was named after Ernest W. Brown, who was chief of police when my grandfather was assistant chief.

KRUGER: What did you do at that camp?

EDWARDS: Well, I went down there with the band one year. Of course we would go down there for two weeks for—well, they had competitions and everything else for that two weeks. And then I stayed down there as a counselor. I think I was, what, 16 or something. Then I went down for the next two years as a—as a senior counselor. And they paid us for that.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm. Were there tents? Or were there cabins?

EDWARDS: Oh, we had cabins. They had something like, oh, 26 or 30 cabins that was built. Wooden cabins, screened. Then they had shutters that come down when it rains so it wouldn't rain in.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: But—and you'd get a new group of kids every two weeks, and they were from 6 to 14. And, you got an education in a hurry, believe me. [laughs] I got an education from those kids. It's those ones from SW, they were pretty—they were pretty street smart, anyway.

KRUGER: Were those the black kids?

EDWARDS: No, we didn't have any black kids.

KRUGER: No black kids?

EDWARDS: And then they opened the black camp down the road, maybe two or three miles down the road.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And finally that black camp was closed and they—they started taking them down, well, that's all they had left was black in the city, in the Boys Clubs. But when I was young, they had all white then. So, the blacks didn't go to that camp.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Not while I was there, anyway. But it was probably 10—10 or 12... And all the senior counselors down there were policemen.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: They sent detailed policemen down there for the summer. And there was one lieutenant, Lt. Benswanger, he—my dad knew him pretty well. But he was the director of the camp and then they had another sergeant that was an assistant director. And then they had three or four other policemen who kept things in tow down there. But they would go on hikes, they would go down to Point Lookout, they would go crabbing, they had creeks around there, catch crabs, plenty of crabs down there. And they would—they had an area on—right on the Potomac River, and it's almost to the mouth of the Potomac, so they didn't have too much—too much problem with pollution or anything else. But they would—they had nets up for sea nettles, they had plenty of them. But they had swimming, they had boats, canoes, kayaks, so they had plenty for them to do. And then they had baseball leagues in the evening. And several other things. They kept them busy.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Yeah, and that was the object, keep them busy. They had boxing matches at night, little kids get in there and try and beat each others brains up. And of course the older kids were pretty good boxers because they had—they had boxing in the Clubs, too.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Now I say when my father was at number 5 precinct, they had a—a Boys Club in the basement of their precinct. And he'd go down there and shoot pool with them.

KRUGER: Is it the same building? I mean...

EDWARDS: Yeah, it was in the basement of the precinct.

KRUGER: I mean, but the same building that's there now?

EDWARDS: Yeah. Same building. That's been there for as long as I've been around, anyway.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: It's been there for a long time. But I know he'd go down there and shoot pool with the kids.

KRUGER: When you lived on Capitol Hill did you feel that you were part of the—the city? And were the museums there on the mall, or...?

EDWARDS: Oh yeah.

KRUGER: Did you used to go to the museums?

EDWARDS: Yeah, my—my brother—my younger—well, he's about 5 years younger than me. We went—we went sightseeing one day. We start walking, and we walked—I lived at 12th and Potomac Avenue, we walked to the Capitol, we went in the Capitol, went up in the dome of the Capitol. That's when you could go up in the dome of the Capitol.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: And we came down, and we walked from there to the Monument, walked up the Monument and back down.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: [Laughs] The elevator was working but we walked up and down. And then I don't know—went to a couple of museums and then we come back. We used to go to the 4th of July fireworks down there every year. And when I was in the Navy I played down there in the band for the 4th of July.

KRUGER: On the Capitol grounds?

EDWARDS: Yeah. Well, at the Monument grounds is where it was.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: They would have three service bands down there every year, from the Navy, and the Army, and I guess it was the Marines. But they would have three bands down there every year for that. And then they would have the fireworks. I had the best seat in the house for them.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: And then one year when I was working—managing buildings downtown, I had a building on the 1700 block of Pennsylvania Avenue, and if you got on the roof of that building you could see the Monument grounds. And so I had the whole family up there on the roof of the building to watch the fireworks for 1976.

KRUGER: Oh yeah, that must have been great.

