



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Tom Rall

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

DANTZIC: Alright, so, today is Tuesday, May 19, about three o'clock-ish. And I'm Martha Stracener Dantzic, interviewing Tom Rall about the Eastern Market and its history. So I guess we'll get started. So tell me how you were first, you first ever heard of Eastern Market, and when you first went there, what you—what was your relationship at that time with the market?

RALL: I don't know—I don't remember exactly, but it would have been in the fall of 1969. I had come to Washington that summer to work on Capitol Hill as a conscientious objector, doing alternative service to military service, and I had gotten a job with the liberal wing of the Methodist church, which owned the Methodist building between the Supreme Court and the Senate Office buildings—the only nonpublic building on Capitol Hill still—at that time, and in—and at that time I had an apartment up in the Dupont Circle area, and I had been to school at Kent State University, graduated a couple of years earlier ...

DANTZIC: Oh, wow.

RALL: ... and a couple of my fraternity brothers followed me to Washington and we looked for—they looked for an apartment and found a nice two-story ... two-story apartment in a house at number 20 Seventh Street. And so that would have been the fall of 1969, and being that it was only a block and a half from Eastern Market, we soon discovered Eastern Market, and it became a part of our lives.

DANTZIC: And at that time you were just shopping at the ...

RALL: At that time I was just shopping, the Bowers' Dairy, in particular, Market Lunch, all of those places are, I think, national treasures, and ...

DANTZIC: [laughing]

RALL: ... should become part of a national history registry as well, the businesses, too. And of course I was making my social life on Capitol Hill then, and that at the time was mostly the Pennsylvania Avenue bars ...

DANTZIC: [laughing]

RALL: ... a few of them are still there. The Hawk and the Dove in particular was central to our lives. And Tune Inn—I could probably name a couple of others. But, so, that was 40 years ago this coming fall.

DANTZIC: Wow. Wow. That's—and so you first moved here just as a resident, and you just lived in the neighborhood, and shopped at the market, and then, what were you doing for work at the time?

RALL: Well, I was ...

DANTZIC: Oh, working in the Methodist church.

RALL: ... I was working, I was running a Washington study program, and that led to several other things. I did some work with Southern Christian Leadership Conference, with David Clark, who later became a City Councilperson, and Chair of the City Council. After we got home rule—when I moved to Washington in 1969, we didn't have home rule. In fact, we didn't have a voting delegate—a nonvoting delegate—in Congress at that time, and that was one of the aspects of my job with the Methodist Church, was to lobby for both home rule and the nonvoting delegate. And it happened that I took a job with Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and Reverend Walter Fauntroy was the head of the Washington branch of that, and he later became our first nonvoting delegate in the city, and that was fairly interesting because what I was doing with them was promoting a film on Dr. Martin Luther King's life, a benefit performance, and I ended up organizing all of the Federal Employee Unions to attend various benefit performances of the Ely Landau film premiere here in Washington. And that led to some other type of work—union organizing at the State Department as alternative service, because I'd been working with these Federal Employee Unionists, and that was ... that turned out to be fairly interesting because I was there during the Kent State shootings. I had been a graduate of Kent State University—this is probably well before your time! [laughs]

DANTZIC: [laughing] Right about the time I was coming in ...

RALL: Right, right, right [laughing]

DANTZIC: '68. I was born in a big year.

RALL: Well, Mike Berman was born in 1969, who I know that you have interviewed, and it's like ancient history when I talk about these things.

DANTZIC: [laughs]

RALL: I've gotten ... interestingly, I was also Chairman of the Kent State University Alumni Association at the time of the shootings, and a bunch of my fraternity brothers who were still there, they closed down campus, they came to Washington to party, and a couple of them had actually seen the shootings, so ... and I happened to know some of the AA for the Congressperson of the Kent State District in Ohio, and I ended up sending the fraternity brothers there, and they were the first ones apparently from Kent that had turned up in town, and eventually they were sent over to the White House and grilled by President Nixon's staff. And I ended up going the next day as President of the Kent State

University Alumni Club with my fellow students from Kent, to go to the interview with President Nixon, which I didn't actually get into. It turns out, because of my job union organizing the State Department—I thought my credentials would show that I had a national security pass, but ...

DANTZIC: Right.

RALL: ... worked in the State Department. And they apparently checked me out and thought I wouldn't be safe ...

DANTZIC: [laughing]

RALL: And they were right! [laughs]

DANTZIC: [laughing]

RALL: And so I didn't actually get to go into the meeting at the Oval Office, and a couple of weeks later I was fired from my job at the State Department, probably because of—the Nixon Administration had done due diligence on me!

