



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK  
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

---

**Interview with Keith Melder**

**Interview Date:** March 28, 2003  
**Interviewer:** Kathleen Franz  
**Transcriber:** Barbara Eck

This interview transcript is the property of the Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project.  
Not to be reproduced without permission.

TAPE 1/SIDE 1

**FRANZ:** And I'm here today on March 28, 2003 to interview Keith Melder a long-time Capitol Hill resident and we're meeting today at 811 D Street. Start us off by telling us a little about yourself. Maybe some basic, biographical information, and then we'll jump into Capitol Hill.

**MELDER:** Well I moved to Washington in September of 1961 and I moved to, almost immediately to Capitol Hill. And I rented a sublet apartment in Northeast and then I, through acquaintance with a real estate lady, having very little cash money, I went in with somebody and purchased a small house, rowhouse on 8<sup>th</sup> Street S.E. 241 8<sup>th</sup> Street. And that was in the Fall of 1961 and I had just taken a job at the Smithsonian Institution, the National Museum of American History and was getting myself acquainted with Washington D.C. and I quickly learned to appreciate the location and the amenities of Capitol Hill which was quite different then from what it is today. One of the things I did fairly early on was to get involved in a civic organization that functioned on Capitol Hill. That's long vanished, but it was quite active and fairly prominent in the 1960's. It was called the Capitol Hill Community Council.

A little bit of history about it goes back to the era right around 1960 when Washington, D.C., along with many other cities around the country, was undergoing the transition from being a legally segregated community to being an officially bi-racial or non-discriminatory community. And as part of that tradition, the Capitol Hill Community Council was established about 1960 as a bi-racial, civic organization. Now previous to that time and in fact, even at that time, there were two local, civic organizations in the neighborhood. One of them was the, oh if I can remember the names. The Capitol Hill Southeast Citizens Association that was restricted to white folks and the Southeast Civic Association which was organized to serve the black community. And these two organizations had functioned separately and distinctly for a good many years, probably a half a century or maybe longer, as the, shall we say, the voice of citizens in the neighborhood for the simple reason that Washington as you know, had no elected city government. So these voluntary organizations, citizens and civic associations, were the primary representation of local residents and they functioned to—oh they testified at hearings, they represented the interests of the community various interests, business, religious, educational, what have you. And they were organized into citywide organizations: the Federation of Civic Associations and the Federation of Citizen Associations. The citywide organizations may still exist although they are not very active today, because we have a local, partisan political system now that has largely taken the place of these voluntary groups that existed prior to home rule.

Anyway these, the Capitol Hill Community Council was established to bring together both whites and blacks in this new era of racial integration and I somehow got into, I started going to meetings and I

became interested in the organization and eventually, well not that it takes too long to become involved in some of the activities. One of the things that I, one of the first things that I remember very clearly, was an effort to establish school libraries for the elementary schools in the neighborhood. Along with all its other disabilities, the District of Columbia did not provide publicly funded libraries for elementary school students in this neighborhood. There were school libraries in other parts of the city, but as I understand it they were largely endowed or funded by private funds so we didn't have that here so that one of our efforts early on was to establish school libraries. So about 1960, oh maybe '62 or '63, maybe '62, we had our first book drive. A neighborhood book drive to collect books and have a book sale and the proceeds of the book sale would go toward the purchase of new books for the students in the...

**FRANZ:** I'm just going to adjust a little bit here.

**MELDER:** O.K.

**FRANZ:** Sorry to interrupt.

**MELDER:** That's alright. So we had a book sale and we used the proceeds to purchase books for the young children. The first of these book sales took place at the Eastern Market. At that point in time the Eastern Market was almost empty. The uh—there had been a downtown Center Market with stalls very similar to the Eastern Market, that was the primary public market in the city. This was at roughly 5<sup>th</sup> and K Streets N.W. Many people remember it being there. There had been an earlier Center Market located where the National Archives is today, but that was taken down in the 1930's. So the Eastern Market had been one of several city public markets built and run by the city to provide facilities for different neighborhoods in different parts of town. There was a Western Market, there was a Georgetown Market, there was a Center Market and the Eastern Market, as far as I know, is the last one still operating in its, like in its original form.

But at the same time we had this book sale there was only one primary tenant in the, the Eastern Market and that was the Southern Maryland Seafood Company which may still be there.

**FRANZ:** It's still there.

**MELDER:** OK, good. Oh dear I've kind of forgotten the name of the proprietor of that, but he was a very colorful, old-timey guy and very fiercely defensive of the Eastern Market. He had been the principal tenant there for some time and was insistent that the city was not going to, he had a lease, the city was not going to throw him out and so on. So he was a very, he was very susceptible for sharing the Market with our book sale, because he wanted something to be going on there. It protected his interests and literally it did. And as time went on this turned out to be a shrewd strategy on his part, because with the other

markets all closing the Eastern Market inherited some of the merchants who had been located in the other markets. So we held our book sale in Eastern Market in the Fall of 1962. I probably have, I've got some old Capitol Hill News, newspapers, I might have something on it here. But we had, we got a lot of interest and stimulated people in the community to contribute and buy our books at the book sale. So it's one of the first activities that I engaged in in this Capitol Hill Community Council. Well one thing led to another and we were involved in a number of other community activities. We held several more book sales for the next three or four years until the city itself began to pick up the slack on these school libraries and funded libraries to be used by the students especially as they were building new schools they provided libraries in the new schools so that became less of a problem.

In the meantime, a number of other things took place. One of my memorable experiences had to do with the city had to set up a project to replace Hine Junior High School. The old Hine building which a few people may still remember—I can remember it kind of faintly—had been built in I think the 1890's as the first Eastern High School and along about, oh 1920's when the new Eastern High School was built on East Capitol Street in probably 1920 or so, Hine was converted from the Eastern High School into a junior high school and I think it was part of the segregated white school system. This was before 1954 in Washington, D.C. as many people know and fewer people remember, the public schools were segregated. Washington was one of those cities that was involved in the Brown vs. Board of Education desegregation decision by the Supreme Court in 1954.

So Hine had been a junior high in the white system for many years and had been allowed to deteriorate very badly. By the time the schools desegregated, Hine was a very shabby rundown building and needed to be replaced. So the city had a schedule for replacing these old schools and Hine was on the schedule. So about 1962, I would say, the old Hine building came down and the new building which is the current building went up in its place. However that building had not long been finished before the city proposed to enlarge its playground. Now I should add to this that I lived in a house on Eighth Street—241 8<sup>th</sup> Street [SE]—that was condemned for the building of the present Hine building. The site of my old house is where the alley goes between the school yard and the business block and the residential block just north of there, so every time you drive through the alley you drive through my living room. And I'm very well aware of that. I often drive through that just for the fun of it because I know I'm driving through my old living room.