EDWARDS: The Bicentennial. It was the worst display of fireworks I've ever seen. [laughs] It was! It was really a flop.

KRUGER: Hmm.

EDWARDS: It really was. And they had something like a half million people down there. But we stayed on the roof and watched it. It was pretty nice. [laughs] But you still had to contend with the traffic when it—when it all let out.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: But that's—yeah, we did a lot of sightseeing. There's a lot of things in Washington I haven't seen, and I—I've here most of my life. Until three or four years ago I had never been to the Lincoln Memorial. I have never been in the Jefferson Memorial. So there's—there's a lot of things I haven't seen.

KRUGER: Why do you think you've never been?

EDWARDS: Just never took the time to go down there. My wife says 'you're going to have to go sightseeing one day, see the things we haven't seen.' But, if you stop to think there're a lot of things you haven't seen, too. I've seen most of the museums, of course we went there when we were in school, too.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: So went to the Capitol when I was in junior high school. And you could get up in the dome then. I don't know if you've ever been in the dome, but it's wooden steps that go up in the dome and it goes around.

KRUGER: No.

EDWARDS: And that's why they closed it down. The steps got rotten, they didn't want to replace them. And they got unsafe so they wouldn't let—wouldn't let people up there anymore.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: But that's quite a sight.

KRUGER: I bet. Now did they used to take you on field trips from your school down to the museums or...?

EDWARDS: Yeah. Yeah. Take us to the zoo.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Everybody goes to the zoo. Now it's a [laughs] it's really a rat race to go to the zoo now.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: It's unbelievable. Because a lot—a lot more people go there. It's been a long time since I've been to the zoo. I think I took my grand—I went with my granddaughter to the aquarium in Baltimore. I don't know if you've seen that, but that's unbelievable.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: That's—that's unbelievable, that is. It's a shame you have to go to Baltimore, with all the things that are here and there are so many things that I haven't seen. And I've been here all my life.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: But I guess it's like that. You got it right under your nose and you don't take advantage of it.

KRUGER: I think so. I think so. Can you think about anything else you'd like to talk about?

EDWARDS: Not right offhand.

KRUGER: OK. Well, what we do now...

<BREAK IN TAPE>

EDWARDS: ...hot, and the wind was blowing, and we thought—that's when I worked for the Evening Star. And my brother was assistant manager and it was raining really hard. They—that was something that they would give the carriers, free tickets to the circus.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm. Do you remember what year that was?

EDWARDS: No. God, I think I was only about 12...13.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: And we went there and it was raining so hard and it—the wind started blowing and we was afraid the tent was going to come down, so we got out of there. And ran home in the rain, which was a pretty good run. But, that's the scariest I've been. [laughs]

KRUGER: Yeah? Do you remember the riots in 1968? Were you here then?

EDWARDS: Oh yeah, I was driving a cab then. I drove for Washington Cab, I had my own—own cab. And I took off for a couple of weeks.

KRUGER: Did you?

EDWARDS: Yeah, I remember the way—I worked at the power plant in VA, in Alexandria, and we could look out the door and see all the different fires started all around. And...

KRUGER: Where did you live then?

EDWARDS: I lived in Oxon Hill.

KRUGER: Oh, OK.

EDWARDS: I lived in Oxon Hill then. And people would get in the cab after—about a week after the riots, they would get in the cabs. "Take me down and show me where the riots were." I'd tell them, I'd say, 'I'll take you down and leave you.'

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: I said, 'I ain't waiting'. I said, 'I'm not driving you around down there.' I'd say, 'You want to go down I'll drop you off.' They'd say, 'Oh, no. I don't want to stay.' I'd say, 'Sorry.' [laughs] And the same when they had Resurrection City...

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: ...on the mall.

KRUGER: Yeah

EDWARDS: I remember, I think they were down there six or seven weeks, and it rained every day. Every single day. Those people were floating around on sheets of 4 x 8 plywood like rafts. That's how much water was down there. Of course, the grass down there—they just tore up all the grass.

KRUGER: Now was that around the—in front of the Lincoln Memorial?

EDWARDS: Yeah, it was down on the mall, right at Lincoln Memorial. And they were down there for six weeks, and it rained every day. I thought...

