



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK  
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

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**Interview with Bob Herrema**

**Interview Date:** May 8, 2003  
**Interviewer:** Nicky Cymrot  
**Transcriber:** Eric Peters

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

[NOTE: Steve Cymrot also participated in this interview. Nicky and Steve Cymrot are referred to as N. CYMROT and S. CYMROT, respectively, in the transcript.]

[Initial comments about volume control on the tape recorder.]

**N. CYMROT:** So, today is May the...

**HERREMA:** 8<sup>th</sup>.

**N. CYMROT:** —8<sup>th</sup>, 2003. And this is Nicky Cymrot and I'm sitting here with Bob Herrema and we are going to talk a little bit about Bob's life on Capitol Hill. And so let us just start Bob and ask you, when did you come to the Hill, and why did you come to the Hill?

**HERREMA:** Well that's an interesting story. When I worked on the Hill for Lowell Weicker, up through the middle of 1977, we lived out in Potomac. I was the Potomac developer, and you know we'd—my—Joannie and I decided we wanted to get a place on the Hill, move to the Hill, but you know, we just never did it. I mean we'd already built—we'd already renovated 103 Fifth Street NE and 311 Third Street NE, 303 and 305 11<sup>th</sup> Street SE, you know, just as—when I was working the Hill. I had my brother come down, and... But when I left Weicker's office in '77, I had a couple of guys, Stan Bissey being one of them, Victor Kamber being another, that said, 'Hey, you know, you've done some pretty nice things here. Why don't we go around and find properties to buy?' Because the market back—this was back in '77, so the market was—still had a lot of potential. And so I just decided after having turned down a couple opportunities in government relations work, which I found would be too much of what I had been doing for Senator Weicker and I was ready for a change. So we—we started—we bought 318 East Capitol Street.

**N. CYMROT:** That was a big house.

**HERREMA:** During—during the time... Yeah, let me—back up, and I'll tell you the story about 318 East Capitol Street. That—in that year, I mean, in the—in the remaining months of '77, the Wheelers, who we had known for a little while—.

**N. CYMROT:** Who are they?

**HERREMA:** Doug and Heather Wheeler. Yeah. They had lived on A Street. And we met them through—actually, through Pat Noonan, who was with the Nature Conservancy back then, I believe. Or he got—he was involved with the Nature Conservancy subsequent to that if he wasn't involved then. Well

they wanted—they wanted to build a house. They wanted to get a vacant lot and build a house. And Joannie and I said, ‘Well, we do, too.’ And as it turns out, the houses on the—the property on the corner, 11<sup>th</sup> and North Carolina [SE] came on the market. So we were—we were bidding against Drew [Scallan] and his partner—whatever his partner’s name was. Anyway, we got beat. They got the property and built those two very contemporary houses. Shortly thereafter the Wheelers bought the funeral home parking lot on 11<sup>th</sup> Street. I can’t remember the name of the funeral home, but, you know, the funeral home was not operating any longer.

**S. CYMROT:** Is that Mattingly?

**HERREMA:** Mattingly, I think. Yeah. I think that’s right.

**N. CYMROT:** What was the address?

**S. CYMROT:** In the 100 block.

**HERREMA:** Well, 146 is the address of the house they built. So—anyway, so that all—none of that panned out. Pete Lamden, who’d been my plumber on various projects, and as you know, was a wheeler-dealer in real estate more than he was a plumber, or certainly spent as much time wheeling and dealing. I cut a deal with him to buy a real crappy building at 233 Kentucky Avenue. It was—it was just in awful shape. There still were a few tenants living in it, but—it was—you know, he could have been thrown in jail. And—but part of that deal was to buy 1103 East Capitol and 1105 East Capitol. So it was a package deal. And Joannie and I were going to live in 1103, fix it up and live in it, 1103. Well, everything—that—as is everything with Pete Lamden, it got delayed. And... October or maybe early November—probably early November, we were working at—on 116 12<sup>th</sup> Street NE, renovating a five unit apartment building, and Bill Creeger calls and said, ‘You have a house that is going to be auctioned this afternoon at Thomas J. Allen’s at 1207 East Capitol, and I think you’d—I think you ought to go look at it. He said, ‘I know Joannie would love it. It’s got a lot of windows.’ So Kim, this gal that I mentioned earlier, Kim Coleman, who was working for me as kind of a construction gopher and part-time market tech designer. She drove me over to the house, we walked in, we looked around. The house was—you know, things had been gutted. Bathrooms and kitchens and—so it was not habitable, but the fireplace, the mantels, and floors, and staircases, and—here was just a lot of things in there that were in—still in good shape.

**N. CYMROT:** Was it a single family house at that point?

**HERREMA:** Well, it had been a rooming house. It had been a rooming house. Yeah. It was empty. The woman who bought it, who actually graduated from East High School in Rochester, NY, my home town,

Esther Satterfield Walker, just bailed. She bought it, she started working on it to fix it up for herself, and—the story I heard, she fell in love and moved to California. Perhaps to continue her musical career, but... in any event. The house was going to be auctioned that afternoon. So, I called Joannie, I said, ‘Joannie’, so I said, ‘It’s a fabulous house. I’m going to go bid on it.’ She screamed and yelled, carried on. But... so I went down... I went down to Eastern Liberty to get a \$5,000 deposit check out of my account to go to the auction, and we were running late, but Eastern Liberty made me go to National Permanent to get signed off on it for some—my check had to get signed by somebody at National Permanent, I think. For—for some reason. Or National Capitol. Or something—I can’t remember all the details. It was some weird, weird deal. I had to go to two banks to get my \$5,000.

**N. CYMROT:** Were these banks that were on the Hill?

**HERREMA:** Yeah, Eastern Liberty was, you know, was there at Seventh and Sixth.

**S. CYMROT:** Sixth Street.

**HERREMA:** It actually may have been—actually, you know what, it may have been when they were located closer to the Capitol.

**S. CYMROT:** They were on Fourth, in the Naval Lodge building.

**HERREMA:** Fourth, yeah. That may have been—that’s probably where they were, actually. Yeah. Yeah. Because this was ’77, and—anyway...

**HERREMA:** So, I—you know, Kim drives me down to Owen’s office, you know, and I just fly out of the car, told her, you know, ‘You park it wherever you can. Come on inside when you—when you get a chance.’ So I go running into this big room, all kinds of people are seated in chairs, and a number of people. Actually, it’s full. And so there are a number of people at the back of the room. And so I show up in the back of the room, my height seemed to have an advantage for that moment, because, you know, people turned around and kind of looked to see who this new person was. And the bidding had already started, it had been going up in \$5,000 increments, and it started going in 1’s, very slowly.

**N. CYMROT:** What were the prices?

**HERREMA:** Well, it—the bidding stopped at 125. And I had made up my mind, you know, kind of, you know, in the few—in the few unfettered moments I had, that 125 was the number I would pay and that’s it. And I said, ‘Holy—’ You know, I mean, I—I go to all this trouble to get down here, I’m going to—I’m at least going to bid \$1,000 more. So I’m in the back of the room, scared to death. But it must be the look

on my face, was—was interpreted not as fear, but as resolve. I bid another thousand. And I got it. Had to get to settlement in 30 days. I'd forgot about that. No, I know he told me about that.

**N. CYMROT, S. CYMROT:** [Laugh]

**HERREMA:** So, anyway, but American Security was a good bank, and they managed to give me a bridge loan and carry on and carry on. So we sold our house in Potomac, quickly, and—and we moved into 1207 when the renovation was finished in the summer. And the kids finished their school year out in Maryland where we were living.

**N. CYMROT:** How old were the girls then?

**HERREMA:** Amy was—let's see. Amy was 9, and Jennifer was 11. And in the intervening months while we were still living in Maryland and, in fact, there were a couple of months when we had to move in with Joannie's parents because the people that bought our house wanted possession and we weren't ready to move, so we moved in with the in-laws. But with Heather Wheeler's help, our two girls got accepted to Capitol Hill Day School and so we moved to Capitol Hill in—in the summer of 1978. To back up, about 318 East Capitol Street, which was the building we bought when I—it was the first building we bought with these other partners. In—well, it would have been mid-'77, we bought it, and then Bill Creeger was the agent. It was a rooming house, you know, little tiny kitchens, gas stoves, little bathrooms here and there, here and there. It was empty except for Joyce Dawson. Joyce was a big old carpenter who used to hang out at the Tune Inn in the evenings. In the daytime he was a carpenter. He'd work for—he did a lot of work for Stu and Mike. Stu Long and Mike Lange. And—you know, he was up in his late 50's at the time, I think. Big man. Very limited education but he was one of the best carpenters I've ever seen. Slow and methodical but he never made a mistake. Just—he'd walk into a room, he'd figure out what he had to do to finish it—do whatever he was supposed to do to finish it, and he'd start at one end... End of the day he's out of there, done. Anyway, so—so I'm in there looking at this house, making, you know, measurements to see what we could do with it. This was before we put the contract in, and all the sudden this big guy comes up and says, 'Boy, what are you doing here?'