So that house was demolished in 1964—I moved out of there in the Fall of 1963 so it was probably demolished shortly thereafter, let's say in the beginning of '64. But the city wanted to take all of the rest of that block to enlarge the school playground. And the Capitol Hill Community Council, along with the Restoration Society and many other organized groups in the neighborhood fought this proposal to take

that square. It was controversial. There were some people in the neighborhood who thought it ought to be demolished because it was, had no value. I mean there were a lot of old—rather, there was a Safeway store and a few run-down old shops in that block. There had been, however, a number of houses that had been restored, remodeled, even newly built right around that time that were threatened with demolition by the city proposal. So there was a strong feeling that this block had a lot of value in the community.

The other factor, of course, was the Eastern Market that beginning around 1963 right after we had our first book sale in the Eastern Market with the closing of some of the other markets, some of the merchants from the older markets in other parts of the city moved to Eastern Market. And Eastern Market was having a revival. It had been, as I said before, largely abandoned, except for the Southern Maryland Seafood Company that used it more as a wholesaler, a wholesale outlet, than as a retail food store, fish store. But beginning around 1963-64, the Eastern Market began a revival so we saw this all of a piece, those of us who wanted to save that block. We saw the Eastern Market as the nucleus of a kind of Capitol Hill revival.

At the time I should also mention that the present swimming pool that's behind Eastern Market was an old—there was an old firehouse there. An abandoned, not abandoned, but it was no longer in daily use as a firehouse. There was quite a bit of city property there. And the city, this is lore. I don't know how true this is or not. The lore is that the city proposed to demolish Eastern Market and replace it with some kind of supermarket site and have a supermarket somewhat like out on 14<sup>th</sup> Street. As the place where Capitol Hill would shop. A lot of people thought this was a mistake and so there had been a preservation movement to protect Eastern Market. I was not directly involved in that, although I would hear about it from time to time and I'm sure there are a lot of people in the neighborhood, I would hope so, who might remember that. I don't know how you would get more information on that, but it would be worth looking for. So you had this effort to preserve the block north of the Hine Junior High School which eventually succeeded and this is the little article that I brought from *Potomac* magazine. Washington Post magazine from 1966 tells a little about that fight, although there are a lot of details, the nitty gritty details that I've forgotten.

**FRANZ:** Do you want to share some of the best stories?

**MELDER:** Well I'm not sure that I can remember a whole lot. I do remember that at one of the occasions when we were working on this problem, I was president of the Captiol Hill Community Council and I remember having meetings and doing a lot of, sort of, oh, running around and buttonholing Congressmen. In those days we worked, to some extent, we worked directly with Congressmen because we had no city administration. We had no mayor, nor council so we had to make our interests known directly with people on the Hill. And we did. I remember writing testimony and writing letters to Capitol Hill, to Congressmen

and members of the House and Senate and so on. So that one of the things, the ways in which the neighborhood worked, was through these civic groups that tried to have direct impact on members of Congress and to some extent that was a functioning system. I wouldn't want to go back to that system because it was pretty dreadful. Unrepresentative, local government system, but that's what we did. And we worked against this condemnation of that land. Now, eventually, oh probably in 1966, about the time this newspaper came out, the influence of these local groups on Congress helped sway and the Congress eliminated that proposal from the District budget 'cause Congress had the direct role in the writing of DC budgets. You could get line items in the budget if you had enough influence.

**FRANZ:** Was there anybody in Congress who you worked with that was particularly sympathetic to Capitol Hill?

**MELDER:** I do not remember.

**FRANZ:** OK. But there must have been Congress people who lived on the Hill.

**MELDER:** There were Congress people who lived on the Hill, certainly. And these people, some of them, might have been more or less directly impacted by these changes, but I don't recall specific details of that.

**FRANZ:** Can you talk a little bit more about how you said it was controversial preserving the block and who was in favor of actually taking it down other than the city itself? Not specific names, but were there particular groups on Capitol Hill that saw this as a good move and who didn't see it as a good move?

**MELDER:** There was a strong—Capitol Hill was a pretty wild place in those days in a sense, in that there were strong political factions on Capitol Hill. I always thought of our group as being a moderate group, but on the right side were the real estate people who were all in favor of developing property and increasing property values and who in my book at least, were less concerned of the interests of the less fortunate in the community. On the left hand, the left side of the political spectrum, were some liberal democrats who formulated, formed organizations, you can find out all about this in Sam Smith's book, "Captive Capitol." Are you familiar with that?

**FRANZ:** I'm not, but I will go look at that.

**MELDER:** There were organizations such as the Emergency Recreation Council for Capitol East, the—oh there was an educational group that was dedicated to expanding facilities and opportunities for education.

There were a lot of groups. And very worthwhile. Many of them were kind of associated with the support of Friendship House at the time.

**FRANZ:** And where did preservationists fall in that? Left, right, continue...?

**MELDER:** Well they were more in the middle. Maybe a little bit on the right side. Preservation in the 1960's was definitely not in the forefront. It was new in the 60's and had not yet found... There were still preservationists. They were beginning to realize a neighborhood like this, the whole environment has a lot of value. But this was a new thing at the time. The idea of preserving Eastern Market was a pretty, to some people seemed pretty outrageous, because it was old fashioned and antiquated and obsolete.

**FRANZ:** It's hard to think of that now.

**MELDER:** It's hard to believe. And, and, but partly because of the Georgetown influence people in this neighborhood were beginning to realize that just in regard to real estate value, there was tremendous potential here. And which since has been largely recognized and, to some extent, fulfilled. But, at the time, it was kind of a little, it was farfetched. It seemed to many people to be farfetched. This was in the era when people were talking about tearing down Union Station for example.

**FRANZ:** Well urban renewal.

**MELDER:** Urban renewal. That's another story. Urban renewal had already taken effect and in fact the Capitol Hill had been threatened by urban renewal. There had been a number of proposals to demolish parts of the Hill area, because they were considered to be sub standard. And the alleys and so on were looked down upon. And we had in the neighborhood, a number of public housing projects had been constructed. The Ellen Wilson dwellings, I think dates from the 1940's. When I lived here it was very much a going concern and I think it was thought to be quite up to date. And, at the time, one of the controversies of that era had to do with the construction of Potomac Gardens near 13<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania Avenue S. E. That went up, oh I think in the mid-60's. As I remembered it, it created a lot of controversy within our organization. How we would come down on it, whether to go ahead with that or not and I cannot now remember what we voted. I think that in a very close call we might have voted to approve it, but I don't recall.

