



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK  
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

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**Interview with Sonda Allen**

**Interview Date:** April 18, 2009  
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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

**CRUIKSHANK:** I'm interviewing Sonda Allen for the Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project. Good morning Sonda.

**ALLEN:** Good morning.

**CRUIKSHANK:** So we'll be mostly talking about your experiences at Eastern Market and I'd like to start at the beginning. What brought you to the Market or when did you first start working there?

**ALLEN:** I came to the Market sometime in July of 1991. This was after I had finished graduate school and I sort of didn't have a job [laughing] and I was sort of working part-time at a coffee shop, I started teaching part time in the fall and I had decided I did not want to be a college professor and the thing that stopped time for me was making. So that's how I started.

**CRUIKSHANK:** OK. Making—

**ALLEN:** I'm a gold and silversmith. And I make jewelry but I also make sculptures and I make stuff out of metal.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Excellent.

**ALLEN:** Non-ferrous metal, meaning generally not steel or iron.

**CRUIKSHANK:** OK, I see. And when, how did you get into making jewelry?

**ALLEN:** Metalsmithing? Again, undergrad. That was, I started in '86. I bought Sherry Nutter's book. I think Sherry Nutter was majoring in social science and metalsmithing was a two-credit class and I wanted something that was going to take me away from the academic rigors of both history and psychology because that's what I was studying at the time. And it did. It was wonderful. I remember setting up in Montgomery Hall and—Montgomery Hall, I went to St. Mary's College for undergrad.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Oh, you're kidding. So did I.

**ALLEN:** Ah.

**CRUIKSHANK:** That's great.

**ALLEN:** Then you know Robin Bates?

**CRUIKSHANK:** Yes.

**ALLEN:** There you go. This is a very small world. [laughing]

**CRUIKSHANK:** [laughing] No kidding, no kidding. OK, so I'm familiar with Montgomery Hall.

**ALLEN:** There you go. I don't know if Dr. Ingersoll was there. This is really freaky, actually.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Yeah, it is. I took a class with Dr. Ingersoll.

**ALLEN:** The art professor.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Yes.

**ALLEN:** OK, well he also taught metalsmithing. And you know where the applied studios are?

**CRUIKSHANK:** Yes.

**ALLEN:** At least where they were? The other—we need to be very clear that I finished St. Mary's in '89.

**CRUIKSHANK:** OK.

**ALLEN:** And I wonder how old you were in '89?

**CRUIKSHANK:** [laughing]

**ALLEN:** Exactly.

**CRUIKSHANK:** We won't mention.

**ALLEN:** Well I would say maybe there's 15 years between us?

**CRUIKSHANK:** Fair enough, yes.

**ALLEN:** Oh he was really old then. I mean, he was old when I was there but—because I can't deal with—Because Robin was my age and now he's so not.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Yeah.

**ALLEN:** So you know his son who died? Did you know his son who died?

**CRUIKSHANK:** I know of the story because he did a lot of writing about it that was then, you know, published.

**ALLEN:** Because he son would have been about your age.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Oh interesting.

**ALLEN:** And we babysat them.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Oh wow.

**ALLEN:** Because you all were little then.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Right, right. That's true. [laughing]

**ALLEN:** [laughing] In '85 you were a child.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Yes.

**ALLEN:** And I was not.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Yes. Ok. [laughing]

**ALLEN:** [laughing] I was an irresponsible teenager. Irresponsible person in my late teens, early 20's.

**CRUIKSHANK:** But responsible enough to be babysitting, that's something.

**ALLEN:** Well, you know, there was always free food. With Robin Bates there was free food. But anyway, I was in Montgomery Hall and I remember the class was a three-hour studio and, all of a sudden, I looked up and it was dark. And I had completely lost time.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Oh wow.

**ALLEN:** So that's how it started. But I was studying other things. As I like to tell people, I have lots of education. I like learning. I come out of that humanities, liberal arts. I like learning and still learn.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Sure. So, was that the only class in metalsmithing offered at the time?

**ALLEN:** I took two there and then I worked at St. Mary's during the summer. I helped build the docks, then I worked on the maintenance crew and I had access to the studio. So I took two courses in undergrad, plus that summer that I had access to the studio and I loved it and I bought, you know, hand tools and equipment. And then I came to Washington to get my PhD in History.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Excellent.

**ALLEN:** I did a terminal Master's because I was not liking life. And I just started making stuff and I worked, ultimately I apprenticed at an art gallery because I wanted to know more about art because I'm sort of academic by training and then I got an apprenticeship with a goldsmith and I was with him for almost three years.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Wow. Where was—

**ALLEN:** And that was all in Washington.

**CRUIKSHANK:** All in Washington, DC. And you were living here?

**ALLEN:** All in Washington, yes.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Excellent. What school was it?

**ALLEN:** Howard University.

**CRUIKSHANK:** And so you said you were not liking life, was that academically or—

**ALLEN:** I saw what was—I was in love with history and I really loved the Reformation and I liked the Middle Ages and I got my graduate degree in African History and it was like stepping into a minefield in a lot of different ways. The politics of being a professor, I saw because all of a sudden I wasn't just talking about my subject, I was deconstructing, I was doing more deconstruction of history but I was also looking at people who were in sort of the terminal stages of getting their PhD looking for a job. I was talked to as opposed to at, I suppose, by junior professors so I saw what their reality was like and I was not interested. Not to mention the politics of the Atlantic slave trade as a study was unbelievable at that time in the late '80s, early '90s in terms of the—historians who study stuff can come to things with their own prejudices. So with the African slave trade you had like Philip Curtain and he was a white Africanist, you had Muslim Africanists, you had African-American Africanists, you had African Africanists and they were all, a lot of them, were looking at the Atlantic slave trade and you could tell that they were going at it with views that were not necessarily supportable. Or were supportable if you had enough money and time to pursue X, Y, and Z. And I was just, because my undergrad was in European history I was trying to catch up and it was hard to catch up when you were dealing in the historiography, in other words, how history is constructed, as opposed to just what the story is. So I spent a lot of time my first six months just trying to get up on—and that's a lot. That was a lot to bite off.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Yeah. But you finished the program and then here you had this other passion for metalsmithing.

**ALLEN:** I did. Well I didn't—I needed, it was my second year when I realized I was not going to be able to do the PhD and I was like I need to do something. And I just sort of, it just sort of happened, I would say. It just sort of happened. It wasn't a plan I can tell you that.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Did you sell your pieces other places besides Eastern Market before you came to the Market?