**S. CYMROT:** [Laughs]

**HERREMA:** I said, 'This house is for sale and the real estate agent let me in the front door just a little while ago and said there was nobody living here.' 'Well he—' cuss cuss 'wrong.' And, anyway, so, he and I chit-chatted a little bit to kind of keep him from beating me up and—anyway I kind of concluded that the space in the building we could do seven units... seven small units. And so I did drawings, went down and got the permit, you know, passed through zoning, passed everything, started working. Comes the Capitol Hill Restoration Society. 'You can't do that. You can't put seven apartments in that house.'

And I said, 'Well, I have a building permit here. It's been signed off by all the appropriate people, including zoning. It says I can.' And, 'Oh, the Potomac developer.' You know, 'Coming in here, ruining the Hill.' And so they—Olivia Jones, the Congressman's wife, lived across the street, and she was the... kind of the spur that... was driving everybody. And there's a guy, an attorney, Labella, or Lobel. Martin Lobel. Lived on Constitution Avenue, somewhere nearby. And he got himself inserted into this thing. Well, you know, several months and \$5,000 later, thanks to Wayne Quinn, we—our permit was approved again. So we build seven units—apartments. But that was the beginning of—of the effort, to have the zoning regs changed, so that no more rooming houses could ever be converted to apartments. And—I'm not sure when that...

**S. CYMROT:** [unintelligible]

**HERREMA:** Yeah, what—yeah, whatever it was. I just did it... we were the catalyst for such great social change.

**S. CYMROT:** [Laughs] What was your relation with the Restoration Society over the years?

**HERREMA:** Oh—I—after that fiasco, it took—I don't know if I ever did join, to tell you the truth. But I mean, in terms of members of the Restoration Society, you know, I—I got along just fine. I mean, the Wheelers were right... Doug and Heather were active members, and a bunch of other people that—you know, that we got to know and worked with who were members, and... So I—you know, I never—I mean, what happened, happened. You know, you know, I got over it. We got over it. [Laughs]

**N. CYMROT, S. CYMROT:** [Laugh]

**HERREMA:** If we didn't get our permit, now that would have been a different story.

**N. CYMROT:** So, what'd you do next? Were you doing this full time?

**HERREMA:** That's when I started full time. Yup, yup.

**N. CYMROT:** Yes.

**HERREMA:** That was my first—the building that we bought to do the first, you know, major project...

**N. CYMROT:** And who were your partners on that project?

**HERREMA:** Stan Bissey and Victor Kamber. And then—we went down and we did 116 12<sup>th</sup> Street NE. It was a, you know, three story, English basement three story building. Two story building and English basement, with a big carriage house on 12<sup>th</sup> Street, with a big wide alley running along side of it. And it

was a piece of junk. I mean, it was—but we—we seemed to have a knack for taking pieces of junk and making something decent out of them.

**N. CYMROT:** Did you keep that one as a single family?

**HERREMA:** No, we actually made five—it had been an apartment house.

**N. CYMROT:** Oh.

**HERREMA:** And so we made five—we put five apartments in it.

**N. CYMROT:** And did you keep these buildings to rent?

**HERREMA:** Well, we kept—we kept—yeah—with, you know, I think it's in—I think maybe that project or some subsequent projects, Victor brought in the famous Bob Georgine. I don't know if you ever...

**N. CYMROT:** No.

**HERREMA:** He's the guy that—that at the time was the president of the building trade union, who's now the president of the Union Labor Life Insurance Company, who's got this big scandal about having ripped off the shareholders of his—of his insurance company, for a lot of money. Anyway, so Georgine was one of the partners on several subsequent projects, but when tax laws changed that basically said leveraging real estate didn't pay, probably never paid anyway, but you know, but these guys that are making a lot of—they were throwing cash flow into—into real estate, you know, betting on the appreciation in the tax laws. I don't remember all the details about what had happened. So we wound up selling, you know, half a dozen properties anyway, just because it didn't make sense.

**N. CYMROT:** Uh-hmm.

**HERREMA:** And, basically the partners are putting in the negative cash flow, so wanted to stop putting in negative cash flow.

**N. CYMROT:** And you were doing all the managing of the properties?

**HERREMA:** Yeah, Joannie and I—we—you know, everything we did we managed it, or in terms of later, when we were doing condos, we sold it, you know. We—we ignored my friend Don Denton and his capable staff. We just decided we could do it ourselves. Joannie had some experience in real estate, you know, out in Maryland and—it was just something that, you know, why give all this money and have all kinds of people inserting themselves into this and giving you opinions that, you know, you really didn't want to hear because you were going to do it your way anyway, you know. So, anyway...

**S. CYMROT:** Were you with Houses on the Hill yet, then? Did Houses on the Hill exist?

**HERREMA:** Oh yeah. Yeah. They were on 11<sup>th</sup> Street.

**N. CYMROT:** Were you—were you a broker?

**HERREMA:** No. I never—nope.

**N. CYMROT:** What were you doing—?

**HERREMA:** Joannie has her license. She got her license years ago. But...

**N. CYMROT:** So were you associated with Houses on the Hill at all?

**HERREMA:** No.

**N. CYMROT:** No? I see.

**HERREMA:** No, just—I mean, just—Bill Creeger was—you know, he had an easy mark here, you know.

**N. CYMROT:** You bought anything.

**HERREMA:** Well, they didn't buy anything, but I certainly bought some things that were overpriced. Anyway...

**N. CYMROT:** What came next?

**HERREMA:** Hmm?

**N. CYMROT:** Which ones came next?

**HERREMA:** Well then the famous—the—going back to the Pete Lamden fiasco. We finally—he finally worked out a deal where we settled on 233 Kentucky Avenue, because he needed his butt out of that—you know, there was going to be a problem for him if he didn't get out of there. And I, you know, naïve as I was at the time, said, 'Sure, we'll settle.' You know, 'We're ready to do another condo project.' And because actually I had done a couple of condo projects up in Northwest that turned out to be pretty good. So I, 'Yeah, we're ready to do a condo project down here.' And, so we settle on 233 Kentucky Avenue, and anyway, you know, it turned out to be OK. We managed to sell them all with some creative financing and whatever whatever.

**N. CYMROT:** How many units did you end up with?

**HERREMA:** You know, I think there's 20, but I...

**N. CYMROT:** That, too, was an apartment building?

**HERREMA:** Yes, and it has the entrance on—that—13<sup>th</sup> Street as well as Kentucky Avenue. And, so it was OK. Then, 1024 Mass. Avenue, which was sitting there for years, on the corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and Mass. Had a big chain link fence around it. No, it was actually a green plywood fence around it. There was a construction trailer in the yard. And it was—just sat there, you know, windows were all gone, you know, just...

**N. CYMROT:** Apartment building?

**HERREMA:** It had been an apartment building before, I believe.

**N. CYMROT:** Yeah.

**HERREMA:** You know, you know it had been partially gutted, or maybe—maybe more than partially gutted when we bought it. Because the guy that bought it for himself, I don't know, he just decided he was going to continue working up in Northwest and not fool around on Capitol Hill. So, we bought that and fixed it up and, of course that's when the prime rate went from, you know, whatever it was to 20%, and so we were—we just—and then we—we had also, somewhere in the same time frame had bought 676 Fourth Street NE from Dick Bell and David Schwartz. Couple of sweeties. Schmoozed us—ate too much. But—and it was a wreck. I mean, it was all—it wasn't even boarded up, it was just wide open. No windows.

**N. CYMROT:** How much did you pay for that?

**HERREMA:** You know, I don't remember. I'd have to go back and...

**N. CYMROT:** Look?

**HERREMA:** —and look, you know. And actually, you know, and as it turns out, if the interest rates weren't—didn't do what they did, we'd have been all right. You know, we would have made some money. But, you know, at 20% prime, and the bank was getting one or two over, we were working for the bank. And we managed to get out of the Chatham only by the skin of our teeth. Because we—we just—we did, you know, all kinds of creative financing then. We took back—we sold them with First Trust carrying 12 or 13% interest rates and we were swallowing the difference, just to get in—just to get some—a new owner. Get us out of there, you know.

**N. CYMROT:** Can you remember at all what price range you sold the units for?

**HERREMA:** I—I'd be guessing.

**N. CYMROT:** Yeah? OK.

**HERREMA:** I'd be guessing. And then 696 Fourth Street, basically First American Bank was our lender on that, and—and they saw what was happening and they decided to give us a line of credit so we could draw the line of credit to—to again, finance the mortgages to the buyers, you know, at at 12—you know, at a much more acceptable market rate. You know, in terms of what they are paying for it and at that interest rate, you know, what the mortgage payment was going to be. You know, it all worked in terms of all these first time buyers. You know—there were—they wanted a condo, you know. And then—and the work product was, you know, was attractive enough that they...

**N. CYMROT:** Bob, do you remember—who—what kind of people were buying at that time? Where these young families moving in?