**FRANZ:** Are there records from your organization? Do you have the minutes?

**MELDER:** I have some stuff in my own little collection that I need to find a home for. I've thought of giving them to the Historical Society and may well do so.

**FRANZ:** Cause they're a valuable piece of historical information.

**MELDER:** I know they are.

**FRANZ:** Cause you're a historian.

**MELDER:** I'm well aware of that.. That's why I saved all these old papers. I've got, it's, well these are... One of the other things I—there was another thing I wanted to mention. One of the events that I became active in...

**FRANZ:** Actually, no I'm going to interrupt because I have to turn over the tape. I don't want you to get started so let's break right here and turn over the tape.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

**FRANZ:** OK this is side 2 of tape 1, our interview with Keith Melder on March 28, 2003. OK, Keith you were going to tell another story.

**MELDER:** OK. One of the things that my group, the Capitol Hill Community Council, did as a means of tying the community together. One of our goals was to try to bring some feeling of community to the neighborhood which had been somewhat fragmented. So, we began sponsoring an annual Labor Day party, a block party for the whole neighborhood. And I was active in that for several years running until I finally burned out. It was just too much of a, it just was exhausting to do that. I don't know. If you've never done that you don't know.

**FRANZ:** That sounds like a big affair. How big was it?

**MELDER:** It's a big affair! We had, oh I don't know, I think we might have had as many as a thousand people.

**FRANZ:** Wow! Where was it?

**MELDER:** Each year it was held at a different location. The trick was because we felt that it was important to serve beer, as one of the amenities at this event, we had to hold it in a place where the beer could be sold. And you couldn't do that in a public park so that the public parks were all off limits. So we looked for a school playground for parochial school and we got away with that. Oh, we used the St. Peter's School grounds. We used the Holy Comforter School grounds. We used the St. Joseph's churchyard. There had been a school up in Northeast. We even, I remember the first year I was involved in 1963, it was held at a site that no longer exists. The former St. Cyprian's Academy, near 8<sup>th</sup> and C

Streets S.E. It was sort of a hidden space that had been associated with a school that didn't exist anymore, but the space was still there. This space has since been occupied by townhouses.

**FRANZ:** I'm trying to think where that is. I can imagine it, but I can't imagine what's there.

**MELDER:** It's across the street from the Hine School playground. Across 8<sup>th</sup> Street. We would find these peculiar spaces and set up all kind of activities which were party type things. We had beer. We had games, we had food, entertainment. There was usually a band of some sort and as the day went on to evening the people would get up to dance. It was quite an event. Its main goal, I don't think we ever raised any money. We covered our costs. That was the main purpose. But we did get a lot of people to come together and have a good time. That was the main idea. And it was to be inter-racial and to bring people of different income and background levels. It was a big community party, basically.

**FRANZ:** And did that work? Can you talk about who came and...

**MELDER:** Well all kinds of people did come. There's no doubt of that.

**FRANZ:** Cause I always think of the early to mid 60's as really tense time. So it's sort of a bold move to have community gatherings of this kind.

**MELDER:** This was a, that was the idea. To give people a chance to mingle and to get to know each other and have a good time. And if I remember correctly and I'm sure I would remember otherwise, the overall atmosphere and spirit of the thing, it was always very hearty and a lot of good will. It did, at least on the surface, serve to get people together.

**FRANZ:** Why did they choose Labor Day?

**MELDER:** It was the end of summer. It was, I think we advertised it as the summer's end. We're celebrating return to everyday life or something. People had finished their vacations and they were getting back to school and so on. This was the final spree of summer. Of course in those days, not as many people went to the beach.

**FRANZ:** You're stuck in the hot city.

**MELDER:** Right, you're stuck in the hot city. So you had a big party. We didn't have, the thing we didn't have was a swimming pool, but we had, I think we had some hoses and things like that.

**FRANZ:** Open any fire hydrants?

**MELDER:** Yeah, but it was a good time and I think it helped the neighborhood maybe to weather difficult times, although I wouldn't want to go too far to, but it certainly served our organization's central

purpose. I know that a lot of the people involved in the organization were active in this event. So that was a big deal.

I should also say a little bit about the freeway controversy. Our organization, along with most organizations on Capitol Hill, fought against the freeways for obvious reasons. The 11th Street freeway proposal that came out in the mid-50's would have cut about a block of space out of the heart of, well it was on the edge of Capitol Hill then, but now it's the heart of Capitol Hill. The 11<sup>th</sup> Street corridor. It would have been a hideous scar in the neighborhood. It would have divided, it would have been a, could you imagine, I mean a, they were proposing a depressed highway of six, probably six lanes that would have been a, I just can't, I mean, well you could...

**FRANZ:** I can imagine. I actually curated the recent show on transit at the Building Museum

**MELDER:** Oh really!

**FRANZ:** I remember the plans for DC, the freeways for DC, and they're pretty scary.

**MELDER:** Yeah. It was very scary. The whole, this is one of my, I've been interested in over the years is how the citizens of Washington fought the freeway. And we were among those who fought them. I'm sure there are people in the neighborhood who still can remember some of the battles that went on even as those freeways that were finished are now thought of as eyesores and really negative influences on the city.

**FRANZ:** What tactics did you use?

**MELDER:** Well, I think again, it included this business of trying to reach friendly Congressmen and there were several people in the neighborhood who were very articulate and fought with letter writing to the newspapers and things of that sort. And, and would testify at hearings and I remember even after that 11<sup>th</sup> Street. was given up there were other freeways proposed. The east leg along the Anacostia for example, was one that, it's never been built. But it was on the books for many years and people, especially down on Pennsylvania Avenue. Oh, southeast Pennsylvania Avenue. What's the circle down there now?

**FRANZ:** On Pennsylvania Avenue?

**MELDER:** Yeah, there used to be a circle down there. [ed: Barney Circle]

**FRANZ:** Oh, you're beyond my reach here.

**MELDER:** Anyway, I knew people who were involved and I think quite effective in the anti-freeway effort.

Overall the period was one of a lot of activity. And a lot of organized activity. I think that, I don't know if you've met Sam and Kathy Smith. They were here in that era and Sam ran a newspaper called the Capitol East Gazette and but, he was more on the left wing as compared to the Capitol Hill Community Council, but they were, of course, against the freeway, and I'm sure would have some stories about that.