**ALLEN:** I tried everything. Oh my god. I went from store to store to store to store here. The area that we were talking about before where Chaos was, it's a gallery on F Street, there were galleries down there then in '91 and the area was sketchy, I would say. But there were actually more interesting stuff down there than there is now. I mean, it's very commercialized now. So I went to Zenith Gallery, I went to Maya Gallery, I went to Moon Blossoms and Snow, I went to—I've forgotten what it was called, there was a gallery on the Hill. I went, I went, I went, I went, and I went. Some places took the stuff, some places didn't, but it's not my experience is that wholesale bites. It's not worth it. I mean, if you're really making the stuff and you're not manufacturing it, it bites. If you're manufacturing, it's different. And you can be a small-scale manufacturer. There are people at the Market who are manufacturers. They design it but they get it manufactured or they've created it so that it's manufactured.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Oh I see. And is that how you work, or?

**ALLEN:** No.

**CRUIKSHANK:** No, you create everything yourself.

**ALLEN:** Yes. Making my work different, making it much more expensive, making it art.

**CRUIKSHANK:** So you just mentioned that this makes your work more expensive. Is that something that you are questioned about?

**ALLEN:** Yes and no. Now, after 18 years there is a consistency in the presentation that I have, whether I'm at the Market or whether I do other shows, that matches the price points. And if people miss that then I dismiss them, to be perfectly honest. If you don't come—I mean, I have created a booth atmosphere and I've had display items handmade so there's no, there's really no sort of question that you're coming into a place where there's, it's a higher-quality presentation, therefore it's higher-quality work.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Excellent.

**ALLEN:** But yeah, you're always questioned. I mean, me, not so much. I mean, I—both my presentation and my personality are very sort of strong. I don't know if my personality's simple but not as much, no. Not as much as I think—certainly not as much as I was earlier. Of course, I say that today and then when I go back I'll deal with people all day long. But not as much, no.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Good. These other shows or markets, do you go fairly frequently or is Eastern Market your primary?

**ALLEN:** Eastern Market now is basically my sole means. I've done a lot of stuff. I will, I'm doing a gallery show now but being in a gallery looks good, doesn't really have anything to do with making money. Being at Eastern Market because I've been there so long, because I have a loyal following, because I communicate well with my clients, I have clients all over the country and indeed all over the world. And, yeah, the Market is my sole, my real sole source of income. I'll do a show that was derived from the Market called the downtown holiday show. I'll do that because that is Eastern Market clients coming downtown to see me. Most of the shows that I've done have been driven—my success or lack thereof—is related to the people who I can get to come to a show in Bethesda or come to a show in Virginia that are on my mailing list that I've derived mostly from Eastern Market.

**CRUIKSHANK:** So was there a time when you weren't able to make a sole living from Eastern Market and you were—

**ALLEN:** Well, there was a time when I was very poor. [laughing]

**CRUIKSHANK:** [laughing] OK.

**ALLEN:** And right now it's not going so well. Because there's a total slowdown and there's a management changeover and we're in the middle of construction and there was the fire. But I was very poor for quite a long time and I live in a basement with sort of a hot plate. I am an artist so I sort of accept that. I made that marriage and I've done it for 18 years and that's sort of just how it is. You know, '07 right now was my best year. I made, for me, I made a lot of money for me and a decent amount of money for anyone. So, in the last couple of months I've been living off some of that savings but I'm glad I had it. That's just the reality of being a professional artist. It's not for the wimpy. [laughing]

**CRUIKSHANK:** Doesn't sound like it!

**ALLEN:** But I get commissions all the time.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Oh really?

**ALLEN:** I mean, it's a question of when. I never know when somebody who's seen me for ten years, I mean, somebody—I don't know if I can say his name—

**CRUIKSHANK:** Sure you can, absolutely.

**ALLEN:** His name's [name deleted]. He and his wife have been married now for ten years, they live on the Hill. I made their wedding rings. They are architects so I made very fun wedding rings and I think now, after ten years and a baby, they might want something a little more practical.

**CRUIKSHANK:** I see.

**ALLEN:** So he's talked to me about that and that's, you know, wedding ring commissions can be anywhere from \$1,000 to \$5,000 really.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Wow. And have you done other wedding rings?

**ALLEN:** Oh yeah. I do a lot of—wedding rings are a lot of pressure. I like to do wedding jewelry, which is necklaces and earrings, pearls, very friendly, very fun. And historically in the last five years I've done a rousing business in this time of year in wedding stuff.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Interesting. Meaning just the jewelry that people are going to wear on the day?

**ALLEN:** Well, what happens is that they give—the typical is four and four, meaning four pairs of pearl earrings with a little silver knot and four necklaces with a little silver knot. Generally white, six millimeter. Not perfect, fun, handmade, you know. And I would get, I could get probably 20 of those from March through to mid-July. And what happens is the bridesmaids, many of them, because the earrings are small and practical, they wear them all the time. So two years later when they're getting married, they go "Oh, that lady at the Market, oh that's nice." And they'll get one pair or they'll get two pair so it has been feeding on itself like good businesses do. That has not started this year yet, but I'm hoping because historically I've been in process already. Although because it's the Market there are people who I just adore who come out one week and say, "Can you have it for me next weekend?"

**CRUIKSHANK:** Oh. [laughing]

**ALLEN:** And I look at them and I think "Yes!" [laughing] As long as I don't have too many. Sometimes it's sort of like "ooh."

**CRUIKSHANK:** Well that brings up a good question.

**ALLEN:** It depends on what it is. If it's simple enough and if I can do it then, yes!

**CRUIKSHANK:** So how long does it take to make a piece of yours—of the jewelry, I suppose.

**ALLEN:** It all depends on the level. If it's a wedding ring, I just, if you don't give me a couple of months I'm not going to talk to you. There's a—it all depends on what level. I work seasonally and I work in a series. So if you go to stuff that is easiest to make and least expensive and more in production, which would be the pearl earrings with the silver knot, which everybody likes the pearl earrings with the silver knot, I mean, I could make a couple of—I would say maybe two dozen of those a week.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Wow.

**ALLEN:** Yeah, but if I just focus—if that's all I'm doing. I'm not doing anything else. I hate that.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Yeah.

**ALLEN:** So that's the base level, that's the simplest I get, that's the most inexpensive I get. It took me years to decide to make money, I would say. Because I refused to do that for years and years and years and now I could kick myself, but I did. I said No! So up from that now, for example, the series that I have out now is my flower series. It is my most technical series because I'm really doing forming of individual petals, one at a time per earring. So if an earring has four petals that means that I set up and I formed each petal one at a time. So to make a dozen of those earrings it would take two weeks to make just a dozen of those. I mean, if I'm really making them well and taking my time and also enjoying the process it takes about two weeks to make a dozen of those.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Where do you get your materials—the pearls and the metal?