**HERREMA:** Young, single. No, no.

**N. CYMROT:** Single people?

**HERREMA:** Because most of what we did were—were one bedroom units.

**N. CYMROT:** Right.

**HERREMA:** Back then one bedroom units were the—I mean, that's what—that's where the demand was.

**N. CYMROT:** So these were single people basically?

**HERREMA:** Yeah, yeah.

**N. CYMROT:** And working on the Hill? Young professionals?

**HERREMA:** Yeah. At the Chatham there may have been a couple larger units that two people bought to live in. But, mostly again, it was single people. Somewhere in there, we did—we had another interesting little deal. 317 10<sup>th</sup> Street NE. That was a deal that followed Kentucky Avenue, and Willoughby was the manager of that building. And he used to just cry because he was—you know, we paid him, to move the few tenants who were left in the building. You know, he's [unclear], because he manages properties all over town. That—basically are—are meant for the kinds of folks that were living, you know, at the Hawthorne on 10<sup>th</sup> Street.

**N. CYMROT:** The Hawthorne, it was called?

**HERREMA:** That's the—I believe that's what we named it. I don't know what it was called before. But it was an apartment building. And it was—it was ready for a rebirth.

**N. CYMROT:** Uh-hmm.

**HERREMA:** And—and we...

**N. CYMROT:** Most of these buildings were built in the—most of the buildings we're talking about were built in the 1890's, 1910's.

**HERREMA:** Uhm, yeah. I would think that Chatham, on—you know, that—that architectural style on the corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and Mass was probably turn of the century. The Tuscan, that apartment building, you know it's got that kind of Italianate look, you know, stucco and—it may have been in the teens.

**N. CYMROT:** And you were taking out all those systems.

**HERREMA:** Certainly Kentucky Manor. Certainly Kentucky Manor, that building is a—I don't know, '20's or '30's building.

**N. CYMROT:** You were taking out everything?

**HERREMA:** No—no... Oh, yeah. Yeah. In fact, some cases, everything was already gone. Or burned, or—you know. Because that was true with the Schwartz building on Fourth Street. There's some big old guy that worked at the fish market on—you know, at the market on Fourth. And he'd basically been living in the basement of the building for quite some time. I mean, we didn't know it right away, but when we started working there, you know, all the sudden comes this—I mean, he was big. 6-6, 245—I mean, you know, he was a big guy. He had feet as big as—you know, a loaf of bread. I mean, he was a scary dude. Never spoke. Never heard him speak. He may have had, you know, sounds and guttural sounds and whatever whatever, bu... So we very, very gingerly managed to get him out of that building. Obviously he went to some other vacant building, but, you know, but in terms of... Because you know in the wintertime he'd be lighting fires in there keeping himself warm. Going upstairs and snatching up wood where we could find it and—you know—and... Anyway, 10<sup>th</sup> Street, 317 10<sup>th</sup> Street NE, it's a building that has architecturally the exterior has kind of the beginnings of, or it's reminiscent of, art deco. At least that's what I was convinced of, and—and we were also convinced that, because there were similar buildings on Capitol Hill, you know, some in the commercial area, kind of non-descript, but you know, the—some elements of—not Victorian. They were clearly not Victorian buildings. But some that were along the lines of a—of a more recent style of architecture. That we could do that for a tax credit. So—so off we go with applications to the Park Service and whatever whatever whatever and...

**N. CYMROT:** Was that—that was a new program? These tax credits at that time?

**HERREMA:** I'm not... It was not that new. I mean, it had been around for a little while. Because we'd used it on—I think we'd used it on a couple of other buildings, to tell you the truth. But this was a building that—that, you know, we had investors. It was all meant for, you know, buying it and spending the money to fix it up to get the tax credits. Well, we ran into some stumbling blocks, and I—I can't—there must have been some—some Capitol Hill residents, influential residents, that were more architecturally pure than others, and kind of said, 'no, no, no, no'. That building doesn't contribute to the Historic District. It's—it's, you know, it's too new.' And so we got turned down. So, a lot of unhappy investors, but we managed to work it out over time. But the interesting... And Traceries, which is a fairly well known architectural group, and Ruth Ann, I think, worked...

**N. CYMROT:** Ruth Ann Overbeck.

**HERREMA:** Yeah, Ruth Ann Overbeck, worked with some of the project to kind of, you know, because we—we did a photo survey of the Hill and had all kinds of—of, evidence that it doesn't have to be Victorian to contribute. Well, we lost the case. And—and it was decided that—that the period of historicity on Capitol Hill ended with the decade 1919. That was the decision that was only to survive for not many years, because now anything over 50 years automatically is considered to be a contributing structure as far as—as far as I know. If it's in the historic district. In fact, that may be true—that may be true all over town, but... Well, Logan School came next. And that was...

**N. CYMROT:** What year?

**HERREMA:** That would have been 1980—probably '85.

**N. CYMROT:** Tell us how that happened. Was that a new idea? Taking a school?

**HERREMA:** Actually—actually, somebody had done something, you know—you know—in a loft. There's a school up in Northwest that somebody had bought and—and it was kind of a loft style, low budget deal. So they—we were aware for people—you know, that were involved, you know, at least as far as I know they were involved in real estate, knew that these vacant schools had some potential. I—the fellow who owned the building, actually it was he and his wife, a Vietnamese man, that had been buying property for investment purposes. The American Rescue Workers, you know, had acquired the building, you know, somewhere back in the '70's I guess, and they ran it for a while. But it—but there were so many problems inside, plumbing and everything else, that they...

**N. CYMROT:** How were they using it?

**HERREMA:** I guess as a shelter.

**N. CYMROT:** Oh.

**HERREMA:** I mean my—my first experience with the building, you know, the American Rescue Workers were long gone. Because it sat vacant after they—after they basically pulled out. It sat vacant, Dac and his wife bought it, whether they bought it from the Rescue Workers or somebody bought it and flipped it, I don't know. But—and he'd hired Bob Schwartz, an architect up in Northwest to do plans to convert it to condos. And all of the sudden old Dac and his wife couldn't get any banks to do business with them because no track record. 'What, you want to borrow all this money to spend on this piece of junk in this questionable location? You know, what have you done before that can assure us that you are going to pay us back?' Well, he—he had no track record. So he and his wife wined and dined Joannie and me and we struck a deal. I said, 'I think we can make some money on this.' And so we started to tear it apart and put it back together again. And what was fascinating is in—in working on that—that's the first school, was the amount of usable space up in the attics. I mean, you had a big old building, you know, with a basement that had 10 foot ceilings, some below grade some above grade, and then...

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**N. CYMROT:** So, you were talking about Logan School—attic space.

**HERREMA:** Yeah, so the—the—you know, the amount of—the amount of space up in the attics and with the way the rooflines were and stuff, you know, we—we really took advantage of, you know, cutting holes in the roof to—to create patios. You know, using, you know, skylight windows, so you know, we wound up getting 24 units in that building. There were six per floor. Even six in the attic.

**N. CYMROT:** Much more than you had expected.

**HERREMA:** Oh yeah, oh yeah. Yeah, and—and we found then, no resistance for people to walk up a couple of flights of stairs, even though they were long flights of stairs to get to the top floor. Because the units were bright and as I said they had patios with...

**N. CYMROT:** And these were mostly young people again, who were purchasing these properties?

**HERREMA:** Yeah, yeah—yeah. Some of them were one bedrooms, and some were two bedrooms, and actually, you know, there's probably—I suspect there are probably only about four couples that wound up buying units there. Others were—there were a couple lobbyists, you know, that bought the units there as kind of a pied-a-terre place that, you know, you know, just half a dozen blocks off the Hill. So if they

wanted to—if they were busy on some project, and they needed to spend the night, a couple nights in a row, whatever whatever, they used it for that purpose. It was—you know, as it turns out, because of the location, because you have that one nasty apartment building on—on G Street right next to it, that, you know, people hanging out all hours of the day and night, you know, and there was another building on—on Third Street that was no great shakes, and you know, here's H Street a block away, you know, we—we underestimated what the market—what we could have—what—the—the value of those units. And we sold them so fast, that—well, I wouldn't say so fast, but we sold them in a lot quicker time than I thought and you know, when it was all said and done, we looked back and say, 'Oh, we could have gotten ten thousand more here, ten thousand more there, whatever. And it didn't bother me so much because I had a kind of a—you know, pretty much of a fixed deal with—with Dac and his wife. But, with all said and done, and they counted how much money they had, that they made, and they got—they made money—they got all their—all the money they put into it back, and made some money, but they were whining and crying about, 'Oh, we should have waited and sold them for more—sold them for more.' You know, we've all been there. And at the time we were—at the time we building the Logan School, the Carbery School became available because finally the school—yeah, I think it had been in the hands of the school administration for years, and it was just filled with junk. Window guards from other schools, just, you know, just junk. Windows were all shot. Pigeons were breeding in the place like—like you can't imagine. There were weed trees, the ailanthus trees growing on windowsills on the second floor. Some of them had a, you know, diameter of two inches.