DANTZIC: Determined you were unsafe!

RALL: Right.

DANTZIC: Wow. Very interesting. What an interesting time in our history.

RALL: Right, and it was a great time to come to Washington ...

DANTZIC: Mm hmm.

RALL: And all of us that were in Capitol Hill in the late 60s, early 70s, were deeply, deeply affected by our experience here in Washington, and for some of us, like myself, pleasantly so, and it shaped the remainder of my life, including eventually coming to my last work at ... which has been the development of the Flea Market at Eastern Market on Sundays.

DANTZIC: Wow. And so, at that time, in the ... after 1969 and the early 70s, and so on, Capitol Hill, was it ... like a ghost town, or ...?

RALL: Well, Eastern Market on Sundays certainly was. And even up until, up through the 70s into the early 80s, when I was asked to start to sell at the Flea Market, that the local nonprofit community arts organization—Market 5 Gallery—that had been established in the 1970s and where, through circumstances of my connections—I ended up in the antique business in the Shenandoah Valley, but still

kept my social life on Capitol Hill and it became known that ... And then in the mid 70s I started selling antiques at Georgetown Flea Market ...

DANTZIC: Oh.

RALL: ... and my cadre of close friends in Washington realized that I was in the antiques business, and a fellow by the name of Ted Gay—who's probably been interviewed, hopefully, somewhere before he passed away a few years ago, for this particular project—I haven't actually looked at the archives, but hopefully he's there. Who had a frame shop up on Capitol Hill and got involved in DC politics after we got home rule, and became eventually a chair of the DC Democratic Party. He knew that I was into the antique business, and he asked me to be an auctioneer for a benefit auction for a joint benefit auction for Capitol Hill Arts Workshop, and ...

DANTZIC: Oh ...

RALL: [Capitol East Children's Center], I think it was called. Which is still going—both of them. And that was to be held at Market 5 Gallery.

DANTZIC: At ... in the North Hall?

RALL: At Eastern Market, and that was right around 1978.

DANTZIC: And that was your first auction?

RALL: That was my very first auction.

DANTZIC: Even for you, as an auctioneer, that's when you just ... how did you learn to be an auctioneer?

RALL: Well, my business was going to auctions. I went to three or four auctions a week to supply my antiques business for Georgetown and to furnish a house—a big house out in the country.

DANTZIC: Mm hmm.

RALL: And you know, I had no hesitation to say that, you know, this is what I was doing. So what I did was, was I pretty much copied the auctioneers that I saw every day. And that led to doing it the next year, to doing a benefit auction at the church that the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop was in over on Fourth Street. Saint ... I forget the ... I don't remember the name of the church, but of course it's still there. And they were raising money at that time to buy the building—the old school building of the BB French school—

and that was part of their successful campaign to do that. And I'm proud to say that I helped fundraise for the founding of the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop on Capitol Hill as well.

DANTZIC: That's awesome.

RALL: And then that led to my eventually thinking that—well, the auction business might be a decent business to get into, and I went back to the founder of Market 5 Gallery, John Harrod, sometime in the early 80s. And I said, "Look, I'd like to do auctions, but just primarily just raising funds through admissions for Market 5 gallery. And, you know, run a consignment auction." And he said, "Sure." So for the next decade I did periodic auctions ...

DANTZIC: In the schoolyard? Or still ...

RALL: No, in the North Hall.

DANTZIC: ... in the North Hall. Oh, wow.

RALL: And during—those were always held on Saturday, and during that period of time, he had started the outdoor crafts market in the late 70s. So it was beginning to blossom in the late 70s and the early 80s.

DANTZIC: And how many, how many artists were out there selling their wares?

RALL: Well, the footprint of the Saturday market didn't really change. It was too much over the years, because Saturday was always market day ...

DANTZIC: Oh, so Saturday was already happening and so you started doing the auctions on Sunday. I got you.

RALL: No, no, no. I was doing the auctions on Saturdays, always, because that was the best day of the week. I mean, essentially, you have to remember that Eastern Market was abandoned on Sundays. The market itself was not open on Sundays, which dates back to things called blue laws ...

DANTZIC: Right.

RALL: ... of the early 20th century. The whole market system in DC that Eastern Market was a part of, was closed on Sundays. So other than whatever things Market 5 Gallery might be doing with art shows, or music, or theater, or summer programs for ... arts programs for youth, there really wasn't much activity at Eastern Market in the—well, on Sundays, even until 1983 when John Harrod said to me, "I'm going to start a Sunday flea market. Would you like to sell here?" And I said, "Well, sure" because I'd

had already developed a good customer base here on Capitol Hill with the auctions, and you know, thought it was a great location. The subway had come in.