**FRANZ:** That's a good recommendation.

**MELDER:** Yeah. Kathy and, they both talked at the event in November. Their talk was sponsored by the...

**FRANZ:** The oral history project.

**MELDER:** The organization. That's right. That's when I really got stimulated.

**FRANZ:** And so they preserved the block beyond what is now the playground behind Hine junior high. I just want to go back to that for a second. But your house was demolished so there obviously was a block that was lost in there.

**MELDER:** Yeah, if you go down to that area you'll see that C Street dead-ends. C Street used to be cut through. When I first came here in 1961 C Street ran clear through that block. There were houses facing on C Street. And those are all gone.

**FRANZ:** OK. So where did you go once your house was demolished?

**MELDER:** I moved to a house on South Carolina Avenue. The 300 block of South Carolina. And at that point I kind of dropped out of the activism in the community. I was...

**FRANZ:** A little tired?

**MELDER:** I was worn out. And I, at that time, I was trying to, to do other things. But I should, let's see. One of my favorite recollections from that later period was the corner grocery store which existed, that still exists. That's at 4<sup>th</sup> and E streets S.E., across from Marion Park. At the corner of the block across from Marion Park. For a while it was kind of a crummy place and I didn't shop there very much, but then a, an elderly couple took it over. It was the Weisfelds and I've forgotten whether his name was Sam or, anyway Sarah was her name. And they ran this together with one of their sons as a mom and pop grocery store. It lasted in that form for about 10 years. And was really a marvelous place. I used to do most of my shopping there in its very congested, compact location. About the size, well not much bigger than this

house. They had a complete grocery store. Mr. Weisfeld was a butcher so he did the meat cutting. He developed quite a reputation for the quality of his meat and Sarah ran the cash register and, I guess, kept the books. They had, they hired help to work around the place and stock the shelves, but basically it was a—and Marshall, the son, ran the wine department. He was very proud of that. He always had his bargains. I got very addicted to Marshall's wine supply. You could really get some good buys.

**FRANZ:** That's great!

**MELDER:** It was great.

**FRANZ:** This is actually, for newcomers like myself to Capitol Hill a hot issue is where to shop.

**MELDER:** Yes, I'm sure it is.

**FRANZ:** How to get groceries.

**MELDER:** Well, I should tell you that in the 1960's there were six Safeway stores in the neighborhood. There were three Safeway stores on 7<sup>th</sup> Street. There was one in the northeast just north of East Capitol Street.

**FRANZ:** Oh, we have the mail coming in.

**MELDER:** There was another across from the Eastern Market. And there was another one in southeast between about F and G Streets S.E. The buildings they're all still there, but they're no longer stores. And they, there was this one over here on 8<sup>th</sup> Street with the parking lot on the roof. That used to be a Safeway.

**FRANZ:** Oh, that was a Safeway?

**MELDER:** It was built as a Safeway. I remember when it was built. It was built in the 60's, so there were a lot more shopping facilities then. That's one of the real drawbacks of living around here is your shopping, grocery shopping. It's the most simple.

**FRANZ:** (At same time as final sentence above). It's difficult.

**MELDER:** Yes, it's very iffy.

**FRANZ:** And were there specialty stores like butchers and bakers?

**MELDER:** There were a few but not to any degree. There were still quite a number of corner groceries. Most of those are no longer in business, but I can remember, there were still a few. Many more than are now, in the 60's. The whole business, that's a very interesting issue. In my view, the neighborhood has been boutique. There used to be more general purpose merchants. There used to be a five and dime

store, for instance, down on Pennsylvania Avenue. There were more drugstores. You still have a couple of hardware stores. There were more hardware stores. Uh, let's see. There were even a few used car lots. Which is hard to believe.

**FRANZ:** That is hard to believe.

**MELDER:** And there were more auto repair facilities.

**FRANZ:** So do you think a loss of the small businesses was because the population went down or was it red lining in terms of grocery stores or...?

**MELDER:** I think that the Safeway Company was looking to eliminate the smaller outlets. And the stores that I remember in the 60's were all quite small by supermarket standards. At least two of them had no parking lots and the others had limited parking facilities. But I think that the trend in the grocery business is high volume and these little stores were just marginal at best. And probably they weren't making money on them. And there may have been some real estate issues too. One of the problems in a neighborhood like this is that when the real estate prices go up all the commercial rents go up and those places that are low volume in their trade are just sitting ducks to be replaced and, and, that's what happens. They lose out. I remember there used to be saloons, bars, neighborhood type bars on Pennsylvania Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> Sreet. Some of those streets. Now, those are all joints.

**FRANZ:** Or Starbucks.

**MELDER:** Or Starbucks. That's right, or Starbucks. Yeah, they, oh, I can remember where Mr. Henry's is at 6<sup>th</sup> and Penn. Used to be a hardware store.

**FRANZ:** Oh that used to be a hardware store?

**MELDER:** Used to be a hardware store . Mr. Henry's has been there for a long time. Mr. Henry's is at least 30 years old, I would say. So, that's been gone a long time. That block of Pennsylvania Avenue. That hundred block had a lot of little. There was a men's clothing store, the print shop may still be there. A little print shop! A job printer. Oh near, the hardware store. There were a couple of liquor stores that were gone. There was a greater variety.

**FRANZ:** More commercial.

**MELDER:** More commercial. And there was a theatre too. The old Avenue Grand Theatre. And that burned up in about, probably in 1970 or maybe before 1970. And so there have been a lot of changes and not all of them for the better. A part of it is the general upgrading of the population. The more affluent people are not interested in shopping at some of these dumpy little neighborhood outlets. They will go off

to someplace, they'll drive, of course, to someplace in the suburbs or, or. Of course now you can take the Metro to downtown or to Pentagon City or to any number of places. So it's a different, a very different situation. And the Metro has made the area more accessible.

**FRANZ:** Do you remember when the Metro went in at Eastern Market? Were you there?

**MELDER:** I do, yes. I was there? I remember that occasion, 1977.

**FRANZ:** Were people happy to have the Metro stop?

**MELDER:** People were overjoyed. Well for one thing. The Metro construction had torn up the neighborhood for several years and people were overjoyed to just to get that over with. But on the whole, I think there had been such a fight to get the Metro and to have it be a real regional transit system that people felt empowered in a sense. Well, I can't imagine Washington D. C. without the Metro and it would be a very different place. In some ways uninhabitable. It certainly wouldn't be as, as, oh, as open as it is now to getting around.

**FRANZ:** Were there, I'm sorry to interrupt. But were there community organizations instrumental in bringing a Metro stop to Eastern Market?