**N. CYMROT:** Oh!

**HERREMA:** They had been there a while.

**N. CYMROT:** Where is the Carbery School?

**HERREMA:** 410 Fifth Street NE. Just a couple blocks away from Logan School. In fact, someone told me that—that back before desegregation that—that basically the Logan School had been the black school in that area, and the Carbery School had been the white school. I don't—I frankly don't know whether that's entirely true or not, but in—just in—in fact, Ruth Ann did the historic work on that building to get the tax credits and, you know, designated as a contributing structure. And maybe that's where I got some of this information from. But, anyway, the city—the city, GSA or whoever it is—Department of Administrative Services, somebody, took the building over from the school board because it was—it was just sitting there, a—a blight. And—and they put out a Request for Proposals, we submitted our proposal, and, you know, there were hearings on the proposals. And I couldn't believe, you know, when we were—because we had our schematics toward what we were going to do with it. There were people who lived in the neighborhood who said, 'We'd rather have the building stay just the way it is instead of

having more residences and parking congestion and all that kind of stuff.' I'm sure they changed their mind after a few—you know, after the building was finished. But, I mean, you know, when you hear that from intelligent people who—who—and it happens often, who just can't see how their neighborhood can benefit from something. Anyway. So, Carbery—Carbery, we won the bid and went to work.

**N. CYMROT:** Were you doing that by yourself? Did you have partners on that one?

**HERREMA:** Actually—actually, Dac Laqui was a partner to begin with. But—but I refused to hire his son again. On Logan School, his son, the youngest son, was his employee on the job to kind of monitor things and monitor the bills and invoices and, you know, doing the paperwork. And basically he just kind of—you know, just a presence for his dad, because I had other projects I was working on, and—so I'm there part of the day. But I—I found that his son was not the kind of person I wanted to pay any money to for services. You know, I just didn't need it. And he wasn't that effective. And so Dac said—well, and he and his wife were getting ready to, I think, to go back to Vietnam. And so he decided to—to bail. So we—we took him out and another partner, we—he was running into problems with a divorce; we took him out. And—and Lane Potkin, an attorney that I had been using... Actually, I met Lane through Ruth Ann Overbeck, because I think Lane did legal work for some of her trusts. The L'Enfant Trusts?

**N. CYMROT:** Yes.

**S. CYMROT:** Lane?

**HERREMA:** Lane.

**S. CYMROT:** Lane.

**HERREMA:** Lane Potkin [spells it]. He was a young attorney that—you know, that I—as I recall that's how I met him. Because he did some of the historic preservation stuff with Ruth Ann being the—you know, the L'Enfant Trust and whatever. And I found him to be sharp and cheap. Inexpensive—inexpensive. And so Lane's dad—he decided—he—he basically stepped in and took over some of the investment responsibilities. And it turned out—turned out to be a, you know, a very good deal for him, for sure. And I'll never forget we had—Lane had a negotiating session with Senator Allan Dixon from Illinois. Allan and his wife put a contract in on one of the units. I don't know if they'd been living on the Hill at the time, and—and were just fascinated by a condo. But—but we had one extra parking space. There were 23 units in the building but we had 24 parking places. So Senator Dixon, I mean he wheeled and dealt and carried on with Lane to get that extra parking place cheap. And I still tease Lane about it, letting some slick-talking senator, you know, browbeat him like that.

**N. CYMROT:** [Laughs]

**HERREMA:** And they didn't stay there very long. They—they were there maybe a year, maybe not even, before they—they booked. They bought the house on the corner of Third and—where was The Man in the Green Hat?

**N. CYMROT:** That's C and Mass[achusetts].

**HERREMA:** C. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, C. No? Yeah.

**N. CYMROT:** There on the corner of Mass and Third.

**HERREMA:** Yeah, but I mean, the next block up is...

**N. CYMROT:** C.

**HERREMA:** —Third and—is that C Street that—where—where the funeral home...

**N. CYMROT:** Going back toward East Capitol Street?

**HERREMA:** No—no.

**N. CYMROT:** The funeral home? Yes. Yes. Yes.

**HERREMA:** The funeral home. That's C.

**N. CYMROT:** C and Massachusetts Avenue.

**HERREMA:** OK, and the next one up was...

**N. CYMROT:** Maryland.

**HERREMA:** —Maryland Avenue. OK. Anyway, so—so he and his wife bought a big house there and fixed it up. Another senator sent one of his staff over to see if she couldn't wheel and deal. Alfonse D'Amato. And I don't—I don't remember him ever coming to the building, although he may have, you know, when I wasn't there, but he'd sent some good looking young girl to kind of check the place out and see what—see what kind of deal they could work and, you know, yada yada yada. We weren't interested in dealing because we didn't need to. So that never materialized. I don't know whether he was looking for it for himself or for some friends. It never materialized. Having—having done those two schools, and again, knowing what you can do with that attic space. Interesting little side light, because, if you look at Carbery, what we did with the patios at the ground level. Certainly the patios on the Fifth Street side of the building are public space. The skylight windows, the balconies at the back of the building that you don't see from the façade, from the street. You have to go back on Fourth Street or further back to see the

balconies that we did. And other things like that were perfectly acceptable then with the historic preservation people. Not the case anymore, I understand.

**N. CYMROT:** Hmmm.

**HERREMA:** Because Drew tried to do some of those things over on...

**N. CYMROT:** Drew?

**HERREMA:** Scallan. Over at the Lenox School.

**N. CYMROT:** Drew Scallan?

**HERREMA:** Yeah, Drew Scallan who, he and his brother bought the old Lenox School at Fifth and the freeway, basically. And the historic staff has not gotten any better in terms of understanding an adaptive re-use situations, what you really should allow to make things viable and yet still have some contributing architectural features. We had an experience with that on—on Grace Church. Grace Church...

**N. CYMROT:** Is located?

**HERREMA:** At Ninth and South Carolina.

**N. CYMROT:** SE?

**HERREMA:** SE, yeah. You know—stone's throw from Pennsylvania Avenue. Can I have a swig of water? The—the congregation... The original Grace Church was predominantly a white congregation that—that moved out to Camp Springs or somewhere—Route 5 or somewhere out in Maryland. Back, I suppose, just after the riots or promoted by the riots, this is just a surmise on my part, but—I mean, I had met several people who were members of the congregation back in the 50's and 60's. You know, some—one—one couple—they got married there, and—and so they kind of said, you know, we—we think just decided to—to move out. And so then—then the Reverend and—and his group bought the church and renamed it Faith Baptist Church. And they were operating it for a while and I actually think the Capitol Hill Day... School had some classes. Pre-school classes or some—some school on the Hill had been renting space in—in the non-church part of that building for—I think before they went over to Christ Church or—I don't know—that's kind of a... I don't think—I don't think it's my imagination, I think that people have told me that. Well, you know, that—that way back, you know, in the late 60's or early 70's it was—it was used for another function. But the—the congregation, Faith Baptist Church congregation, was predominantly older and—and getting smaller. The building was—was not being maintained. I mean, they would have services, you know, on—during the week on one night and on Sundays. But, you know, they managed to get enough money to keep the heat on.

**N. CYMROT:** And where do you think they lived? Most of the congregation?

**HERREMA:** My impression was they were all, for the most part, had—had... I mean, there are some that were probably on Capitol Hill, but a whole lot of people had been moving to the—to the PG County suburbs.

**N. CYMROT:** Is this an African American congregation?

**HERREMA:** Yes. Yes. Yes. Anyway, so, you know, I mean, vandals were throwing stones and breaking windows and all the stained glass was, you know, had been damaged. Because—because it was just obviously not a—you know, it was—it wasn't a live presence. Even though—even though there was church services a couple of times a week, just nobody knew it. There didn't seem to be... Anyway, the building was inviting vandals in. And the—the church put it on the market. It had been on the market for quite some time. I can't remember what the price was, but we met with the pastor and said, 'Look, if we can get, you know, here's—here's—in the—the church is worth nothing to us as it is. It's worth nothing to a lot of people as it is, as you know because you have it on the market. But if we can get permission to put a certain number of condominium units in the building, then we will pay you a certain price. And, the only thing is, that, you know, we have a contract, we will not take possession until we have a final zoning order. But in the meantime, we'll help you defray some of your expenses and whatever, if you want to just kind of wait it out with us and take the gamble that we'll win. And, participate in any public hearing and whatever that—that go on as a result of the process.

And, so they agreed, and so we hired Bob Schwartz because he had done—you know, they had done such a good job on Logan School and the Carbery School. In fact, the Carbery School, Bob was given the Mayor's Award for Design. Or maybe the project was given the Mayor's Award, but certainly Bob was recognized by the Mayor as—as having made a big contribution in terms of architectural—in the architectural result of Carbery. So anyway, we—we—you know, we wound up into the attic again, looking for all that space. And I mean it's just huge—huge, you know above the—the main sanctuary, again, there was 20 feet of space—vertical space. Not at the edges where the roofline obviously tapered down, but...