DANTZIC: Oh, wow.

RALL: The subway system had come in in the late 70s. We had an Eastern Market subway stop on the orange and blue lines just two blocks away!

DANTZIC: Yeah.

RALL: You know, so, in fact, the Georgetown Flea Market was not then, and is still not located within easy walking distance of a subway stop.

DANTZIC: Right.

RALL: So in 1983, I said, “Sure, I’ll come and set up.” And for most of that year I was the only exhibitor—whenever I came. I alternated my time between Georgetown and Eastern Market.

DANTZIC: And that was on Saturdays.

RALL: No, this was on Sundays.

DANTZIC: So that was on Sundays. Oh. Okay.

RALL: That was—there was a good artists and crafts community there by ... on Saturdays by 1983, and in fact, I think that the whole North Plaza was probably already full by 1983. I think he probably started the outdoor arts and crafts fair after Market 5 Gallery was established, which was—I should say something about how important the conversion of the North Hall from a storage space for the city, to a space that would have an arts contingent to it, was in bringing life to Eastern Market. The farmers’ line, you know, Saturdays was always a great day at Eastern Market, but the addition of the arts and crafts fair and the arts gallery at Eastern Market—and they were very good about having trios and music on Saturdays as well at the North Hall.

DANTZIC: In the evenings? On the stage?

RALL: No, oh, during the day, the stage was used, and in fact, through all of the 80s, even on Sundays, then the North Hall was being used for cultural things, and not for vending, which after 1991 it was being used for on both Saturdays and Sundays. Primarily because of some changes then at the Market when both the—the Flea Market had built up to—at any rate, to get back to ’83 ... At the end of ’83 I said to John Harrod, “You know, I think I can do this a little better. And the next season, I’d like to run the

Sunday market.” So we came to an agreement. I actually typed something out—a letter of understanding—and we shook hands in 1984. And I started promoting that spring. I started—I also took on a couple of young partners who’d been in the used book business, and through my contacts at Georgetown Flea Market, I was able to find a property for an antiques store as well that we opened out in the Shenandoah Valley in 1984. So we were doing auctions, the antique store in an old country inn overlooking the north fork of the Shenandoah River ...

DANTZIC: Oh, yes.

RALL: ... and every weekend we were coming, one of us, to Eastern Market. Starting a flea market.

DANTZIC: When you say one of us, your wife and yourself?

RALL: No, no. I had a couple of partners..

DANTZIC: Oh yeah, your partners, got you.

RALL: ... from the book-selling business. Mark and Brad Anderson, I should mention their names for posterity’s sake. Mark is still in the antique business here in Washington, and Brad is an artist in North Carolina now. And I started ... we started with the idea that we would do direct mail and advertise, and we started with a sheet and a half of Avery labels in terms of potential dealers. 45 potential dealers I think I had on our list, and right from the beginning we started to advertise in the *Washington Post*, in the antiques and collectibles section. My idea was that it would be an antiques and collectible market, just like Georgetown. And in the community papers—*The Hill Rag*, the *City Paper*, *The Blade*, in particular, was wonderful for recruitment for both customers and dealers. At one point, early on in the mid-80s, I wouldn’t be a bit surprised if 40-50% of our exhibitor base were gay and lesbians.

DANTZIC: Wow.

RALL: I mean, they probably were the economic force that developed the market. Unfortunately, of course, the AIDS epidemic was just being started, and we had an awful lot of attrition of our early gay and lesbian dealer base.

DANTZIC: Oh, no.

RALL: And also it became clear pretty rapidly that Market 5 Gallery had already established an artist, a craftspeople interest in Eastern Market on Saturdays, and many of those people decided that they wanted to start selling on Sundays as well. And also the farmers began to take notice that something was going on. I mean, literally, that first Sunday in 1984, the alcoholics were sleeping in the doorways of Eastern

Market—it was, really, a run-down, abandoned building on Sundays—you could take a bowling ball and roll it the whole length of the farmers’ line canopy on a Sunday morning and there wouldn’t be a single person under the farmers’ long shed on Sundays. But as we began to advertise, that began to change.

DANTZIC: Wow.

RALL: By ...

DANTZIC: But you still weren’t in the schoolyard yet? You’re still just out ...

RALL: Oh, no, no.

DANTZIC: ... on the plaza and underneath the farmers’ line.

RALL: Well, yeah. We started at the North End of the Market, at the North Hall Plaza, which then wasn’t an ideal space. It had a huge tree and a driveway into the North Hall ...