KRUGER: When was that? It was 1963?

EDWARDS: Prior—it was prior to the riots, I know.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: Because the riots were in '67, I believe.

KRUGER: Or '68.

EDWARDS: Yeah.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: And it was prior to that. Because I know John Layton was the chief of police then, and he's the one that went through there and moved them all out of there when it was time for them to leave. And he was also grand master the year I was master the first year, '76.

KRUGER: When people were living in tents on the mall, did it—I mean, it's not very far from Capitol Hill, but did it have an impact on Capitol Hill that you know about?

EDWARDS: I don't—well—well, I was driving a cab then. I don't think there was any overflow from it. I think they just stayed down there and took care of themselves, I guess.

KRUGER: Yeah. But what about the riots? Weren't they on H Street?

EDWARDS: Oh, the riots were on H Street NE. And the sad part about it is what they burned. They burned everything where they lived. They thought they were hurting the white people. They were burning out everywhere they shopped. Because they figured they were going to build them up the next day, but they didn't.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Seventh Street NW, they burned out I don't know how many blocks down there. And, they—they never—they never rebuilt it. H Street, they built—burned out places there, they never rebuilt it. They are just starting to now.

KRUGER: Right.

EDWARDS: And that's a lot of years.

KRUGER: Yeah. What was it like before the riots? Did you used to shop there?

EDWARDS: Oh yeah. Yeah. My...my aunt used to have a beauty parlor over on H Street NE. It wasn't bad. You could—you could go around the city without a problem. I mean, nobody ever noticed it, really. I didn't think the—I didn't think it had a problem as far as crime. I don't think the crime was that high then. But there—there—Martin Luther King set it off, really. It's unfortunate. I thought it was, because they hurt themselves, really.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: And it—I thought it was a shame, because you—you could see what they were burning. And it was—and they finally realized it afterwards. 'Where are we going to shop?' And it's too bad. It was all... all burned. So it was the damndest thing I ever saw. Yeah I—like I said, I drove a cab, and—and—same as Resurrection City, people want to go down there and—and see those people. I'd say, 'I'll take you down and drop you off. I'm not staying. I haven't got the time for that. I got—gotta keep driving to make money.'

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: And that was—my father-in-law drove a cab for 41 years in this town. And when I told my wife—I started driving at airport, and drove an airport cab for about 6 months. Of course, you didn't have to buy the cab down there, they paid you on commission, on how much money you made. And made pretty good money there, too. But then I got my own cab. My wife said, 'I'll divorce you if you get a cab,' because you know her father had been robbed two or three times driving cab. And I said, 'Well I'm going to...' I bought a new car, had it painted into a cab. She said, 'Isn't this a shame.' [laughs] But that's how it paid for it. I mean, the cab paid for—the car paid for itself. But I only drove it for about three years and then I painted it over and gave it to my son. And he ran the wheels off of that car before he got rid of it. [laughs]

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: It was—it was a—I met a lot of—lot of strange people, met a lot of interesting people.

KRUGER: Driving a cab?

EDWARDS: Yeah.

KRUGER: I bet.

EDWARDS: Yeah. Especially the ones coming out of the airport. Of course you always used to try to get in the airport because, see, DC cabs were not allowed to pick up at the airport.

KRUGER: Right.

EDWARDS: It was out of their jurisdiction. It was in VA.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: And of course, the company that had the—that—that had the rights at the airport—that's all—that's the only place that they could pick up. So they—they—the VA cabs and DC cabs could not pick up there, unless somebody—you were sitting there and you're trying to get out of a jam up next to the curb and somebody got in your car. You're not going to tell them to get out.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: You're going to take them where ever you want them to go. Well, that's—that's all right. But they used to give you tickets for it. If you—if you lingered at the curb too long. But—because it was good fares. I mean, when I was driving a cab, the one zone was eighty cents. One zone was eighty cents.

KRUGER: They didn't have meters then either?

EDWARDS: No. It was zones.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: It was a zone system. Same as they got now.

KRUGER: Did you used to pick up at Union Station?