**ALLEN:** A company, I go to a refinery. So with what I do there is no loss. Meaning that you give me gold or silver, I can melt it down, I can roll it out, I can make a sheet, I can make wire. That's one of the differences between sort of goldsmiths and silversmiths and people who make jewelry.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Ok. Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

**ALLEN:** Traditionally, sort of metalsmithing if you were to put somebody like me back in the time of the Egyptians, I would be fine. As long as I could see them demonstrate it because the techniques for doing it are the same. You know, gold and silver, as well as platinum are precious metals. Platinum I'm going to put aside because it's sort of a space-age metal but gold is infinitely usable. It has qualities of being both ductile and flexible. And what that means is that if you were to give me gold rings I could put them in a crucible, which is like a ceramic bowl, I could melt them down and I could make them liquid. From that, I may pour it into a ingot then there are draw plates that you draw it through to make wire, there are rolling mills that you roll it through to make sheet and I can do and have done all of that. And then from sheet you fabricate your ring, pin, your sculpture, whatever. Now that's very different from somebody who takes components that are pre-made and puts them together.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Yes. Do you live with all this equipment?

**ALLEN:** Yes.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Wow.

**ALLEN:** Yes. I live in a studio that's this size. It's basement and then my workshop is the sort of the guts of the house, meaning you know, the radiator, the furnace and then there's my workbenches and buffers and torches and stuff like that.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Fascinating, so you just live with your craft.

**ALLEN:** Yes, there's a little separation but not much.

**CRUIKSHANK:** How long have you been in that situation? Was there a time when you were living—

**ALLEN:** When I was a graduate student I lived with books. So it just sort of transferred over time from—now I live with books and tools.

**CRUIKSHANK:** OK. And you live, as you said earlier, in Baltimore?

**ALLEN:** Yes.

**CRUIKSHANK:** So, well I guess maybe you can talk me through a typical weekend morning, then. Your process from when you leave Baltimore to getting here and set up at the Market.

**ALLEN:** OK. So now, as I said before, because I lived in Washington, because I also used to live on the Hill and because I have a lot of clients, because I know a lot of people, I used to—for about ten years—I would rent a room or have friends who lived in and around Washington and I would come down on MARC because I didn't have a car and I would stay in their house and—we historically could store our set-up or parts of our set-up at the Market. So I would have part of my set-up stored at the Market, I would have my jewelry on me and I would catch the bus or catch the subway from their house to here. That was before I had a car, that was before the fire. After the fire, after the car, I've been commuting back and forth. So now that we're in construction and, for me I'm very sort of concerned about, you know, the new management, I'm in a different spot—we're set up at spots in the Market—you know, I'm just very concerned so the best thing I see is getting here early. So now I get up at 4:00, I leave the house around sometime between 5:00 and 5:30, I get here sometime between 6:00 and 6:30. My set-up is not elaborate but I like to take my time in the morning. I'm not necessarily a morning person. I like to be set up around 10:00 and I like to break down around 4:00 but depending. Now it's nicer—and before, to be brutally honest—at 4:00 the weird people would start showing up. And now it's a little better. And you can read weird as homeless, you can read weird as people who ask questions that don't really make any sense, like “Do you sell cake?” or “Do you like cats?” For some reason they all decide to show up in groups sometime between 4:00 and 4:30 and you just really want to be on your way going home, you want to be packing at the very least. I've noticed as of last week, I mean maybe last week was sort of

freaky but there were more sort of people who might be interested in buying something. And that would be my only interest, people who are interested in buying something or people who in the future might be interested in purchasing something and have a real clear interest in creativity as opposed to stuff that's re-sold or commercial or whatever.

**CRUIKSHANK:** It's interesting to me that you're drawing these comparisons between what you do as a craftswoman—I don't know if that's a word—as an artist. And clearly some of the other vendors at the Market are just either using manufactured components or as you said having it manufactured. Do you have a rapport with some of the other jewelry-makers at the Market? Do you sort of compare your work?

**ALLEN:** No. There have been other gold and silversmiths at the Market but for most of the time I've been there I would be the person with the most technical training that's there. So, no.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Do you have relationships or rapport with any of the other vendors?

**ALLEN:** Yeah. I hate that word—vendors. I—

**CRUIKSHANK:** OK. What would you prefer?

**ALLEN:** Generally there are, well, in my world there are sort of the artists or creative end and then there are the resellers.

**CRUIKSHANK:** I see.

**ALLEN:** And then there are the farmers or most of the farmers are also resellers, they're not farmers. So, sure, I mean, I talk to—there's a woman there named Bernadette, we set up near each other. There's Kessler, who's a painter, there's Michael Berman, he's a painter, there have been people that I was very, very close to—Sheila Crider was there—she's a painter, she's an abstract expressionist. Stevens Carter was there, he's also a painter.

**CRUIKSHANK:** And they're no longer at the Market?

**ALLEN:** Neither one of them is there. Janae Horner I talk to, she is a textile artist. Audrey Hafner I talk to, she is by training a photographer. She now does sculpture and jewelry. She's an artist. So, I talk to, I set up across for about a decade from Mitch and Pia. They are Thai-Chinese. They resell stuff. They used to resell these gorgeous vessels from Thailand or China. Now they don't. They resell jewelry that's not all that interesting. But they're wonderful people.

**CRUIKSHANK:** And a decade is a long time.

**ALLEN:** Well, we have had wonderful—when you're there, I mean it's sort of, I hate the word "co-worker" because ugh, I mean, we're artists and we're generally independent or we're something. But if you are—you can either be happy with who you're set up next to or you can feel stuck or you can feel, you know, it can—it all depends on personality and chemistry or you all could just never get to know each other at all which could be perfectly fine.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Right. Interesting.

**ALLEN:** I generally, personally, seek out the artists. Like Jesse Dunham, I love him—he's a reseller of fruit and vegetables and he is a tree guy. He is from West Virginia. He's very wrong and he's very enjoyable.