**MELDER:** Yes, I think that was something my organization worked for and I think other organizations did as well. I remember we, I didn't personally have much of a connection with the Metro developers, but some of my friends in the organization got to know the people who were pushing for the Metro. And we did, oh I don't recall the details, but as the routing of the Metro was planned our organization at least had something to say about it. And I—yeah the Eastern Market story, I can't remember when that was decided upon, but it was during, certainly during the 1960's cause that's when the real serious planning of the Metro took place. Yeah, I think... Well when I first came here the streetcars were still running in 1961. In fact I lived, when I lived on 8<sup>th</sup> Street there was a streetcar stop in front of my house and I enjoyed it because they stopped in front of the house and they made a pleasant sound, unlike the buses (laugh). So they would. They had bells and you could here them ringing their bells.

**FRANZ:** Did you take it to work?

**MELDER:** It was not convenient for my job. (pause) I guess I did. I did take it some to work. It [the streetcar] was only operating for a year or so before the authorities closed it down [in 1962]. I guess I did take it, now that I... That's really a faint memory, but I guess I did take it to work sometimes. Yeah, it went down Pennsylvania Avenue to Independence to... oh, I've forgotten now exactly. But I used to take the bus to work a lot and then of course when Metro arrived I took the Metro. So it's been a... it was possible—I didn't do it very often, but it was possible for me to walk to work.

**FRANZ:** It's kind of a hike though.

**MELDER:** It's a long walk, yeah. I have friends who live here who hike down there, but it's a little far for me. What else?

**FRANZ:** Can you follow up on what happened with Eastern Market after it was saved? You said it operated as a wholesale outlet for a little while when other markets started to close down. But where did it go from there?

**MELDER:** Well, beginning in the when the, the, merchants began moving into it in, oh, around 1963. It gradually filled up. The spaces inside, the stall spaces inside which were—I can remember when there was, the whole building was almost empty. It's hard to believe.

**FRANZ:** It is hard to believe.

**MELDER:** But it's true. The North Market building was not even open. Now I guess it's a gallery.

**FRANZ:** Yes it's a gallery.

**MELDER:** It was just empty, closed space. But, I remember people, as this, as more and more merchants moved in people were really excited. It was a wonderful, it seemed like a wonderful thing. Well, we took advantage of it.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

TAPE 2/SIDE 1

**FRANZ:** March 28, 2003. This is the first side of tape 2. We just got cut off. Keith was talking about what happened at Eastern Market after it was saved and how thrilled people were when merchants started to move in.

**MELDER:** I was saying that the farmers' line on the outside of the building was never totally abandoned that I can remember. But certainly as the market rejuvenated it came alive again and, I have not kept up trading at Eastern Market.

**FRANZ:** Oh, you don't go back?

**MELDER:** I don't go back. It's kind of inconvenient for me. But I've been fascinated to see how popular it is and how it has become a kind of community center. And it's fascinating to me because of course, there was a time when it almost vanished.

**FRANZ:** And now it's such a tourist destination so that all the license plates are from Virginia and Maryland on the weekend. I was wondering if you saw that early on that it became a destination for people from the suburbs or was it mostly local folks?

**MELDER:** I was never aware of the fact that it was much of a destination. I thought of it as a local amenity that, I mean that it was a place that you could get... I remember shopping for cheese. The cheese guy was quite a fixture there. I'm sure there are different cheese guys now from what there were.

**FRANZ:** It might be the same guy. It's a great cheese shop there.

**MELDER:** I don't think so. That was one of the first things that sticks in my mind as a place to go. Let's see. And the fruits and vegetable people, and some of the meat people. I know that, I hear from time to time people talk about Eastern Market. There still seems to be a lot of dispute about how to cope with it. I know that years ago it hadn't been brought up to date in many respects. There was no air conditioning. There were, the plumbing was inadequate and lots of things were not the way they should have been. I haven't followed what has gone on in recent years, but I know there were arguments how to deal with it. The city, I don't think wanted to be saddled with it. I think the city would have been overjoyed just to take it down and sell the property to a developer, but I realize that there are a lot of proposals to do a lot of different things with it. It seems to me that it is a tremendous asset and it probably ought to be managed for the community benefit, but whether that's what will happen, I don't know.

**FRANZ:** I don't know either. It's clear that if you follow the real estate on the Hill the property values go up in proximity to Eastern Market.

**MELDER:** Is that so?

**FRANZ:** It's very true.

**MELDER:** Well that's... that area in the neighborhood, the commercial, the nearby commercial opportunities, the transportation and all that is certainly the center of life on Capitol Hill. It certainly was then. I remember well the Kresges five and dime store on the corner. Which I patronized quite regularly.

**FRANZ:** Which corner was it on?

**MELDER:** It was where Bread and Chocolate is. It was the northwest corner.

**FRANZ:** And when did that come down?

**MELDER:** Well, it didn't come down. The building has been substantially remodeled. It went out of business sometime in the mid-80's. I don't know when it opened. Probably opened in the 1920's

**FRANZ:** And did they just retire?

**MELDER:** Well, the Kresge company gave up on all their city stores, they were going into the K-Mart business, so their emphasis was all on suburban, large... well, like Safeway. It's a typical thing you see in the business community. They're out looking for large volume. I think that these locations, as the rentals, the prices of property go up, smaller, more specialized businesses tend to take over I guess they have a wider profit margin. These volume stores have to have a lot of sales to survive.

**FRANZ:** Although now we're seeing the population rise again. Sort of a lot of building projects along Massachusetts Avenue Northeast. I wonder if we'll be able to attract some more business back into the city.

**MELDER:** I don't know. One of the, I'm not, I certainly don't... I'm not a student of business behavior, but as I travel around and look around I [observe] a community can exercise some control and, and have some influence on the way businesses assemble. There are possibilities to make an attractive business community, but it's rare, at least in my observation. I don't know, a few places like I think for example Cleveland Park in Northwest, has a very strong, local community organization I think. Probably several organizations that seem to have some influence over the way businesses operate. I'm not sure that Capitol Hill is at that stage yet. Oh, but it could be coming. I know that the Barracks Row project is, hopes to develop a magic combination of businesses and well, what have you, that will make it a destination point.

**FRANZ:** Have you been down to Barracks Row and 8<sup>th</sup> Street. Lately?

**MELDER:** I've driven down there in the last year or so, but it's kind of... driving is so tough now I haven't felt that I wanted to go by there, but...

**FRANZ:** But it raises the—the military has been there a very long time. Did they play a role in any of the community organizations that were active in the 60's?

**MELDER:** I was not aware of their... We sometimes organized outings to the Marine drill demonstrations. I think that was one of our annual events that my group promoted. Some of us would go.