So—so we—we started off kind of traditional, like—like we did with the schools. 'Well, let's do this—do that—do that.' And then all of the sudden because the way the building is built—the way—the way they—the newer part of the building, because the building was built in two sections. The older section is the one that faces Ninth Street, it's got the turret and clearly—clearly was married to the newer building. The newer building—in terms of structure and heating and plumbing and everything, looked to be more like a '20's building, instead of a turn of the century building. But I've never gone back to try and figure

out. But they—their clearly their—their buildings were built at two different times. At least, that's your and my expert opinion. But the—the way the—the—I'll say the newer building, which is the larger section, it—it's basically kind of a triangular shaped building. And the roofline is slate—was slate, very steeply pitched up. But the very middle of the building was a flat roof, flat tin roof. And—and so we just decided to take that flat part of the roof, tear it all off, and open it up. Make it—make an interior courtyard. And there's a significant amount of structural work, I can tell you.

**N. CYMROT:** It was a beautiful result, I remember it.

**HERREMA:** We—we never—we never would have, you know, again, it's one of those things where I—I'd run into a couple of guys who were concrete, you know, skilled concrete professionals, just, you know, just guys working off the back of a pickup truck. But they'd been around the concrete business for a—a long, long time. And—and so we were able to hire them cheap to come in and do all the concrete work. Because, you know, if you'd have gone out and hired Bartley or some of these other guys, we'd never any...

**N. CYMROT:** Who were you just saying? What was the name you just said?

**HERREMA:** Well, there's, I mean, there are big companies around that do this kind of concrete work all over town. Bartley is one of them. But—but I just happened to have used these guys, run into them, they were eager, and—any my structural engineer was glad to come down, make sure that the reinforcing bars and everything was all properly placed and—because we did it all ourselves. You know, we—anyway, so—so that managed to—that—that's where we—that's where we were able to make some money on the project, because we didn't spend it on all that structural work. And it—it's...

**N. CYMROT:** That was your last large one, is that right?

**HERREMA:** Yeah. Yeah. Because—let's see, I guess—I guess that was... And through all of this, you know, the—the demand—up and down, interest rates. I mean, you know there are a lot of factors that you're always...

**N. CYMROT:** Were you in a stressful situation a lot of the time?

**HERREMA:** Too dumb to be stressful. Or stressed out. I mean, you know, whatever I did I—I—if I got into it, I'm going to make it—I'm going to finish it. I had no choice, you know. And, no—no Daddy Warbucks sitting by me to bail me out. And—and Joannie was—I mean, Joannie was—my wife, was—she was just—she's smart, she's sensible, and she made a—a lot of contributions to—to just keeping things moving along, you know. And I think—in some respects because I'd had dealings with bankers, you know, on more than just one occasion, you know, I guess bankers like everybody else,

they—they make a determination as to whether or not you're a guy they can trust and you can—and they'll extend you a little more leeway if things are tight or you're in trouble, than others. And I think I benefited from that. Nobody ever told me that, but I can—I can see where I could have—where the plug could have been pulled on me on a couple of occasions. I would have been...

**N. CYMROT:** Bob, you mentioned at the beginning that you had been a developer from Potomac. Had you been doing developing out there as well?

**HERREMA:** No. No. No.

**N. CYMROT:** No. But you just got that title when you moved to town?

**HERREMA:** I mean, that—that basically—.well, no that basically was used as an epithet by the Restoration Society and others...

**N. CYMROT:** Right.

**HERREMA:** ...when this 'Potomac developer'...

**N. CYMROT:** You.

**HERREMA:** ...coming in to do this seven-unit apartment building on 318 East Capitol Street. It kind of got...

**N. CYMROT:** Well, meanwhile, while you were doing these projects, your girls were going to school.

**HERREMA:** Right. The last—the thing that kind of all of the sudden—by this time it was, what, 1989, and—and the market was still very, very strong. So I bought—went to auction, and bought 1118 East Capitol Street. It was part of a—a large, I think, bankruptcy. I'm trying to remember the name of the old coot that—that—it was his mother's properties. But he had properties all over Capitol Hill. He was—he was—I mean, he was a character. Had no money, you know, just had properties. And, you know, he'd borrow money against them to live on or whatever whatever.

**N. CYMROT:** 1118. What was that? Single family?

**HERREMA:** Yeah. 1118 East Capitol Street NE was a—it was a single family house. I mean the basement hadn't been improved, just had a big old dark basement. And when we—and when we—when we went to inspect the property, there was a walk aisle that allowed you to get from certain areas in the house to the stairway to go upstairs, but the rest of the house was just jammed full of junk. Junk. The guy was a packrat. Newspapers. I mean, mechanical things that were totally obsolete. I wish I could remember the name of the guy. Because he—he got foreclosed on on a number of properties all at the same time.

**S. CYMROT:** It wasn't Longley?

**HERREMA:** Hmm?

**S. CYMROT:** It wasn't Longley?

**HERREMA:** No. No. Anyway. We—we signed—we went to the auction, it was a lot of activity, the price went up and up. Joannie said, 'Don't you dare go any higher than—', I don't know what it was, a hundred and something. But, I did. You know. This was an auction.

**N. CYMROT:** Right.

**HERREMA:** The only other auction I'd been to, look what happened. I had this wonderful result. And, so we paid too much for it. And as it turns out, the lawyer that—that was disposing of all these properties took his damn sweet time to settlement. It was a year between the time we bought the house and the—actually the time that he got everything cleared up. I mean, he had a lot of clearing up to do, but still. In that year, you know, it was now 1990, things were starting to soften. So we—we decided, you know, in that location, we were going to—we were going to just do a bang-up job. We put a new English basement apartment in, and used some attic space because the way the—the way the building is built there's two stories but then the—in the third story, the attic, there was windows and stuff, so we—we decided we could move the roofline around and use some of that space.

So we spent a lot of money on it. Put it on the market—nobody showed. You know, a very prominent location. Just a stone house, pretty—pretty house, nobody showed. And that thing sat on the market—initially we marketed it ourselves, but nothing was happening. So we turned it over to Angela Grimmer and JW Drake and the troops at Pardoe. I think it was Pardoe at the time. Whoever. And they tried and they tried and they tried and they tried, you know, after I don't know how many months it was on the—on the market. We finally just decided to ask American Security to let us rent it, because we were getting killed. You know, sitting there, paying the bank interest, no money coming in. And they agreed, so we—we got tenants for the basement apartment and the upstairs, and after it was rented, you know, people moved in. You know, the market—I guess began to change a little bit, but it just... It was one of these things that just happened that...that the fellow who bought the house was a young attorney, making good money, you know, big career ahead of him. He lived on East Capitol Street very near to JW and...

**N. CYMROT:** JW Drake?

**HERREMA:** JW Drake, yeah. The real estate agent that actually—she was the one that finally wound up selling the house to him at, you know—you know, we were—we were asking 495 and—which—which at the time, you know, for the—the quality of the house seemed very reasonable. We wound up getting 412.

So, all the way around that was a—that was a big beating. And I decided that—because Annie graduated in '90, my youngest daughter, Amy graduated from college in '91 and she was going in the Peace Corps for two years, and so her tuition was all paid for, you know, Peace Corps was going to take care of her for a couple of years, and my oldest daughter was in California doing her music, and she was OK. She didn't—she didn't need any help from dad. So I said, the business of taking risks for—for big rewards... I just learned a lesson. It doesn't always work that way, and I'm just not going to do it anymore.

So that's pretty much where I—I decided... Actually, for a couple of years, I just—I just was a general contractor, you know, working for various people doing their renovations. And—and that—that, you know, that—that, you know, that was fine, but we were spending—we'd bought this house down in Virginia and we were spending—wanting to spend more time, you know, in Virginia and not in the city, so, you know, you want to leave work in the afternoon on Friday at, maybe 2:30, to get out of town before the rush hour really got crazy. You know and you come back Sunday or maybe Monday morning. Well, it didn't take very many months of that—my not being around all the time when the profit from the various jobs was—as a general contractor, the profit was—was not worth the—the effort. You know, the guys working for me were slowing down, taking it easy, because there basically was a slow down. There was not much happening in the way of—and I probably bid a number of jobs a little low just to get them. But I'm competing against guys that used to work for construction companies that got laid off and they're—they're operating off the back of their truck. No insurance, not paying any taxes, you know and—anyway, come 1993 I decided I was going to just kind of switch gears entirely and... Drew Scallan had been—had been after me for a while to join him in his appraisal practice, and—and it just seemed like 'here's something that's your own work product, you don't have to rely on subs'. I mean I had to—I had to learn a little bit, you know, in terms of taking courses and, you know, getting certified and all that kind of stuff, but—but, you know, that was—that was worth it. And—and he was—he was—I wasn't with him but a year or so before he joined up with Richard Harps, who is—who is a very prominent real estate appraiser in DC. So in terms of just—you know, just the assignments we got, the people I worked with, it really was a—a big change and a very positive change.