DANTZIC: [chuckling]

RALL: ... and it was a lot of mud, actually. It ... the bricks on the North Plaza didn’t come in till quite a while later. And at any rate, we set up on the mud underneath the trees, and eventually—and it took two or three years to actually populate the whole North Hall and the spaces on the building adjacent to the North Hall facing Seventh Street, and we also started to use the covered canopy adjacent to the North Hall, adjacent to Seventh Street. And probably within three years we had filled all of that area, and I said to John, “Well, you know, what do you think if we would use the rest of the canopy?” And he said, “Sure, go ahead”, so we started to do that. And then, we filled that in fairly rapidly.

DANTZIC: It’s moving, so ... [referring to the recording equipment]

RALL: Okay, and then, eventually, come 1989, 1990, we filled all the way around C Street. We were in front of all the entrance doors to the South Hall, and we had begun to go down the west side of the building on the North Hall side ...

DANTZIC: Oh, wow.

RALL: ... with exhibitors. And it was at that point that the South Hall management began to say, “What’s going on here?” And ... [laughing]

DANTZIC: [laughing] So, four years in, the city starts to pay attention to what’s happening! I mean, I don’t mean to say that in a negative way, but they just didn’t really realize how it was growing.

RALL: Well, the city never really paid attention. Except that, you know, Market 5 Gallery was obviously a benefit to the neighborhood.

DANTZIC: Mm hmm.

RALL: It was actually, probably one of the very first—the establishment of the Gallery at Eastern Market was probably one of the very first things that happened once we got home rule. And my friend Ted Gay, whom I mentioned, was instrumental in establishing the gallery. He was on the original board, and he also, besides being a chair of the DC Democratic Party later on for quite a few years, he was also chair of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities. So he wasn't, at that point, but he was in the art business, of course, having a frame shop, and he knew John Harrod, who got his start at a place called Friendship House, right around the corner from the Carnegie Library, there near the stop.

DANTZIC: Mm hmm. Right.

RALL: And ...

DANTZIC: Here, I'm going to flip the tape real quick.

RALL: Okay.

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TAPE 1/SIDE 2

RALL: So Ted Gay thoroughly wanted home rule, at least, I believe this is how it happened, but I know he was on the original board of directors. And he hired John, and I think it may have been in the first year of home rule. And, at any rate, he helped negotiate the lease for Market 5 Gallery to take over the space that had been empty—a storage space for the last ten or 15, 20 years, I'm not sure. You'd have to check with somebody who knows more about the history of that particular space. For a dollar a year!

DANTZIC: Wow.

RALL: Which was a great deal for the city, to get that space cleaned up, to bring all of this activity to Eastern Market. To essentially bring it to this unheated, un-air-conditioned, no bathroom, no running water facility at Eastern Market, which was the North Hall, until this very coming month.

DANTZIC: Right.

RALL: When it is going to get heat and air-conditioning and bathrooms.

DANTZIC: Thirteen!

RALL: Bathrooms and running water, that the North Hall never had through all this period of time. So the fact that some people would say to ... do say that the dollar a month, or the dollar a year nominal rent, for this space, was way too little, I would argue, as I just said, that it turned out to be one of the better deals of the early home rule in Washington DC.

DANTZIC: Because it changed ... it changed the market, in my opinion.

RALL: It changed ... essentially, in my mind, it was the catalyst to the revival of Eastern Market through the later quarter of the 20th century.

DANTZIC: Wow. And so, so, this was the late 80s is kind of where we are now, before you moved into the schoolyard.

RALL: Well, that didn't happen ... the late 80s, the management of Eastern—of the South Hall at the Eastern Market, began to hear that there was ... they were Southern Marylanders. They had businesses there, but you know, Sunday was not a day that they came to the market. So they really had to find out by word of mouth that something was going on at the Eastern Market on Sundays.

DANTZIC: Was this the Glasgows? Or this was the other ... the ...

RALL: Well, the Glasgows ... the Eastern Market Corporation that the Glasgow family ran was ... were the proprietors of the South Hall at the time. And they were the ones that began to take notice, along with some of their tenants who lived on Capitol Hill or around Capitol Hill and saw what was going on. I mean, they heard that the farmers' line was returning. So in 1991, in summer of 1991, they decided that they would open the South Hall on Sundays.

DANTZIC: I wondered when that was.

RALL: Yeah. That was the summer of 1991. At the same time, they evicted all the arts and crafts ... all of the Sunday flea market, from spaces adjacent to the Center and South Hall, saying that they had a leasehold right to those spaces. So that was really our very first crisis, because we were faced with having the displacement of a dozen to two dozen exhibitors from spaces that they had been occupying around the building, and it was at that time to accommodate everybody that we then began to start doing exhibitor sales inside Market 5 Gallery itself on Sundays.