Here's another thing that we did. We organized visits to, when Washington had a baseball team. We went out to the ballpark as a group. Maybe once or twice a season. And I can remember doing that. That ended in the 1970's because the team ended. But there were things of that sort that community organizations did I think.

**FRANZ:** You said that this is one of the few, racially integrated groups on the Hill. I just wanted to return to that a little bit. What was the racial composition of the Hill in the 60's? Can you give us a thumbnail sketch? You don't have to be accurate. I'm just curious.

**MELDER:** It was a... it was evolving. It, it there had been for many years, a kind of mixture of people. I think that, well my sense was that uh, (long pause) it wasn't exactly (long pause). I would say there was a mixed racial composition. Now the, when I lived on South Carolina Avenue there were neighbors of black and white. For several years the house I lived in, on either side were tenants that were black. I would say there was probably more of a , oh, uh (long pause) racial mixing then than there is now.

**FRANZ:** That's interesting!

**MELDER:** I think, and you'd have to study this block by block to know this. It seems to me that one of the results of increased real estate prices has been a moving away of poorer people whatever their color. This has led to more of a separation in a sense.

**FRANZ:** Do you think that the '68 riots had an impact on the Hill in terms of white flight?

**MELDER:** I think they did. Oh, I, yeah. It's not white flight, but I think it's... there was more of a polarization. That's an interesting question because I remember the '68 situation. I was living on South Carolina Avenue and, uh, we (long pause) There were two effects of that riot. One was there was an occupying force of I suppose it was, I don't know if it was the regular Army or what it was, National Guard or... Anyway there was an Army camp in Marion Park for a brief time. Not for very long. And that I found very upsetting. You couldn't walk through the park for example. And you felt as though it was, at least I did, I felt it was an occupying force there. And the other thing was that in, to a slight degree, there was some damage on 8<sup>th</sup> Street. A little bit. Not a whole lot, but the, some of the stores had their windows broken and there was a little bit of looting that went on. I do not remember the specific places that were damaged, but I remember going over there and observing that there were store windows broken out and things in disarray in some of the stores. But it, it's, I think the general feeling was that we escaped the worst of it and we did! H Street Northeast was terribly damaged. Well it's never recovered in 30 some years. 35 years now.

**FRANZ:** So you're talking about 8<sup>th</sup> Northeast and H Street?

**MELDER:** I'm talking about 8<sup>th</sup> Southeast.

**FRANZ:** That's what you're saying was not damaged?

**MELDER:** That was not... it was—there were a few episodes, incidents of damage, but not badly. H Street Northeast was severely damaged. Um, but certainly the people never felt the same after it.

**FRANZ:** What do you think changed?

**MELDER:** I think there was a sense... I think I felt this. That Washington was not going to be hurt. Washington had achieved a kind of harmony. And I felt this, certainly, in the neighborhood here, that we were not going to have to go through the agonies of racial conflict and I think that that episode threatened everybody. I know, it was traumatic. Well, like any episode of violence it's, you stop and think, you wonder what is going on. We're having a little bit of it today. Um, and I think people uh, it polarized people more that anybody realizes.

**FRANZ:** Well, especially if the neighborhood in the city was a coalition of community groups. It must have really torn into that.

**MELDER:** Yeah, I think it kind of, in a sense, it ended the uh (long pause) it ended the group that I belonged to. Not that that was the causing, what caused it to end, but (long pause) It damaged the morale of the community and, (long pause) Well It's hard to say what the long term impact was. Of course in the years immediately after that there was an upsurge, I would say an upsurge, of (long pause) oh, struggle, and anxiety, fear. And, that, that was national. There had been racial episodes in many cities across the country prior to that. In '68, of course, many cities were hurt and Washington... I think people thought Washington would escape this and, it didn't. It was very badly damaged, physically, but even more in the sense of the attitudes of the people. And this is just an impression, but I don't... nobody was the same afterwards.

**FRANZ:** Or as an historian myself I cannot agree with you on the local scene, but I can agree with you on the national scene. The country was not the same after the 60's riots. You've given us a nice sort of small picture of that here. It fits the bigger picture.

**MELDER:** Yeah, that was a traumatic time. My organization which was racially mixed and had a great deal of confidence in its survival and so on was, I don't think it was ever the same after that.

**FRANZ:** Were you still involved with the organization in '68, '69 or by that time had you sort of phased out?

**MELDER:** I had... '68 was about the end of my involvement in it. Well, some things happened in my own life that put me on a different track, but...

**FRANZ:** (phone rings) I'll apologize for my phone ringing.

**MELDER:** That's all right. (phone rings again, twice) I think that just sort of to sum up as I think back on that era, it was a... I think Capitol Hill was an interesting place then and I felt that we were trying to cope with some of the things the nation was facing at the time. And whether or not we met them head on or kind of deflected them I don't know, but it certainly was fun to be here.

**FRANZ:** Well, and the legacy you've left behind, Eastern Market is the epicenter of Capitol Hill.

**MELDER:** Yeah, Eastern Market is still here. The experience of living here in that era. I've thought about it, reflected on it as you could say, and it (pause) the way in which Capitol Hill evolved, for all of its flaws, it had many constructive outcomes. I think that, we see here an obvious example of gentrification and while I have my mixed feelings about it, it probably, the gradual change in the neighborhood was a more happier process than it might have been with more drastic and rapid changes. I do think that, I, I felt at the time that some of the promoters of restoration were pushing a little hard and that they were not as considerate as they ought to be of people who lived here already who had less, fewer economic resources than the people who were moving in irrespective of whether they were black or white. And I still think that the ideal that our group represented which was a mixed community of modest means, etc etc. That was a good one. Maybe it was unrealistic. I don't know.

**FRANZ:** Gotta keep trying.

**MELDER:** Right, but I still think it's valuable. For example, I think that looking at some of the more affluent parts of town here in Washington while they're pleasant enough, I find them stultifying, almost hostile in a way. I think there was a welcoming quality to Capitol Hill which probably hasn't survived. I don't know. That's a very intangible kind of impression. Here's, here's probably where the 1968 business was hurtful to the neighborhood, because there was in easiness to the atmosphere that I think maybe suffered from that. And of course when you have, as we're seeing increasingly across the country, I think that's damaging to community survival What we had, what we tried to create, without succeeding. What we tried to create in the 60's was a community of multiple backgrounds and that (long pause) was a worthwhile effort and it could have turned out differently. I'm not sorry we tried.

**FRANZ:** I'm not sorry you tried either. I'm glad you tried. We actually have about 30 seconds left on the tape. You've given a great summation, but do you have anything else you want to add.? Shall we keep going?