**N. CYMROT:** When did you sell your house?

**HERREMA:** On 1207, the very—the very first house we did, back in 1972, was 103 Fifth Street NE. It was funny because I had always thought about buying a house to invest in on Capitol Hill and Joannie was in agreement with me, but we just never had time. You know, working on the Hill is just—just never had time to chase one down. And I had an—I had a—appendectomy in the summer of that—of '72. So when recuperating I was kind of—had a lot of time on my hands. You know, just to kind of think about it

and get my juices back up to a certain level, and—and so I called Bill Creeger and—from—I was on the Hill and said, ‘we’re ready to buy something.’

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

TAPE 2/SIDE 1

**N. CYMROT:** We’re ready again.

**HERREMA:** Anyway, so—so Bill took us into this house on Fifth Street, it was vacant. A bunch of hippies had been living there, it was in awful shape. I mean, just plaster falling down, you know, bathrooms had been just beat up. It had been little spots of fire damage, you know, where the hippies or street people had started fires to warm themselves and, you know, started burning some of the house. Never—never serious damage but it was things that you had to take care of. Joannie says, ‘Get out of here! I’m getting out of here, this place is awful!’ And I said, ‘Now think about it. Now think about it.’ You know. ‘Don’t rush.’ The stairwell was in nice shape.

Anyway, so we, you know, we thought what we could do with it. It was four stories, an English basement and three stories. And it was basically a rectangular—a rectangle. Unlike some of the buildings that have the doglegs, you know. I said, ‘You know, we can—we can do, you know, two bedrooms and a bath and living room, dining room, kitchen with nice spaces. Not—not tiny. And just duplicate it.’ First floor and second floor, third floor and fourth floor. Anyway so, we bought it and fixed it up. My younger brother came down from Rochester with one of his buddies who was a good carpenter as well, and they—they basically did the work. I’d show up on Friday afternoon, Friday evening, bring a six pack, you know, and we’d wind up the day and drive out to Potomac while they were...

**S. CYMROT:** [Laughs]

**HERREMA:** ...drinking their beer and—occasionally they may have had some shots, too. I don’t know. But anyway, so we—we—that we—continued to own that house up until just a couple of years ago. So when the girls—this goes back to 1207, when the girls, you know, had this huge house, nobody living there but Joannie and me, and so we decided to rent it out and move in to fix up the upper two floors, spiff them up a little more than they had been from the earlier time, and so we moved into the top two floors of Fifth Street and rented out 1207.

And, I don’t know, it was rented for three or four years, it was showing abuse because of tenants. And, never on the market, but—but one of the agents from—from Don Denton’s office... Well, anyway, she—she inquired as to whether or not we would sell that, consider selling the house. Hadn’t thought about it. I mean, you know, there was a period of time earlier on when, you know, when I thought I could

get 600 thousand for that house, you know, but then I hadn't really thought about it recently. And she said, well, they had this couple, you know, and their kids were grown and gone and they're both active at Catholic University and they are just tired of driving across the bridge every day. And they'd looked at a couple of houses and just never got—just never—too little too late. So I said, well, you know, here's—here's what I'll take if they want to—if they want to make—if they want to meet my price. And so we negotiated a little bit back and forth, you know, I finally decided what they offered was acceptable. So we sold it. Sold it too soon, obviously. You know, I mean, you know, but—that's water under the bridge.

So we—we enjoyed living on Fifth Street, you know, because we had the second bedroom if Amy did come home—she did come home once from the Peace Corps, she had to testify in court because she was at the Tune Inn, or maybe it was the Hawk and the Dove—no it was the Hawk and the Dove, when—when one of the patrons got unruly and an off duty police man who used to hang out—took him outside and beat him up and threw him on the sidewalk. And she—she witnessed this, so—so she was asked to come back to be a witness. And the Peace Corps said fine, it's your civic obligation to do that. So she came home for a couple of weeks. So, you know, we had a second bedroom, she stayed there. But it was, you know, in '97 it was pretty clear that, you know, we were going to be spending more and more time in the country.

**N. CYMROT:** Where was this house in the country?

**HERREMA:** It's in Rappahannock County. It's a—an old farm house that actually was a log—the original house was a log house. You know, 35 by 17. Big high ceilings for a log house. We didn't know it was a log house when we bought it. And it had been added onto several times in the 1800's. And so we—we really liked—liked—as you guys know, going out to the country to kind of—peace and quiet, watch all the wildlife, get dirty and sweaty in the gardens. And, so anyway, we finally decided that we'd move full time to the country.

And actually, when it was—it was actually promoted or—or—there was incentive because Joannie's mom, who—who—she and her dad had been living in some senior citizen project out in Gaithersburg. Well, she was—she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, and the senior citizens facility where they were, they just—they weren't able to take care of her and he was—he was 82 at the time, and he's still with us. Tough old coot. But he—they needed help. They needed family help, because there are people you could hire... Well actually, in this place you couldn't hire anybody yourself anyway. Anybody—you had to hire people that they approved of. And they're all, you know—some could barely speak English. And they used to—you know, Joannie's mom, I mean, she—she'd—she played with them. So anyway, we—we said, 'We got this first floor bedroom, bathroom right next to it, you know, just come on down and live

with us,' and—and—and they weren't there more than a week before he decided he wanted to build a cottage. You know, instead of living in the house with us, because the money that he'd spent to buy into this community out in Gaithersburg, you know, he got a bunch of it back. So he said, 'I was going to give it to them or build a cottage down here,' you know. And so that's—that was a good project for him, he had a lot of fun. Because he was a—he was in the construction/real estate/building/development business for years. For most of his adult life actually. So—so he had this project. It got her—it got him away from his wife, who was very difficult to deal with. We hired people to come in, you know, five days a week, one gal came in five days a week, and another girl came in on the weekends. But even still, it was rough. And, so they were in the cottage for...

**N. CYMROT:** Let me ask you Bob, when you were—how—how did the kids enjoy the Day School. How... What kind of experience was that? Was that good?

**HERREMA:** Oh yeah, I—I think the Capitol Day School was—I think Della Spradlin—I mean, there were teachers there that, you know, that were really very caring and, you know, and Amy more than Jennifer needed that little extra, you know, sometimes, you know, you go around the track once and you've got it down pat. Amy you had to go around the track twice. And that was just in—in her early, you know, in her early school days. When she got to high school, I mean, she—she blossomed like crazy. And...and she...

**N. CYMROT:** Where did she go to high school?

**HERREMA:** At—at the Field School.

**N. CYMROT:** Field School.

**HERREMA:** I was—I was getting ready to say, 'Wait a minute, that doesn't sound right.'

**N. CYMROT:** The Field School, yes.

**HERREMA:** But it is, the Field School. Yeah. Yup. And...

**N. CYMROT:** Up on Wisconsin Avenue.

**HERREMA:** Well no, it was on—on Wyoming Avenue.

**N. CYMROT:** Wyoming, I meant. Yes.

**HERREMA:** Right off Connecticut.

**N. CYMROT:** I meant Wyoming. [Laughs]

**HERREMA:** Did your son go there?

**N. CYMROT:** Son and daughter went there.

**HERREMA:** Oh, OK.

**N. CYMROT:** It was just a misstatement on my part.

**HERREMA:** See—I call them ‘chemo’ moments. I can get away with that, you know.

**N. CYMROT:** Uh-huh.

**HERREMA:** No, so I think the Day School prepared them very well. I mean Amy went on to get her graduate degree in social work from the University of Maryland, and she graduated with, I think, a straight A average. So—so from this kid that needed a little extra help... And Cookie Cleaver actually took Amy under her wing on math, because Cookie kind of worked at the school or certainly was around because she lived a block away. She had two boys there and—and so the math teacher that Amy had basically—basically designated Amy as a—as a slow learner, and sit in the back of the room and don’t bother me because I got smart kids to teach. And when Cookie heard that she—she jumped right in and—and basically helped Amy out in terms of her math.

**N. CYMROT:** Bob...

**HERREMA:** It wasn’t like she was a slow learner, just like—just like in certain—like math, somehow or another, again you need a little more repetition, a little more—a little more cognitive cranking before you get the drills. Some kids are faster than others.

**N. CYMROT:** During the time that you were there and raising your daughters, were there some bad things about living on Capitol Hill or in the city? What—what did you worry about?

**HERREMA:** Boy, none that I—none that I can remember. But the—because the girls would start off in the morning, the young Vance girl—anyway, they—they—that family lived—he was the newscaster, still is the newscaster for...

**N. CYMROT:** Oh, Jim Vance.

**HERREMA:** Jim Vance, OK. Amani, I think Amani Vance was his daughter. But they lived half a block up or a block up, you know, on—on—off the park. You know, east of us on Mass Avenue. And so Amani would start coming down, our next door neighbor was running from somebody, they—they had two kids in school. Occasionally that daughter would go along, and then Amy and Jennifer, and they would pick up—let me think, who was next on the line? The Grimmer girls. Suzannah Jones. So the—the crowd got

bigger as their—you know, from day to day it was different people, because not everybody did this every day, you know. So...