EDWARDS: No, Diamond Cab had the franchise down there.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: They had—they had the—they had it sewed up down there for years. Because they paid for it, too.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: But Diamond Cab was the only ones who could pick up down there. Of course, if you're there, and you dropped somebody off and somebody gets in, there's nothing said. But Diamond Cab's the only ones that could park there.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: They had a cab stand there. And they had cab stands—two or three parking spaces at a lot of the hotels, if you could get into it.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: You could pick up good fares there, too. But—because most of them were going to the airport, coming out of a hotel.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Or Union Station.

EDWARDS: But a fare to—because once you leave the District, it's mileage.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm. How much a mile?

EDWARDS: Oh, I forget what it was. 60 cents a mile, something like that. But an airport fare was probably three...four dollars.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: When they opened Dulles—now, if you could get a fare to Dulles, which was very few, because Dulles—you could go to Dulles in the middle of the afternoon and shoot a gun off and not hit anybody. It was pretty bad there, for about the first five or six years it was open. It was nothing. Now you...

KRUGER: When did it open?

EDWARDS: Early '60's.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Early '60's. Opened before its time is what it did. And now they've enlarged it how many...twice? But a fare to Dulles then...I think it was \$28.

KRUGER: Well that's pretty good?

EDWARDS: \$28 dollars. And now it's—you get almost 50? It's almost \$50. I caught a cab here to go downtown here to go to—to a building on 16th Street. It was \$6.80. When I was driving a cab, it would have probably been 90 cents or \$1.20. Well, you know, gasoline was worth 16...17 cents a gallon.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: It made a difference.

KRUGER: It sure did.

EDWARDS: But they—I don't know why they've never—Congress has stopped that...

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

TAPE 2/SIDE 1

KRUGER: This is the second tape on Tuesday, April 15, 2003, interviewing Randy Edwards at the Naval Lodge. This is Janice Kruger. Randy was talking about cab fares and the price of gasoline when he drove a cab. And meters, and zones, and things like that in the city.

EDWARDS: The time—Congress has held that up for all these years because they can ride from the Capitol to the State Department—this side of the State Department, for one zone.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: For one zone. And you lose money if you take a cab fare from the Capitol to the State Department at 5 o'clock in the evening.

KRUGER: Oh yeah. The traffic.

EDWARDS: Traffic. That's why most of the cabs will go home at 3:30 in the afternoon. They just can't make any money in rush hour.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: I mean, if you had meters, you could. Because a meter registers on time if you are sitting still. When I worked for airport cab, you get caught in the middle of 14th Street Bridge in the morning it would—it would change—it would run up a quarter I think for every two minutes. And I had seen that meter change three or four times and you hadn't moved a foot. And the people start squirming around in the back, because, you know, what can you do?

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: You can't—you can't go over or under the traffic.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: But the cab drivers don't realize that the meters would be doing them a favor. They would make more money.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Only trouble is, IRS can track their money better.

KRUGER: Yeah. Yeah.

EDWARDS: Because it's almost impossible to track what a cab makes—what a cab driver makes now. I mean, I know—I never made any money when I drove a cab, but it paid for the car and a lot of other things.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: That's—that's—that's the true reasons that they don't want meters. Cost of the meter. They gave them the choice of car—put a meter in the cab or—or those blinking lights on the top of them. Well it'll cost them \$50 for the blinking light and it'll cost them \$400 for a meter. So what did they take?

KRUGER: The one that says 'Call 911.'

EDWARDS: 'Call 911.' But nobody pays any attention to it anyway. So it don't mean nothing.

KRUGER: Oh, I don't know about that.

EDWARDS: I don't think so. They've had a case—they've had cases where they've used the lights and nobody bothered with them.

KRUGER: Hmm.

EDWARDS: It's useless, really.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: But...

KRUGER: Now you're talking about the members of Congress taking advantage of the—the cheap cab fares. Did you have a lot—any encounters with members of Congress or...