**CRUIKSHANK:** [laughing] He's very?

**ALLEN:** He's wrong.

**CRUIKSHANK:** He's wrong?

**ALLEN:** He's wrong. He used to chew tobacco. He's—I will out Jesse—he's a redneck for Obama.

**CRUIKSHANK:** [laughing] I love it.

**ALLEN:** Go Jesse! Oh he is. [laughing]

**CRUIKSHANK:** Sonda, I'm going to stop here to turn over the tape.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

**CRUIKSHANK:** So you meet and interact with some varied people.

**ALLEN:** Very diverse. The Market is diverse. There's an artist that I love there. His name is Tzolman Damba, his last name I cannot pronounce. He is from Mongolia. There's another artists there, whose work is absolutely exquisite. His name is Adiante and he is from Surinam. There's another photographer there. His name is Val, I cannot pronounce his last name either, he is from Ukraine. [ed: his name is Val Proudki.] There's another guy whose first name I can't even pronounce and he is from Georgia and I'm not talking about Atlanta! [ed: his name is Pridon Goisashvili.] So, I love that. And we sort of meet and smile at each other and sometimes we buy each other's work and the communication can be interesting. There are people there who are real importers of international goods and I believe they are from Ecuador and their first language is not Spanish, it is Quichua and I think their Spanish is sort of interesting.

Because I remember there was a lady there, a friend of mine, her name was Marta Vindalaho. She is from Mexico, she lived in the States for 30 years and she retired back to Mexico but, to make a long story short, when the people from Ecuador came, John Harrod, who is the founder of Market 5 Gallery and the reason that there is an outdoor market, came to Marta and said “Hi, Marta, you speak Spanish. I need you to help me with these folks because his English is not so good.” Because they wanted a space and so Marta went over and she talked to them in Spanish and she said, “Well you know what, their Spanish is interesting too because their first language is not Spanish!” [laughing]

**CRUIKSHANK:** [laughing] Oh no.

**ALLEN:** [laughing] And John was sort of like “Are you for real?” And Marta was like “Uh, they’re Indians and their first language is Quichua.”

**CRUIKSHANK:** Wow. But they did get a space?

**ALLEN:** Oh, they have been there now I think for 12 years and they have two daughters and their daughters speak English like you and I but, you know, Mom and Dad you just sort of smile and nod at. But you sort of smile and nod at the guy, the painter from Mongolia, too. You know, he said he came to the States to learn English and I think he’s been here for over a decade and you sort of smile and nod and I have a couple of Tsolman’s pieces. He has been in the Sackler Gallery and he did the Silk Road exhibition.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Oh, a few years ago? Of course.

**ALLEN:** Yup. He was there. Oh he’s fabulous. And my first nephew was born in the year of the horse so I bought a horse—one of his original horses, because apparently in Mongolia horses are big business—and I remember coming over to Tsolman and saying so it’s the year of the horse and I have a nephew. And he’s smiling and nodding and he’s going “It’s on linen. It is ink.” And I’m like “OK, I’m going to get this one.”

**CRUIKSHANK:** That’s great. Do you see these people outside the Market?

**ALLEN:** Some of them I do, some of them I don’t. The people that I named earlier, Sheila Crider and Stevens Carter, yes.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Because they are no longer at the Market?

**ALLEN:** No, we just became friends. And there was, at one point in the mid-90s, an African and African American artist renaissance at Eastern Market where you had Fatai Dosemu who is a friend of mine. He is

a painter from Nigeria. He was at the Market. You had Chris, whose last name I cannot remember, who is also from Nigeria. He was also a painter at the Market. There was a Malian wood carver behind me whose name I am completely forgetting, he was at the Market. There was Adiante, there was me, there was Sheila, there was Stevens and the grand of them all was Simmie Knox, who is emeritus professor at University of Maryland and has one of his oil paintings in the National Portrait Gallery.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Oh wow.

**ALLEN:** Yes, and so that was all of us there together, talking and exploring and the guy that I studied with here—his name was Jamal Mimms—and he was, in his day, probably one of the number one African American goldsmiths in the country. So yeah.

**CRUIKSHANK:** So there was a real—

**ALLEN:** Oh it was real. It was a renaissance. We did different shows, not just at the Market but we—for example both Stevens and Sheila are in a major collection of African American artists called the Evans-Tibbs collection. Evans Tibbs before he died sold his collection. He was in discussion with the Smithsonian but he finally sold it to the Corcoran, so Sheila and Stevens are in the Corcoran. They've also been in catalogs and have had prints done and they've done major shows.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Just some incredibly talented people.

**ALLEN:** Yup. And I've studied metalsmithing in Europe; Sheila has studied painting in Japan; there are other people who have—but there was that period of time. So, we were, because there was, I don't know, you would have to talk to more of them to get a fuller range but we had a lot in common. We had a certain level of intelligentsia, we understood the same references and that does not really exist anymore at Eastern Market.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Do you think that's just a function of these people you talked about having moved on to other things or do you think there were other contributing factors to sort of the end of this era you're describing?

**ALLEN:** Well, Washington has gentrified a lot.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Yes.

**ALLEN:** This area has gentrified a lot. So that's a part of it. I think the base of who comes to the Market in all of its levels, whether it's fruit or food or arts and crafts, is changing. There is a marked loss of

middle and upper middle class African American consumers who come to the Market. And I think that definitely contributed to it, yeah.

**CRUIKSHANK:** I don't—this is a complete subject shift—but I don't want to neglect to talk about the fire, especially because you mentioned that now your routine with the Market is completely different.

**ALLEN:** Up in the air, yes.

**CRUIKSHANK:** So let's start with how you heard about the fire.

**ALLEN:** It was Sunday night. I was there. I had dinner with friends. A lot of the people at the Market in the evening eat on the Hill. We have done that forever. We contribute mightily to the reality of a lot of the restaurants in this area. We always have.

**CRUIKSHANK:** That's great. Where do you guys eat?

**ALLEN:** I love Aatish. I love Aatish and they know me there and they say hi. And when I come in the winter they go, "Two soup? Roti?" I go, "Yes, two soup, roti, thank you!" They have a wonderful split pea soup. So I eat there a lot and I love Old Siam. I think that night I had dinner at Old Siam and I think I had my car and I took myself back to Baltimore. And that Monday morning I get an email and it's dated 7:00 and it's from Ruthi Tinterry, and I've know Ruthi probably for 15 years and she lives on the Hill. And I might have had dinner with her, we are friends. I mean, she's a client but we are very good friends. In the email she says the Market had a fire and I'm thinking oh, somebody set a trash can on fire. And then I get another email from Ruthi and I'm like "oh shit." And I think from there I emailed three people—Tom Rall, who was the founder of the flea market at Eastern Market, Mike Berman, who is an artist at the Market and John Harrod who is the founder of Market 5 Gallery. And I'm not sure which one was the first person I got—it was either Tom Rall or Mike Berman—and I saw, I think Mike might have been the person who sent me the photo that was the cover of the Washington Post and I started to cry because it looked like hell. I mean, there was flames, there was—oh my god—it was horrible. And I just kept on going "I was just there, I was just there ..."