**N. CYMROT:** But they would walk to school every day?

**HERREMA:** But they would walk to school, yeah. Unless it was terrible, terrible weather, and we'd give them a ride.

**N. CYMROT:** And where was the school located at that time?

**HERREMA:** At Christ Church. G and Sixth or Seventh. In between Sixth and Seventh. Because they hadn't bought the Dent School yet. That was—I think Jennifer—I think Jennifer was in the first graduating class from the Dent School.

**N. CYMROT:** Were you involved in the acquisition of that space at the time?

**HERREMA:** No. No. No, there were other folks on the board.

**N. CYMROT:** Uh-hmm.

**HERREMA:** I can't remember their names, but they were all very active and...

**N. CYMROT:** Let me ask you a couple of just...

**HERREMA:** They never—they never—they never asked for my advice so I never gave it.

**N. CYMROT:** [Laughs] Let me ask you a couple of just normal questions. Where did you do your shopping? Your grocery shopping?

**HERREMA:** I didn't do any grocery shopping.

**N. CYMROT:** Oh. There's the answer.

**S. CYMROT:** [Laughs]

**N. CYMROT:** Where did Joannie do her grocery shopping?

**HERREMA:** What—what are—what are you talking about?

**S. CYMROT:** [Laughs]

**HERREMA:** Well, the Safeway. You know, the Safeway down on 13<sup>th</sup> and Kentucky, or, I mean, you know...

**N. CYMROT:** Uh-hmm.

**HERREMA:** Kentucky?

**N. CYMROT:** That's right.

**HERREMA:** Kentucky and, yeah, E Street. Kentucky and E, whatever that is.

**N. CYMROT:** Eastern Market?

**HERREMA:** She did some at Eastern Market. I don't think she was ever a big fan of—. I don't think she was ever a big fan of going there to kind of hang out and cruise and buy stuff. I mean—I think that she was—occasionally because of the kids being in school later on up in northwest, she'd go to the Safeway in Georgetown. There are, I'm sure occasions, when just in the course of running around shopping for other stuff, clothes and whatever, she'd shop in Virginia. Because there was—there were a couple of Loehmann's or—or various outlet stores or whatever that she—she liked to look at.

**N. CYMROT:** What was—what did Eighth Street, Barracks Row, look like in the time you were living there?

**HERREMA:** Well, it was—it was a—you know, aside from the Marine building, and Ademas Tile, and the Broker at one time, I guess you guys had some offices down there, that were somewhat nondescript from the outside. But it was slow—it was very slow going, I mean, there wasn't much happening on Eighth Street. Way back when I preferred to do my business with Harry Kroll at District Lock. In later years I started doing kind of 50-50 between District Lock and Frager's. But Eighth Street was—it was—I mean, Margot Kelly was, you know, she would be busy down there, she hired Johnny Pagonos to do stuff. I don't think Johnny ever actually owned anything in there. But he was—he was a ball of fire. That guy had his hands on a lot of properties in terms of his own—his own ownership. But also in terms of doing work for, I don't know, Margot and Stu... Stu Long and Mike Lange. He did a lot of work in there, commercial ventures and—and he did work for, I don't know, was it—was it Millicent Chatel? Or—I think there are some—there some older ladies that I don't think I've even met, but I've heard their names, you know, that have been around a whole lot longer than me. You know, that were buying buildings and fixing them up—gently. No—no... You know, I think for a long time, people who were buying properties on the Hill and fixing them up were doing it on the cheap and, you know, over time the result was there. Because somebody later on bought the house and they wound up basically tearing everything out, gutting it. That obviously is a reflection of the market.

**N. CYMROT:** Did you eat out ever?

**HERREMA:** Oh yeah, yeah.

**N. CYMROT:** Where did you go?

**HERREMA:** We liked—we liked... Let me see, early on we liked Yolanda's. Wasn't it Yolanda's? I liked Italian food.

**N. CYMROT:** I forgot that one.

**HERREMA:** Yolanda's.

**N. CYMROT:** Where is Yolanda's? Where was Yolanda's?

**HERREMA:** It was on the second floor of one of Stu and Mike's buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue in the two or three hundred block. I can't remember which. I'm not even sure what's there now. But, you know—it's the French guy now has an operation—Le Bistro or something like that? Isn't—isn't there—isn't—it's right next to the Trover's Shop.

**S. CYMROT:** Radicchio.

**N. CYMROT:** Radicchio. Radicchio.

**S. CYMROT:** [Inaudible]—upstairs.

**HERREMA:** Well maybe so. Anyway—all right—I don't know. Anyway—there was a restaurant on Eighth Street that was half Mexican, half Thai.

**N. CYMROT:** Yes.

**HERREMA:** I can't remember the name of it. But we used to go there often with, like the Dyes, Becky and Allen, or the Nulands, and their kids. So it was kind of a—kind of a family, you know...

**N. CYMROT:** Right.

**HERREMA:** You get an assortment of all kinds of stuff, you know. We—we liked La Trattoria. They're still around. They've had their ups and downs, but—but again, you know, it was a—for good Italian food we—we always thought they did a pretty good job. And...

**N. CYMROT:** Well Bob...

**HERREMA:** Las Placitas. You know, we—we really—we really liked—because even now if Joannie and I happen to be in town, and, you know, spending, you know, spending some time when we'll have dinner in town and then head for the country. We'll go to Las Placitas.

**N. CYMROT:** That's in the 1300 block of Pennsylvania?

**HERREMA:** No, Las Placitas is... That's—that's La Lomita.

**N. CYMROT:** La Lomita.

**HERREMA:** Las Placitas is Salvadoran and it's in—it's on Eighth Street in...

**N. CYMROT:** Eighth Street, right.

**HERREMA:** ...you know, kind of near District Lock or in that block. We—we would used to go to La Lomita out on Pennsylvania Avenue. Somehow or another—somehow or another, I don't know, it just became—we just—just found other places on the—on the other side of the Hill. 2 Quail. We'd go there. For kind of a special deal, you know, because it's a little more expensive than some of the other restaurants. Back in the early days, The Man in the Green Hat.

**N. CYMROT:** Oh, that's right.

**HERREMA:** I mean, The Man in the Green Hat was, you know, was—I mean, it was—it was a bar, but what's her name, Noonan? Or—there were a group of people that are still on the Capitol Hill or used to be.

**S. CYMROT:** Eddie O'Brien's.

**HERREMA:** Huh?

**S. CYMROT:** Eddie O'Brien's.

**HERREMA:** Yeah, the—the woman I'm thinking of, kind of a typical Irish, you know, gal, lot of personality.

**N. CYMROT:** Peggy O'Brien.

**HERREMA:** Peggy O'Brien. OK.

**N. CYMROT:** She was one of the owners.

**HERREMA:** OK.

**N. CYMROT:** Bob, are you surprised at the real estate development and the trends that are taking place now on the Hill?

**HERREMA:** Amazing. When—when the city, I don't know, five or six years ago, when the city—I mean it's been now maybe longer. But when the city was—had decided to—to divest itself of all these old school properties, you know, they—they asked for us to do appraisals on some of the properties that

they wanted to get rid of. And, of course, the only—you know, our—our market analysis was, ‘Nobody’s buying these kinds of buildings, you know, for nonprofits. There’s just too much money involved.’ They’re too—they’re too dysfunctional—their functional utility was just lacking to a great degree. So the only thing that we ever thought that you could do, especially with those that are in good locations was to convert them to condos.

Well, back then the market for condos, was, you know, up and down, but the dollars per square foot—just unbelievable. I mean, you know, you’re getting \$300 a square foot now plus at Carbery School, and I don’t think we were getting—well, maybe we were getting \$100 a square foot, you know, at Carbery. But it took you a lot of money to get there. And so we—we just, you know, we just couldn’t see the value. Lo and behold, the markets changed dramatically in the last five years, six years. And so you got—you got this guy that paid—he paid over a million dollars for the Lenox School property and turned around and sold it. Frank and Kitty bought—you know, they—they had obligated themselves for the part, you know, where the townhouses were being built. And Drew and his brother, you know, obligated themselves to take over the old—the old school. They’re going to put fourteen apartments in there. And—and—and.

**N. CYMROT:** Are those—are they going to sell those apartments?

**HERREMA:** No. Well—well...

**N. CYMROT:** Maybe.

**HERREMA:** The idea is to rent them at high rents.

**N. CYMROT:** Uh-hmm.

**HERREMA:** You know what happened to that scenario here in the last...

[Interaction with HERREMA and nurse]

**HERREMA:** What were we talking about? I’m about talked out.

**N. CYMROT:** What were some of the things your children did when they were growing up, other than go to school?

**HERREMA:** [Possibly to nurse] Merci beaucoup.

**HERREMA:** Well they—they both participated in Soccer on the Hill. I mean, Amy was—Amy was in the co-ed league. I mean, that was back, you know, when they barely kicked the ball.