EDWARDS: No. Huh-uhm. No. Matter of fact, most of the cabs go around them. Go around those—those spots, rather than—rather than. Like I said, most of them want to go home. I'd go home at 3...3 o'clock in the afternoon.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Because you had to pick up. It was a law that you—if somebody hailed you, you had to pick them up. Of course, you bypassed them anyway, but you were supposed to pick them up. It's against—against the law to pass them up. But it's a shame. It's a shame that Congress has done that. It's

a—it's a—I think it's the only big city that's left with a zone system, which is—And it's the capital of the United States, and it's ridiculous.

KRUGER: It's a colony.

EDWARDS: It's—it's—it's a shame.

KRUGER: Yup.

EDWARDS: But, it's a—it's a dangerous business, too. Probably one of the most dangerous jobs around now, is to drive in a cab. And a lot of people killed.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: And robbed. Because they know you got money.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Might have trouble finding it, but they know you got money. You're a sitting duck, really.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: But I never had any problem because I never drove at night. Well, I drove at night a few times around Christmas time I needed some extra money, so I'd drive at night. But the years that I drove, I never drove at night. Not many times. Was afraid, really.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: Rainy days, now they charge you extra fare for when it's raining. Charge you extra fare when it's snowing. Of course, you can't get around as well. If gasoline goes up, they charge you extra fare for that. They're allowed to add onto the fare for gasoline prices.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Of course, you didn't have the price of gasoline, either. But, it's strange. Like I said, they'd be better off with the meter system.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: That's my opinion, anyway.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: But I think—I don't know. I think it's—in fact it may be the IRS can get you quicker.

KRUGER: Right.

EDWARDS: Because they can—they can track the meter.

KRUGER: Well, today's the day to talk about the IRS, right.

EDWARDS: It's like a cash register.

KRUGER: Right.

EDWARDS: It's like a cash register. [laughs]

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: If you can ring it up, it counts it. If you don't, it doesn't.

KRUGER: Yeah. Now does your family come back—I mean, do you ever—do you ever look at where you used to live on Capitol Hill?

EDWARDS: Oh, I've been over to Potomac Avenue a few times.

KRUGER: Uh-huh. Is your house still there?

EDWARDS: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Used to be three houses. It was a—a big house here, and then it was three rowhouses. We lived in the middle one. And then it was a grocery store right on the corner.

KRUGER: What kind of grocery store?

EDWARDS: DGS then.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And it was—was two Jewish families that owned it, and they lived upstairs above the store.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Like everybody did.

KRUGER: Yeah.

EDWARDS: If you had a funeral home, you lived above it.

KRUGER: Right.

EDWARDS: If you had a store, you lived above it. It was two—two families. It was two brothers married two sisters.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: And came here and...

KRUGER: So that was where the corner of where?

EDWARDS: 12th and...12th and Potomac Avenue. It was a triangle there.

KRUGER: OK. Is that south of Pennsylvania?

EDWARDS: Yeah. Uh-hmm. Yeah. And good people. That's when you'd go in the store and they had these little books, about—about this big. And that was—that was the—you could charge.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And they'd write down what you bought and you'd need to pay them on pay day.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Because I know my father had one in there. And he had a lot of books in those—that man had a lot of books in that store. But they had everything you needed. I mean, that was before supermarkets.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: I think the first A&P was one of the first ones in that area of SE. They opened up right there at 12th and...12th and Pennsylvania Avenue. And they opened that up in the early '40's.

KRUGER: Is that where the CVS is now?

EDWARDS: Yeah. Yeah. And we used to go up there and my dad would go up there and get a kid with a wagon to bring the groceries home. And then I worked for A&P for 10 years part time.

KRUGER: What did you do?

EDWARDS: I was a checker.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Cashier.

KRUGER: At that A&P?

EDWARDS: No, the one at 27th and the Avenue.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Across the bridge. That's a funeral home now.

KRUGER: Oh.

EDWARDS: Still an A&P—Alexander Pope.