**MELDER:** I'm kind of winding down. I don't know whether I want to go much further. I guess I would like to have this era remembered. Better remembered and I hope that people do use this material and look into some of these things. For example, this whole business of the preservation of Eastern Market. It was

sort of a legend back forty years ago and it, I've sometimes thought it would be interesting to know whether the lore of that is actually based on fact or not.

**FRANZ:** OK. That's good and that can give us some directions to take the research.

**MELDER:** And the role of different parties in the development of neighborhoods, the different interest groups and the, uh, oh the uh, promoters vs. the people who want to stay and just live and be solid citizens.

And it's fascinating set of issues to me.

**FRANZ:** To me too. And it seems like Capitol Hill really did have a lot going on in the mid '60's.

**MELDER:** I mean, this, uh, I brought these. These are samples. I've got...

**FRANZ:** We're looking at a large stack of newspapers.

**MELDER:** You could go through these and...

**FRANZ:** So, the Roll Call community news?

**MELDER:** Yeah, that was an early version of the current Roll Call. But here the earliest *Capitol Hill News*, volume 1, number 1. Here you can see the kind of issues that were of interest to the local publicists.

**FRANZ:** I think what I'm going to do if it's ok with you. And we can spend 15 minutes, if that's ok with you, just going through the newspaper.

**MELDER:** Yeah, that would be fine. That would be fine.

END OF TAPE 2/SIDE 1

TAPE 2/SIDE 2

**FRANZ:** This is side two of tape 2, March 28, 2003. I'm the interviewer, Kathy Franz, sitting here with Keith Melder and we're going to go through a large stack, or a medium stack of newspapers that he's brought with him today to look at some of the issues on Capitol Hill in the mid '60's. So, Keith, the *Capitol Hill News* for those of us that don't know about that. (laughs) Was this a community newspaper?

**MELDER:** It was a community newspaper and it was one of the main efforts of my group the Capitol Hill Community Council. At that time there really wasn't, there was not a commercial community paper. Since then you've got several community papers that are profit making enterprises. This was strictly a

non-profit, volunteer, all-volunteer effort. And I can hardly believe a paper every month for about 8 or 10 years.

**FRANZ:** Where were you housed?

**MELDER:** Oh in people's houses, bedrooms, studies, living rooms.

**FRANZ:** Did you have a printing press?

**MELDER:** No, we hired the printing. I was not directly involved in the production of the paper, but several of my friends were. But it was a joint effort. We all wrote for it and we—it was distributed free. And I remember carrying loads of papers around to different stores and leaving them off. We had our friends in the marketplace. We had a lot of advertisers too. The early issues were, didn't have many advertisers. There's a little group here.

**FRANZ:** We're looking at an issue from January 1961. There is a short article on the 11<sup>th</sup> Street freeway, code enforcement, Friendship House, It really is addressing all the issues of the day. And then there's a nice list of businesses on the back, supporting businesses. Many of them are no longer here (laughs). These are a wonderful documents. So just flipping through...

**MELDER:** Well we have Friendship House, freeway hearings. Yes lots of those. Um, and then the arts were already visible in the neighborhood. I can't speak to the arts community to any extent. I was not then involved in it. But there were artists and groups that were promoting music and the visual arts and of course there was already a house tour, annual house tour sponsored by the Restoration Society. And that shows up in the paper.

**FRANZ:** And here we have the Jazz Jubilee.

**MELDER:** Ah, the Jazz Jubilee, right, and the freeway. Here's an article on Providence Hospital. I remember the building. I never uh, when I moved to the neighborhood the old Providence Hospital had been re-located so that the hospital was in far Northeast. But the old building was, the building dating back to the Civil War times at least was located in Southeast. Second and Third and C. Or D. Anyway. The building was there. It was a landmark. It's now an open space. I think it's owned by the Architect of the Capitol. For years they were going to put a building on it relating to the Capitol complex, but now it's open space. It was a subject for community interest and concern for many years, because... for a while those buildings were rented to, I think, one of the federal agencies. Maybe the Department of Commerce or something and then they became vacant and people, there was a lot of concern about what would become of them. And, of course the buildings were not maintained so the community was upset about that so that becomes an issue.

**FRANZ:** The freeway is all over these (laughs).

**MELDER:** The freeway and the art shows and things going on in the neighborhood. (someone came in and tape stopped).

**FRANZ:** OK. We're picking back up again. I think we have about fifteen minutes left on this tape and I'll let Keith say his final few words and we'll wrap it up.

**MELDER:** I'm just looking at the *Capitol Hill News* from 1961. Volume one. First year we put it out. This was a little before my time. I didn't arrive here until September of '61. The people I worked with in the Community Council were all into it. Here's a... "Hearing Set on Save Capitol Hill." I don't know what this—I don't remember this one. But it's a—oh, it has to do with traffic and street patterns and all that. This has been a continuing issue on the Hill. The fact that the neighborhood is in the direct line of traffic between here and suburban Maryland so it has always been an issue. The streets such as Independence Avenue and Constitution which are neighborhood streets have worried, before the freeways, were real hazards. They were the main egress from the city toward the east and they were more problematic than they are now. And the streets like 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets used to be more freeways than they are now. They've slowed down. They've been more controlled than they used to be. It's been a problem for a long time.

**FRANZ:** And the Metro must have taken some of that traffic.

**MELDER:** The Metro, I think has really been a benefit in that respect. Here's the uh, one of the first "Labor Day Caper." That's what we call these labor day events. Labor Day Caper. In 1961.

**FRANZ:** Does that say, give a sort of detailed account of...

**MELDER:** Well this talks about. This is before the caper so they're talking about what's going to happen. Fun and games, dancing, entertainment. Tickets and food are a dollar and a quarter, but reduced to a dollar if purchased in advance. We supported Home Rule. Here are—I should have read these before I...

**FRANZ:** They're wonderful documents.

**MELDER:** They are fun. Oh here's the something that takes place at Eastern Market. Oh I had forgotten that before Eastern Market filled up with business people it was available as a sort of public space for activities. I've mentioned the book sale here, but there were other things that go on as well. Of course you couldn't do that today. It's filled with buyers and sellers.

**FRANZ:** That's true. It's truly a commercial.

**MELDER:** Then here a few, few of the vignette, of some of the old time Hill residents. Dorothy and Richard Atkinson. Dick Atkinson was a judge in DC. Also they were active in the community for years and years. Dorothy, his wife, was a wonderful, wonderful lady. She was a big wheel in our organization for a long time. She was on our board and I got to know her very well and I loved her. She was a great lady.