**CRUIKSHANK:** When did you see it in person?

**ALLEN:** Wednesday is when I came up. I parked at Union Station and took the subway up and I was trembling and when you got off the subway you could smell the smoke. At the Eastern Market subway you could smell it as you came up. And other people were outside the building and I went all the way up and Market 5 Gallery was not touched and John was there with his irascible, grouchy, self-assuring self.

And that Tuesday, I think, Tom Rall sent out this email going “We are going to be there on the weekend!” and I’m like “Yippee!”

**CRUIKSHANK:** That’s great. So you came trembling and you left reassured?

**ALLEN:** Oh god, yes, because John was there. He was his grouchy sort of, it was John, it was not—you know, when something devastating happens, if the people that you look to are calm, then you are calm—and both John and Tom were calm and they were like “Well, you know, we’re just going to set up. We’re going to do our thing.” And so we did.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Good. So were you there the next weekend?

**ALLEN:** Absolutely.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Fantastic. And how was the turnout?

**ALLEN:** The support from this community was overwhelming. I got emails as far as away in the States as California, New York

**CRUIKSHANK:** From clients?

**ALLEN:** From clients, people who knew. The Market was on the cover of USA Today.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Oh I didn’t know that.

**ALLEN:** Yeah, it was, that this historic building had burned because it’s been a continuous market and I think it’s one of the few in the United States, period, that has been a continuous market. Then I got people—because I had studied in Europe—and I don’t know how they found out—but I had people in Ireland emailing me. This woman in England emailed me but yeah, all over. And I sent out sort of this major email—email’s great!

**CRUIKSHANK:** Yeah, it is.

**ALLEN:** It’s also cheaper. But that weekend people just went out of their way. I mean, they came. Fenty came. I was very impressed with Fenty. He came to the Market five times. We had this big meeting that the community, I mean, food vendors, nonfood vendors, people were there. It was amazing, but it also happened you know, after Katrina, during the wars, after there was another storm, sort of after 9/11 and I think, what I felt like was that there were people who were just determined that this was not going to devastate this area. That, in other words, that these little people—that means us, and all of us, whether we’re food or nonfood or whoever—that they were going to make sure that we were ok. And I felt that

people came to see from all over, there were fundraisers immediately at Tunnick's, there were fundraisers further down, I forgot what the name of the place was, maybe Mickey's? [ed: Marty's] So the next thing I knew, in literally—and maybe I'm exaggerating—but in literally three weeks, half a million dollars was raised like that. Just like, what do you need? I personally got sort of the magical commissions like, you know, I've been wanting that gold ring and I'm like OK! And I got more than that, I mean, people were sort of coming looking like oh apparently I do need these earrings now.

**CRUIKSHANK:** That's great.

**ALLEN:** I felt like a lot of us experienced it.

**CRUIKSHANK:** The support from the community?

**ALLEN:** Yes, and the financial support, the real sort of, we're coming out there, we're going to buy something. There were people definitely there like I just need to buy something. You know, there were people sort of looking at me like we're paying bills, right? We need to buy something. There was definitely a slow-down, I mean it was scary. Because there was that up tick and I was very fortunate because I got some wonderful you will survive commissions but then there were just no sales. And to this day, to this day there are many people who think the Market's still closed.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Really?

**ALLEN:** There's been no major advertisement. There's been no major article that has said that Eastern Market is open, none. And the website is a joke.

**CRUIKSHANK:** I don't think I've been to the website.

**ALLEN:** Well, go there. The OPM website for Eastern Market is not good.

**CRUIKSHANK:** OK. What would you—I was going to ask what would you like to see in the way of advertising—but maybe, it seems like the re-opening is great opportunity to correct some of the misconceptions. So what would be your ideal vision for the reopening?

**ALLEN:** First we need new management. [laughing] Real management!

**CRUIKSHANK:** [laughing] OK.

**ALLEN:** Not OPM.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Well let's start there.

**ALLEN:** Let's just jump right in.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Sure, let's start there. When did the current management start?

**ALLEN:** You mean the city? OPM took over January 1, 2009.

**CRUIKSHANK:** And forgive me, but OPM is—

**ALLEN:** Office of Property Management.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Property Management, ok.

**ALLEN:** Before that, the outside—and I'm talking about the outside, I'm not talking about the building that was built in 1873 with the 12 precious food and flower people and I'm not talking about the farmers who are actually resellers of fruit and vegetables from god knows where—I'm talking about the outside. The outside I believe started in the 1980s by John Harrod. He was founder of Market 5 Gallery. I believe he had been doing other community-type activities, maybe as a coach, hopefully the interview with him will clarify that. I do believe he was put in place or asked to do something with that space by the then-Mayor Marion Barry. And he created a gallery with a stage, he agitated to have the bricks put in because before it was dirt on the plaza, the north plaza. He started advertising, he started, you know, people started finding out about it and so that's how it started. I would say that John was not perfect and that he, to my knowledge, did not dot I's and cross T's in terms of getting real financial information to the city and for years the city was not the most efficient place in the world in the first place so if he started out dotting I's and crossing T's, maybe he just stopped because there was no reason to. I don't really know. Sometime in the late '80s, early '90s, he got into an agreement with Tom Rall, who is the founder of the flea market and Tom did dot I's and cross T's but he was subcontracted to Market 5 Gallery and, because of that lack, and also because John got old—John is sick now, I think he has maybe emphysema and maybe heart problems, but I don't know—there was a lot of frustration because people were looking, the city was looking for certain financial information and it was just not forthcoming or maybe it wasn't forthcoming the way they want. Be that as it may, I don't really know, but the city took over from him. And the city had taken over from him to my knowledge twice before, so this is the third time the city had taken over from him.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Interesting, and this was in the late 80s?