**N. CYMROT:** Were you a coach?

**HERREMA:** No, actually, but Joannie was for a little while. She coached Amy's team as they got older.

**N. CYMROT:** Were you founders of that? Had it—was it just beginning?

**HERREMA:** No, no. It—it...no—I—it—it had been—it was up and running. I think Dave Schwartz and I don't know who all got involved in getting it started, but it was up and running. Because I remember Amy playing on—the team that she was on was, boys-girls. More boys than girls, I think. Because I think the Schwartz boys played, I think they were around Amy's—or at least the younger one, or one of the younger ones. And I think one of the Cleaver boys, and... But it was a good bunch. And you got to meet parents and get to know parents better because you'd—we'd go to all the games.

**N. CYMROT:** And these were children from all different schools, I remember.

**HERREMA:** On Capitol Hill, yeah.

**N. CYMROT:** Yes, uh-hmm.

**HERREMA:** Oh yeah, they're from all over. Any, you know...

**N. CYMROT:** And where did they play?

**HERREMA:** Some on the Mall, some—some down at Ft. McNair. McMyer? McNair.

**N. CYMROT:** McNair.

**HERREMA:** Got them sent down—down in SW, right?

**N. CYMROT:** Right.

**S. CYMROT:** Yeah.

**HERREMA:** And occasionally—occasionally they'd get in games with other leagues, you know. They'd go to Virginia as I recall and play. I know that was true of the big girls. I mean, because the girls team was all girls, and I know that we'd take Jennifer out to—they played out at Sandy Spring because they competed against, you know, whatever school that was.

**S. CYMROT:** Friends School.

**HERREMA:** Was that—no was that...

**S. CYMROT:** Sandy Springs Friends.

**HERREMA:** Yeah, was as that when she was at Field School?

**N. CYMROT:** You were at Field School, that's right.

**S. CYMROT:** No, that was at Field.

**HERREMA:** Was she at Field when she was playing soccer against them? But she only played soccer one or two years at Field, maybe one year. So that may have—that was probably that. But anyway, they—the girls' teams, you know, with Suzannah Jones and Tracy Shiekels and—oh, what was the name of the girl... Defolled [unclear], Defolled girl, big, big girl from Capitol Hill Day School.

**S. CYMROT:** Uh-hmm.

**HERREMA:** I mean, just there were some really good kids. And it was always fun to watch them, you know. Because I don't care whether we got pictures of—you know, in the snow, in the rain, they're out there kicking that ball...

[Inaudible section of tape, approximately 5 seconds]

**HERREMA:** —young girl growing up.

**N. CYMROT:** No, never. No, no.

**HERREMA:** My—my sisters never did. Joannie really never did either. I mean, to—to a great extent. I mean, they played—they played sports, you know, but they weren't—they weren't competitive. These kids are competitive.

**S. CYMROT:** You didn't regret not staying in Potomac?

**HERREMA:** Absolutely not. Absolutely not. Nope. No, because—well, in terms of what I was doing, I'm working out of my house. So I'm in and out every day. My kids are there, they see me come, 'Hi dad.' Whatever, whatever. They see me go. I wasn't an absentee father or—or a father that, you know, that's at the job until eight o'clock at night. I—I mean I sometimes was working at eight o'clock at night, but that was at home. And that was a big benefit I think, at least in terms of what my two girls tell me about their relationship with me as their dad. You know, that I was around. They wanted to sit and chat about something, they—they'd find a minute.

And—and the experiences they had and all that stuff, I—I—they—I—they wouldn't trade it. They wouldn't trade it for anything. Street smart, you know, in terms of just—just growing up. You know, always being mindful of looking around, make sure there are no surprises out there. So—no, we—we... In fact, well you know, the—if it weren't for the fact that, you know we're—you're getting closer to retirement age, where you want to really spend more time in a different place, you know, we—we miss

the Hill. You know, when—when we first moved to Virginia, you know, full time we—we'd come back a lot more for various gatherings and social events and parties and... But, you know, in the last couple years it just became a whole lot easier to... Oh, and also because in the last two years, I mean, Joannie's dad moved from our—our—from the cottage, back up to Bethesda, because he wanted to be closer to medical care and driving, you know, was a—perhaps going to be a problem. And this way, Bethesda you can take a cab where ever you want to go. Don't have to depend on anybody. And the fact that—the fact that Joannie had agreed to help Pam Scallan out at her shop up in—up in Northwest for the summer, just so that Pam could go to Canada. Well, that turned out to be—Pam says, 'Stay, please!' So the advantage of that was that we'd go up—we'd drive up every Sunday—Sunday evening, take Joannie's dad a meal. She'd fix something at home and take him a meal and spend the night with him Sunday night and Monday night, and she'd work at the shop on Mondays and Tuesdays.

**S. CYMROT:** Uh-hmm.

**HERREMA:** And then we'd come home. And I'd work, you know, in—in Drew's office, or at 208, because I had my little office at 208 for a while, while we were moving tenants. And, so yeah, you—you get two days worth of work done and come home Tuesday night and—and I'd usually go in another day—another day...

**N. CYMROT:** So Bob, I think we're going to stop now and thank you so much for taking the—your energy to talk to us...

**HERREMA:** Oh yeah.

**N. CYMROT:** ...about what happened on the Hill during your time there because I think you were involved in a particular piece of—of history that it's important that we record.

**HERREMA:** Oh! When I—I... Hold on a second. Back up to the Grace Church.

**N. CYMROT:** Uh-hmm.

**HERREMA:** The story about Grace Church.

**N. CYMROT:** Uh-hmm. Go ahead.

**HERREMA:** I forgot to mention, we were talking about Grace Church that, you know, we had this deal with—with the reverend and—and to get zoning to do all we wanted to do. And there was a series of public hearings and Flossie Lee, our wonderful commissioner was—she was on—she was on my side. Her daughter bought a condo at Logan School and loved it. And so—so Flossie actually may have been a part owner of the condo with her daughter. Anyway, so, Flossie was all for condos. Which, you know,

which is kind of—kind of actually surprised me. I mean, I always got along with Flossie but, you know, she could be unpredictable. So anyway, we had these public hearings, neighbors just carrying on. ‘No parking,’ well—we don’t have to have parking. We had—because it was a church you had grandfathered in for 60 spaces or something. ‘No parking,’ OK we’ll give you some parking.

And then all these same old same old, you know, not in my back yard, you know, whining and objections and whatever. And then—so—so—we—we finally agreed, because actually we’d—we were going to put six parking places in the garage, or in the—on the first floor on the D Street side of the building.

And—but there was no garage door there—there was no—there was no—I mean there was never any parking in the building. So were going to have to create an entrance. And we finally agreed, well we’ll do nine. You know, that’s for 24 units, nine parking places. You know, not everybody buys a parking place that has a condo. At least, not then. Not way back when. So we work with Historic Preservation staff to get our plans all approved and whatever, whatever, whatever. And—and the young gal that was on the staff had just thought we were doing a terrific job; adaptive reuses exactly—exactly what it should be, and including this garage door opening on D Street. Which was right underneath the big old round rose window or whatever you call those stained glass windows. And—and—so we proceed, everything’s working along just fine, this...

END OF TAPE 2/SIDE 1

TAPE 2/SIDE 2

**HERREMA:** ‘...can’t do that. You can’t put a garage door in that building. There never was a garage door. This is—this is—this is an affront to the architectural integrity.’ Well, we said, ‘Excuse me but, you know, the whole basis of this project is based on our satisfying the neighbors and the zoning order that had been—well maybe the zoning order didn’t include it, but, you know, of—of having indoor parking for at least nine places. And we can’t do that without the garage door.’ ‘Well that’s just too bad.’

**S. CYMROT:** [laughs]

**HERREMA:** And, so we—we said, ‘All right, this is another one of those cases where you go to—go to the board.’ Coke—what was the architect’s name, Coke... Anyway, Jim Speight was the chairman of the board.

**S. CYMROT:** Uh-hmm.

**HERREMA:** And he was—he had an affinity for Capitol Hill. And I knew him because his daughter was in school at the—the Day School with our kids, I believe. He was a political appointee. Subject to the pressures of—of—that political appointees feel. Anyway, we had this hearing, and this little staff person

gets up, and carries on and carries on about this garage door and it can't be done, blah blah blah. And so one of the architects on the—on the board, who—who is a prominent architect, he said—I know, I know—he said—he said to the staff person in front of everybody else, to—he said—he said, 'You know, there are times when people want to throw the baby with the bathwater, and that's exactly what you're doing, and we're not going to stand for it.' So we proceeded.

**S. CYMROT:** You got your garage door.

**HERREMA:** Got the garage door. Anyway, end of the story.

**S. CYMROT:** End of story.

END OF INTERVIEW