KRUGER: Oh... [laughs]

EDWARDS: [laughs] No, I worked there for—when I went to work—I worked for Giant about 6 months, and then I went to this job, I had shift work. And Giant wouldn't change my schedule around for the shift work. They wanted you in the evenings and on—on the weekends.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Well, of course I changed shifts every week and I worked most weekends. I only had one weekend off a month.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: So they wouldn't change it. So, I went to this store over here and my brother used to work—my younger brother used to work there and they knew the manager. And I managed to show up. I can use the—I worked—I worked midnight. I'd go to work in there at 9 o'clock in the morning after I got off work. And I'd work until about 1 or 2 o'clock, and I'd go home to sleep. And I'd go to work at midnight.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: When I worked three to eleven, I'd work in the morning. And when I worked day work, I'd work in the evening. And I'd—I worked there for 10 years. And I was making pretty good money then.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Checking made good money. They made more money then than they make now.

KRUGER: Hmm.

EDWARDS: If you believe that.

KRUGER: Did...did you ever go to Eastern Market to shop? Was that there the way it is now?

EDWARDS: My dad went to Eastern Market quite often. When he was—especially when he was the captain of the police department.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: Went to Eastern Market quite often. And of course we went to that A&P when we lived on Potomac Avenue. Now it was different when we moved—when we moved out on Alabama Avenue. We'd probably go into MD, to the bigger stores out there.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: They had them out there before they got them in here. I don't know why. But I remember that—that A&P there—there at 12th and the Avenue, that was one of the first supermarkets. They had a Sanitary store across the street from it.

KRUGER: A Sanitary store?

EDWARDS: Yeah.

KRUGER: What's a Sanitary store?

EDWARDS: It was like—it was like a—a—like an A&P.

KRUGER: Oh.

EDWARDS: But they would—you would go in there and you'd tell him what you wanted and he'd go around and take it all off the shelf and put it on the counter.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: And then add it up on a paper bag.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: He'd add it up on a paper bag. And that was the Sanitary—that's what he called it. Sanitary Store was the name of it. But, then A&P moved across the street, well they closed up because A&P put them out of business

KRUGER: And what happened to that little—the...the Jewish store that...?

EDWARDS: I—it turned into a—what in the world did it go to? I don't know if it was a liquor store or what it was.

KRUGER: Oh. So did they go out of business when—when the A&P came?

EDWARDS: It went out of business shortly after that, yeah. Yeah. Couldn't—couldn't compete with the prices.

KRUGER: No.

EDWARDS: Couldn't compete with the prices. Now when I lived on White Street SE right after I got married I used to go that A&P that I worked in. I mean you could go down there and buy groceries. We'd go down there and get \$12 worth of groceries and have to have a kid take it home in a wagon. But when I got married, I was making \$80 in a month, and my wife was making \$80 a week. She worked for the government. But—well, we didn't have any problem surviving on that. Never make it now on it. [laughs]

KRUGER: No. Did you belong to a church?

EDWARDS: Belonged to Wilson Memorial Methodist Church. It's on 700 block of 11th Street SE. My brothers belonged to the Boy Scout troop there, and I never joined the Boy Scouts there, but they belonged to that church. And this—and I told you about Buzzy Graham, or Walter Graham, he belonged there, and then they closed that church and I think—blacks took that church over. And Wilson Memorial and this used to be Trinity Methodist Church across the street here.

KRUGER: Where?

EDWARDS: Three churches. Right over here. There's a church right over here.

KRUGER: By Seward Square?

EDWARDS: Yeah.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: That Wilson Memorial and Trinity and another church combined.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm.

EDWARDS: And took that church over there. And he still goes there. He—he went to Wilson Memorial and then he—he goes to this church here.

KRUGER: Walter Graham goes to that church?

EDWARDS: Yeah, been going there all his life.

KRUGER: That's the Methodist church, isn't it?

EDWARDS: Uh-huh.

KRUGER: Yeah, I live on that corner, on that street.

EDWARDS: Do you? Uh-huh. Yeah, I think they rebuilt the tower on that church, too.

KRUGER: Uh-huh.

EDWARDS: Now, is it the original tower? I think they kept the original tower on this Trinity.

KRUGER: The church here on Seward and 5th is pretty new, I think.

EDWARDS: Yeah, I believe they—they rebuilt it but they rebuilt the tower as the same as it was.

KRUGER: Oh.

EDWARDS: Yeah, my whole family went to Wilson Memorial. Sunday school, sung in the choir. Damn, I've done a lot of things.

KRUGER: Uh-hmm. Well you did!

END OF INTERVIEW