**ALLEN:** No, this is now.

**CRUIKSHANK:** This is after the fire.

**ALLEN:** This is 2009. This is now. But historically in the 18 years that I've been there the city had taken over two other times, so this is the third time. And John would sue and the city would back down and John would come back. This time that doesn't seem like it's happening. What happened at some point in that was that the city put forth an RFP. I'm not really sure what it's an acronym for but it's a bid for marketing, I'm sorry—it's a bid for management. I know for a fact that there was a management team put together by Tom Rall and Mike Berman, Mike being an artist at the Market for 15 years and somebody who has done a lot of work to make sure that the nonfood vendors have a legal right to be there on his own time and an artist who has worked cross-culturally with a lot of different people. He now has a gallery. But he's done other projects with a whole plethora of folks and Tom Rall, put together an RFP to be the overall managers of the Market. For whatever reason, that we are still trying to get the city to explain to us, they cancelled the RFP. They did this about a month ago and they are now interim management of the Market until, I don't know—for at least a year.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Who is that?

**ALLEN:** They would be the Office of Property Management. The interim manager now is a guy named Barry Margeson. And his assistant who was also a nonfood vendor at the Market is named Jennifer Eubanks.

**CRUIKSHANK:** OK. And so what does that mean for you as far as the—

**ALLEN:** Reopening?

**CRUIKSHANK:** Well, the day-to-day and the reopening.

**ALLEN:** There's a lot of confusion now and a lot of insecurity. And let me be clear, the insecurity and the issue is with the nonfood vendors, not to my knowledge so much with the farmers or with the inside Market people. We had a liaison, we had property, I would say, with Market 5 Gallery. Most of the artists, specifically the painters and the photographers, sometime in their tenure there, after they got a permanent space, they would have an exhibition at the gallery. So they could have the best of both worlds, they could have big original pieces hanging inside the gallery and they would have a reception where they could invite their clients, then on the weekends they would be outside. Then if somebody wanted to buy a big piece for \$5,000 they could go inside the gallery. And I think that did good business for a lot of folks.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Sure, so historically there have been temporary locations and permanent locations outside?

**ALLEN:** This is how it worked. The Market was pretty much theoretically—and this was one of the issues I think people had with John Harrod—at some point there was legislation put in place in the 90s, in the late 90s that the stuff that happened outside was sort of supposed to be farmers, flowers, baked goods, arts and crafts, and ethnic stuff that was really from a country, wasn't just stuff that you could buy in New York. That was not always the case. Be that as it may, it took about two years coming regularly to get a permanent space so that meant that you had a space there on the weekends, Saturdays and Sundays.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Was there a process to apply for the space?

**ALLEN:** This was also part of the problem. There was no—in theory there was, in practice there really wasn't—if people asked me how do you get a space on Saturday I would sort of look at them because there was no real clear process. Stuff was supposed to be juried in, it was not supposed to be just hats and scarves again that you could just buy at a wholesaler on Florida Avenue and just resell. Unfortunately there was a good bit of stuff that was just sort of vandy stuff that you could get at a department store but you could get it at the Market for \$5 cheaper. Sunday was flea market so, sort of open to just about everything, but again, according to the legislation there were supposed to be, sort of, antiques were defined and, you know, all this stuff was defined to sort of give it a certain, I would say, cache.

**CRUIKSHANK:** And who was supposed to be doing that vetting?

**ALLEN:** Well, see. There was an internal vendor vetting process and it broke down. And then on Sunday it was more of a flea market but it was also better organized, there's just no way of going around it. And on Sunday there was a clear process for how you got a permanent space, everything on Sundays was just clearer.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Let's break here and change the tape.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

TAPE 2/SIDE 1

**CRUIKSHANK:** ... what was better organized before and how it's different now, other than having to arrive earlier to try to secure your spot.

**ALLEN:** Well that's my decision. I mean, the set up time is still earlier but arriving as early as I do, it's also because I'm coming from Baltimore, because I'm very stressed out, because I'm a new driver, because because because. That's more me being as cautious as I can. So that's more on me that I get here that early than on the process. So, ask me the question again, I'm sorry.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Just, you had said that it feels less organized now with the new management and I'm—

**ALLEN:** Well in general it was less organized on Saturday anyway. But it had its, sort of it was broke but it worked. For all of its problem, it was broke but it worked and it would drive anybody crazy because you really couldn't tell anybody how you got a permanent space on Saturday. John would just sort of, I guess, sense your aura and at some point he would say OK, you're here. [laughing] And you sometimes had to make your aura present to John. And then when John got sick and he had other people take over, it became even more fluid I would say, even more vague. Now one, we're in the middle of a construction site so that's very anxiety-driven.

**CRUIKSHANK:** I was just going to ask. So who assigned your spaces around the construction?

**ALLEN:** Barry Margeson did and it's now being taken over by his assistant, Jennifer Eubanks. And one of the biggest problems is that for whatever reason, OPM, Office of Property Management, Barry Margeson and Jennifer Eubanks have not, refused to talk to old management to find out who has been there for 18 years like me and who just showed up eight months ago so that what is happening now is that interim management run by the city, they're being lied to by some of the people who have really only been there for maybe eight months. Let alone, you know, people like me who have been there for 18 years, people who have been there for 20. There have been some historical realities. A lot of, historically, after a certain point, we took the winter off. Meaning, you know, OPM came in the weekend after Christmas. There are many people who, the weekend after Christmas to the first day in April, they don't show up. They are doing other shows, they're trying to do wholesale, they're just eating their beans and rice and living in their little apartments or their little houses with their heat and they're just functioning. They don't show up. The winter outside can be prohibitory. Now more people are coming back and it's, you know, they're setting up people around a construction site, and also they've set up people who they think have permanent spaces that really don't and while all this stuff is really sort of petty and small, it's also the lifeblood of a lot of people.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Sure, absolutely.

**ALLEN:** The desire is that one, the city talk to former management. The second desire is that the city go away and that we get to be brutal about it. Tom Rall and Mike Berman as the overall managers and if not the overall managers than the managers of the gallery at the end and the nonfood vendors and if the inside people and the farmers want another management system, let them have one. But we need people that we know, that helped found it, that have a historical memory and also, Mike Berman is one hell of a promoter, there's just no ifs ands or buts about it.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Uh huh. And so now he and Tom are not involved with the Market at all?

**ALLEN:** Yeah. The only thing, Tom Rall, because the contract was different, the reason that there's any nonfood vending at the Market at all is because of John Harrod. John Harrod established a relationship with Hines School. Because of John's failure to dot the I's and cross the T's, he lost that. Another group came in because they saw it was making money. John had done all the work, he'd done all the promotion, so today on Saturday there's this other group there in the schoolyard. On Sunday the city took over Eastern Market but they did not take over the Hines schoolyard so Tom Rall is still at Hines schoolyard. A lot of us, if we need questions answered about something, we go to Tom Rall. There was one point where Barry Margeson of OPM was asking us to prove that we'd been there for as long as we had and a lot of us said, well talk to Tom Rall, talk to John Harrod. That was not done, there are those of us who went over to Tom Rall or emailed John Harrod going help me! I have nothing to prove that I've been here for 18 years, I did not keep a piece of—I mean they were asking for a receipt from 18 years ago and I'm like are you crazy? You know, I don't have receipts from 18 years ago, I don't have tax records from 18 years ago, I have nothing from 18 years ago.