**FRANZ:** Do you know if she's still around?

**MELDER:** No, she died 35 years or more ago. In fact I was out of town when she passed away. She died suddenly, a heart attack or something. So, if you've got that sort of thing.

**FRANZ:** This is the second *Capitol Hill News*.

**MELDER:** This is volume two. All kinds of articles relating to people moving into the neighborhood. Here are the problems of traffic on Capitol Hill. Here's a theatre group performing.

**FRANZ:** These are [in poor] condition.

**MELDER:** Some of these are not in very good shape. Engineer commissioner. That's something that doesn't exist anymore. In the days when, before Home rule, DC was governed by three commissioners. It was said that the engineer commissioner was the most important of all. He was an Army officer. A member of the Army Corps of Engineers. He had charge of all of the public works. Anything relating to highways, and oh, uh, construction projects and I think, even zoning, so I think he was really a power. But here we see, here's a "Capitol Hill Groups Combine Efforts on Freeways"... "strong arguments, blah blah. So this was uh...

**FRANZ:** Here we have "Freeway Battles Beginning."

**MELDER:** This was the thing that concentrated everybody's mind back then because it was such a threat. A threat to everybody individually not just to people in general. People felt really strongly about it.

**FRANZ:** Here we have "The Capitol Hill Night Baseball Game".

**MELDER:** Oh yes! That's right Those were the days. (laughs)

**FRANZ:** Did you play?

**MELDER:** Did I play? No, no, but I went to a couple... We had outings that we took to the ballpark. Of course in those days it was called DC stadium. Now the Kennedy, RFK (Robert Francis Kennedy) Stadium. It was built not long before then. It was opened about 1960 or so and replaced the old Griffith

Stadium. The Washington Senators played at DC Stadium so we would go out in a group and enjoy the ball game.

**FRANZ:** Here we have 'Freeway Fight Brighter But Cloudy'.

**MELDER:** Oh, here's a list of citizens groups that were meeting on a monthly basis: "the Community Council, the Restoration Society, the Southeast Citizens Association, the Garden Club, the Lincoln Park Citizens Association, Northeast Civic Association, Public Interest Civic Association and the Southeast Civic Association.

**FRANZ:** It's a lot.

**MELDER:** It's a lot. Yeah. It was a very well organized community. Here's a picture of the buildings that are in the path of the freeway proposed. And I see names of people who I can remember quite well. So it's fun to just look back...

**FRANZ:** To browse.

**MELDER:** What have we here?

**FRANZ:** Take this from you. Here's the second annual neighborhood block party. We have about five minutes on the tape.

**MELDER:** OK That's perfect! F Street Terrace. Oh, that must be down near Christ Church. Yeah, that's the Christ Church area. We had a couple of these events in the Christ Church alley.

**FRANZ:** Because they didn't care if you drank beer? (laughs)

**MELDER:** They didn't care if you drank beer, yes the—the city wouldn't let us drink beer on public space, but we could do it on... churchyards. That was the beauty of it. There's some great photos of the event.

**FRANZ:** There are two proposals for Hill master plans. And a very, long list of community activities calendar.

**MELDER:** You might recognize a few of these names. There's the Monocle restaurant, and Schneiders liquor store. They were in business back then, forty years ago. That's a comfort.

**FRANZ:** That is a comfort. And Grubbs, Grubbs Pharmacy.

**MELDER:** (reads) “Council east leg unnecessary.” That’s the freeway of course. There’s more on the Labor Day party and a lot of personal vignettes. Kind of small towny in those days. People like to read about their neighbors.

**FRANZ:** Well somebody, actually Bernadette McMahon, the woman I picked the, who’s running the oral history project, described Capitol Hill yesterday as a small town. It’s one of the reasons she’s stayed. Would you agree that it sort of remained a small town?

**MELDER:** I don’t know. I’ve been away for so long it’s hard to say. Certainly you can develop a core of good friends in the neighborhood very easily and I think a lot of people do that. People certainly did back then and I’m sure that they do. I know people who, well for example, if you belong to a church locally, the churches, many of them have neighborhood congregations. Now some of them um, it was interesting when people moved out of the neighborhood many of them left their churches. And the churches, some didn’t survive. Some of the, for example there’s a Baptist church near 8<sup>th</sup> and Penn that has become a condominium. I remember when it was a church. Some very clever condos in there I’ll tell you. If you could get hold of one you might really work it, but it’s—the church is gone of course. My understanding is that most of its congregation left the neighborhood and eventually they couldn’t sustain the place. And there’s a synagogue, an old synagogue down on 9<sup>th</sup> St. Do you know where Distad’s? Well it’s a gas station. Ninth and Penn. Anyway, just south of that is an old synagogue. It’s something else now. It’s a Baptist or something. But there was a Jewish community here... a small.

**FRANZ:** Oh, well I’ll have to go look for that.

**MELDER:** Down near the old marine hospital building.

**FRANZ:** I know where that is. OK (someone in the room says: “yellow brick”)

**MELDER:** Yes, right, yellow brick.

**FRANZ:** Well we have about a minute according to my watch. Do you want to say anything final? You gave a great summary earlier, but if you have any...

**MELDER:** (Makes a blowing sound )

**FRANZ:** (laughs) You started...

**MELDER:** (interrupts) Well, I, I think (long pause) looking back and looking now at the neighborhood, it does seem to me that it has managed to sustain itself as a livable place in ways that are really kind of admirable. So many neighborhoods in American cities have not survived very well. And this one for all its flaws, is still a pretty good place to live. You hit on a few of the problems such as basic, availability of

basic shopping needs and so on and that's a problem. In terms of the quality of residential life it's, I think it's pretty attractive and works pretty well. Whether it's as decent and just as it could be is another issue, but livability is pretty good.

**FRANZ:** Which I think is a direct result of the efforts of the '60's to preserve Eastern Market, to bringing Metro in and prevent the freeway. I think the landscape of Capitol Hill is pretty livable. And I think I see that as a result of the efforts. This is not my moment to pontificate about class and equitability.

**MELDER:** Go ahead.

**FRANZ:** The neighborhood is gentrifying as you pointed out and that will be the next...

**MELDER:** Well, it will be a kind of test to see whether people of different income levels can survive here. And I think that that's valuable to have different sorts of people living together, but, of course that's not the American way. In many places its uh... we tend to, more and more toward stratified communities so that we don't mix people very well and I think that's a mistake and it can happen and let's hope it continues to happen.

**FRANZ:** And I think that's a great place to end. Let's preserve equitable housing on the Hill.

**MELDER:** Right.

**FRANZ:** Well, thank you Keith Melder and we'll end this here.

END OF INTERVIEW