**CRUIKSHANK:** So it sounds like basically you all had a process for lack of better work, or at least an understanding even if it wasn't visible or clear to the outside world.

**ALLEN:** Yes, yes. It was broke. There was no doubt about it, it was broke. There was definitely a need for some hand to come in because it was, you know, especially once John got sick and he had other folks coming in, you were. I mean, me as a long-time person I could bark and growl and generally I was left alone, most of us were. But when people would come going how do I get a permanent space and you're looking at them going, honey, I couldn't tell you. On Saturday. On Sunday, yeah you can.

**CRUIKSHANK:** So aside from just talking to Tom and John, what could they do differently or better? Or maybe the better question is, if you could sort of design the process for space, what would be your ideal way of getting a space once the construction's over, once the Market's reopened, how do you want to see that happen?

**ALLEN:** First, knowing who was there when, I think that just helps, especially when you're talking about people's livelihoods. This is not inconsiderate, this is people's livelihoods. So first, just that information is just vital, having it. I think there needs to be a meeting of whoever's managing with everybody so everybody can sort of air their concerns, their whatever, so that it's not just one voice coming at them or two voices coming at them and that it's a real discussion, that these decisions are made in concert because, for all of its imperfections outside, like I said, you're setting up next to someone maybe for 15 years, maybe for 20, maybe for 25, that's something to consider in terms of how people—some people are

very, they like to talk so they'll set up there and they'll talk all day. For me, that would drive me nuts. There are other people who are stone silent, for other people that would drive them nuts. I mean, all of these little—and then there's the time issue—so that would need to be taken into consideration and I think that's paramount.

**CRUIKSHANK:** What is the time issue?

**ALLEN:** In terms of how long people have been there. In terms of the legislation, there's people who have been grandfathered in. I'm one of those magical creatures who's still at the Market, I've been grandfathered in so I should be safe, but who knows what that means? Then there are other issues in terms of aesthetics. How do you deal with people who have been there for 15 years who are just resellers? I mean, legally, the Office of Property Management could just tell them to leave. That would be cruel and thoughtless but they legally don't have any standing. I mean, maybe they have standing because they're grandfathered in but what they're selling is stuff that anybody can buy. It has no sort of ethnic origin reality, it has nothing. It's just, you know, knock-off Fendi handbags or knock-off sunglasses. I mean, you know, most people don't make sunglasses.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Right, but it is how they make their living.

**ALLEN:** It's how they've established making their living. So not getting rid of them would be a reality and figuring out how to—what I would propose is setting up two different markets to accommodate the people who have been there a long time who make their living there who are reselling. So what I would do is put the resellers in one area and set them up so that all these things are in consideration, how long they've been there, I'd put a cut-off date for it but I'd be very sensitive to even somebody who's only been there five years who's a reseller to really find out is this the only way you're making your living. Also, one of the realities right now is that a lot of the people who are resellers are also the most diverse end of the Market and I think all of that is worth preserving, to a certain extent. So if you have somebody who is reselling who, when you talk to them and you really do a little investigation to find out this is the only way they're making their living, ok. But you know if you've only been there for five years and you're working at a restaurant, you're doing X, Y, and Z and you're just really selling stuff then, you know, I'm going to have to ask you to leave with much respect. And then set up the arts and, you know, ethnically sold goods market but again being aware of relationships and time and also aesthetics. You don't want to set up—or maybe you do, I don't know—in my world, I don't want to be set up next to a whole bunch of people who are selling jewelry. I prefer, you know, painter, potter, jeweler, you know, hat maker, bag maker, jeweler, something like that. Something that makes sense and everybody gets along together and that it's also aesthetically pleasing in that there's a nice mix.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Is there prime real estate at the Market or desired locations?

**ALLEN:** Yes, yes, yes. That is—we call it the Gold Coast. Every world, no matter how small, creates its own hierarchy. I think the ants do it, so do we at Eastern Market, you know, we are ants at Eastern Market.

**CRUIKSHANK:** [laughing] So where is it?

**ALLEN:** Well, it was the area leading up to, it was that wall that was in front of the farmers' shed, that was called the Gold Coast. Because people would come up through there and sometimes they would buy the first thing they see and if that was you, that was a good thing. And if it wasn't you, that was a bad thing.

**CRUIKSHANK:** And I guess that's all thrown off now that Seventh Street is under construction.

**ALLEN:** Yes, it is. Aw darn. [laughing] I wasn't in that area.

**CRUIKSHANK:** [laughing] OK. Will you be vying for a space in that area?

**ALLEN:** You know, there's no sort of vying for a space now. I was put in an area in front of Hines school. It's very—to be honest, it's very nice. We have a lot of space, some people consider it Siberia, some people consider it the new Gold Coast. I think it's between the two. You know, because it's all—the whole site is very broken up now.

**CRUIKSHANK:** It feels sort of disjointed.

**ALLEN:** It is disjointed. And it's not being brought together by OPM. They would need a real map with names and places and, you know, somebody who's actually competent.

**CRUIKSHANK:** That actually was going to be my next question—so who came and told you, hey Sonda, now you're going to be across the street from the coffee shop? Did they come with a map and say this is your spot?

**ALLEN:** Yes. I was asked. I mean, it was asked because I had been making some noise of discontent, you know, sort of like is this OK with you and I looked and I said yes! I mean, because to be honest where the 12 of us are that are in front of the school, it's easy. We are very fortunate and hopefully most of us are aware of how fortunate we are because we can actually pull our cars up, unload and park whereas other people, they have to unload from one end and on trolleys pull their stuff to wherever, under the shed or on the plaza. Because, you know, the farmers have the right of way because, you know, they're better than we are. So they can leave their trucks there. Whatever space is left, we can sort of

squeeze in, unload if we have cars and again there are still several nonfood vendors who don't have cars so for them, they're used to schlepping, I was used to schlepping before, but, you know.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Who thinks the farmers are better than you?

**ALLEN:** Well it's in the legislation. Eastern Market is legislated in this order: it is primarily a food and farmers' market. That's one of the emails I sent you, that came right out of the legislation and then we are all the way down there and so how it's been interpreted by OPM is that there is that priority given, so that the building is \$25 million worth of reconstruction and the people inside the building get whatever they want. Now, it's owned—it's like this apartment, it's yours—but you can go to Dean & DeLuca, you can go to Abercrombie & Fitch, you could go to wherever and you can put it on our tab. Whatever you need, you can go to Ikea and just buy whatever you need and it'll be ours but you can use it as long as you're there. That's what the inside people have. The outside farmers have the right to keep their trucks near their merchandise and then there's us.

**CRUIKSHANK:** And what do you have?

**ALLEN:** If you go on the website, which I will forward to you, you will find on the website that the city has taken over that the people who are listed are the inside people—with phone numbers, the farmers—with phone numbers and there's not one nonfood vendor listed. Yet, the people who are more likely to have Facebook pages, websites are definitely the artists. We don't exist. There's a notification that there are artists there but is there one broken out there?

**CRUIKSHANK:** There's no accounting?

**ALLEN:** Not one. There's no real clear, we've been—the nonfood vendors—have been asking since February because I was the first person who asked for the meeting—this is before the RFP was cancelled—asking for a meeting with Tommy Wells, who's the Ward 6 Council person, with Donna Scheeder, who's the head of the Eastern Market Community Advisory organization, as well as with OPM. And that would be the Director of OPM is Robin-Eve Jasper. We've been asking for that meeting. We're generally met with dead silence, which is why I started getting my clients to write to them and that made them at least pay a little attention—not much, but a little. And I ain't done. [laughing]

**CRUIKSHANK:** So it's really, it's reading more like a dictatorship, it's not really—they're just making—from your end at least.

**ALLEN:** It's very frustrating. It's not a dictatorship in that they're trying to pander and pacify. As opposed to any real knowledge it's sort of like, if someone insists that they've been here for 15 years even

if they've sometimes only been here for five, then something will happen in terms of the space. But in terms of an overall management scheme of what, you know, if we're going to manage this place for a year. It's one thing, you know, they were brought in for six weeks so six weeks is fine, who cares. Six weeks of whatever, they're collecting the money, the dotting I's and crossing T's that they said that John Harrod didn't do, that's being done, you know, the city has the money as opposed to John Harrod having the money and it not getting to the city.

**CRUIKSHANK:** The money that you pay to secure your space?

**ALLEN:** Exactly, exactly. And they're saying how it is or is not being used, I think the city is trying to use as little of it as possible to do anything to really be helpful specifically to the nonfood vendors but so there is certainly, if you write to them weekly and tell them that why wasn't this done, they will at some level attempt to address it. Do they understand that this should be done? No. Or are they so overwhelmed by the reality that well, gee, maybe John Harrod had some points in that it's more than we thought it was. I think that's also the truth. Will they admit that? Will, you know—we're looking for this conversation to happen. The nonfood vendors are looking for that meeting where it's not, you know, it's not you pandering to us and if I say that this happened you will go oops, it did, let me see if I can do something about it. It's more can you think about how to do this.

**CRUIKSHANK:** And that's the difference between being sort of appeased or accommodated versus having some recognize your needs and plan for them.

**ALLEN:** Exactly, well it's a need between being competent and not. Because the other issue that is sort of being ignored here which I find amazing is that, you know, we sell outside. Do you have any experience with what that means? You know, if you hire somebody who is a nonfood vendor who never showed up when the weather was tough and you say that person's competent and they can't figure out that they need to put a tarp on dust and grit when the wind blows, that's not competent. That's a joke and that's what we have. Because people need to be able to think things through and envision what that means. You know, with Mike Berman and Tom Rall we would have that. With what we have now, we don't have that.

**CRUIKSHANK:** It's got to be really frustrating.

**ALLEN:** My own little world, I mean, it's OK. And I bark very loudly. Watching people set up in mud, watching people get pelted by sand when I know that it would take a tarp. Last week the breezeway was cut off, making it sort of hazardous because you could only enter on one side and then you had to go out into the street to enter again, that was frustrating. I mean, you're—this weekend should be good but

there's no weather and the breezeways are open and they have been told X, Y and Z. They could not figure it out on their own or they wouldn't do it, I mean, I don't really know. So my little world, yeah, sure, I'm down there on either Siberia or the Gold Coast and I'm fine. I can pull up, I can set up, I have a 10 x 10 space, you know, the marketing issue rests because of people who come up and while they come they don't really get it—they're going where is Eastern Market? I'm going, well, the historical Market is here, it burned. So they're like so it's closed? So I'm like no, it's over here and they're like were you inside and I'm like no and I'm thinking why isn't there a sandwich board at the beginning at one end of the Market and the other with detailed maps and little brochures that people can take? Why isn't that there?

**CRUIKSHANK:** It's a great idea.

**ALLEN:** I know. They've been told, I'll tell them again, but that would also involve spending money. And we can't spend any of that \$25 million on—

**CRUIKSHANK:** On the outdoor portion?

**ALLEN:** It would be on everything. That map would be on everything. This woman, this one woman I'm thinking of because I'll never forget her. She was asking me these questions, she was with her daughter and she finally said "Well I'm looking for used clothes." And I wanted to say, lady, used clothes have never been inside the Market and I said well there are vintage clothing on Sunday and some of it's really cool stuff from the '40s and 1920s and even earlier and she was definitely not looking for that. I said, you just want a used sweater and she said yeah, I said well that's Clothes Encounters. She's like "That's the place!" and I'm like this, um that actually is a store on the other side so I'm thinking well, it would make sense to have an integrated map where the stores are there, our booths are listed out, you know, one, two, three, four, you know, whoever—Val, whoever the photographer who's from the Ukraine, you know, Val's name or whatever he calls his business plus photography and, you know, behind him is Port City Java. And this map I just can't imagine it's going to be that expensive because it would need to be fluid, to change.

**CRUIKSHANK:** It would be a great resource or even if not available in hard copies just to have it on the website for people to come and see what's there.

**ALLEN:** Yeah, it would be a lot cheaper. Yeah. Thank you Ms. Cruikshank!

**CRUIKSHANK:** I hope that you get to have this conversation.

**ALLEN:** As they say, from your mouth to God's ear.

**CRUIKSHANK:** Right—or OPM’s ear or something.

**ALLEN:** Yeah.

**CRUIKSHANK:** So it’s 9:30 and we need to get you to the Market.

**ALLEN:** Absolutely.

END OF INTERVIEW