DANTZIC: Oh.

RALL: And, in fact, I moved my stand for a while from ... up from under the covered canopy into Market 5 Gallery on Sundays, so that I didn't have ... so that as few as my arts exhibitors as possible

would have to be displaced and go from off the street where the traffic was flowing to inside which was, up until that point, had been a community cultural space on Sundays. A lesser used space than the streets. And since that constricted us, and we were beginning to get a waiting list on Sundays for the available space at Eastern Market, the next year, 1992, I went to the principal of the Hine school—a wonderful woman, an award-winning educator by the name of Princess Whitfield, who was just doing wonderful things at the school—and said, “I’d like to expand the flea market over here, and I’d like to use your grassy knoll and your grassy area outside of your recreational fence, and your parking lot on Sundays.” And of course, this was space that was not being used by the school, and I made the same deal with Princess Whitfield that I had made with John Harrod eight years earlier, and that was to pay a straight 40 % of gross income directly to Hine school from proceeds.

DANTZIC: Wow. That was a boon for the school.

RALL: Well, it was, and Princess Whitfield really appreciated it because she could put money that she didn’t have directly into the junior high school band, which was award-winning that time, and after-school recreation programs, and, I mean, it wasn’t a lot of money—we’ve only had, oh in ‘92 we only had room about 20 exhibitors in that area that they are again using as the street construction is going on, and our rent back then was only \$15 or \$20 a space, so, you know, they were only getting \$80 or \$100 a week at that point in time, but that was significant to an under-funded school system, and to the principal of the school ...

DANTZIC: So how ...

RALL: In fact, she would even come out on some Sundays and set up fund-raising tables for children for scholarships and things like that. So that, you know, we went on developing that overflow space along Seventh Street adjacent to the sidewalk outside of the fence of the school, and had begun to develop exhibitor space in the school parking lot, when we ran into another crisis. Actually, there were a couple of crises in the mid-90s at Eastern Market. One was ... occurred in 1995, when the head of what was then called DAS, the Department of Administrative Services, which later became the Office of Property Management that’s now running Eastern Market, sent an eviction letter to Market 5 Gallery.

DANTZIC: Oh, wow.

RALL: Effective six weeks from the date of the letter. And we didn’t really know what was going on there, but it turned out that somebody was trying to take over the business of the outdoor markets that Market 5 Gallery and myself—and I should mention that from the get-go, I named the market, the Flea Market at Eastern Market, and started trading as the Flea Market at Eastern Market as early as 1984. And

I'm still trading under that name, the Flea Market at Eastern Market, 25-26 years later, this is the 26th season at Eastern Market. But they ... it turned out that people were coveting the income from the outdoor markets, and would rather not have it go to Market 5 Gallery, and that really required us to go to the streets and to do some community organizing to save the Gallery at that time, and this had been done—the eviction letter had been done in the agency at the behest of an influential land-use law firm in the city, who were trying to obtain the space for their own clients. But interestingly enough, not with the approval of then-mayor Marion Barry. And the community at that point was very, very solidly behind what Market 5 Gallery and the Flea Market at Eastern Market had done in the previous 20 years, and a letter-writing and petition campaign soon led to the eventual resignation of the head of the Department of Administrative Services, and to Marion Barry, the mayor coming out fully behind Market 5 Gallery. And, in fact, transferring the whole authority over the outdoor markets to the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities at that time.

DANTZIC: So that's another place where the management got diverted into yet another governmental agency.

RALL: Well, yeah, I mean, by the 1990s the city began to pay attention to what was going on at Eastern Market. You know, by then, we were already become ... we had had our first feature cover story in the Sunday magazine of the *Washington Times*, the antiques and trade publications were doing features on the market. We were getting into the initial travel publications, *Fodor's Guides*, the *National Flea Market Directory*, and things like this. And I would—had been advertising as well as in the local outlets. I had been advertising in specialty publications throughout the main antique digests, the *Antique Trader* out of the Midwest, the *Antique Weekly* newspaper that had an Eastern edition. Joel Sater's *Antique News*, the *Newton B*. We even had a free listing in an antique publication for many years in Italy, *La Infa Torre ... La Infa Torme* or something like that.

DANTZIC: And was that ... did you solicit all those, all that press coverage, or did it just kind of all start converging ...

RALL: Well, well, what happened was that, was that the press discovered that something was going on at Eastern Market, maybe even before the DC government discovered what was going on at Eastern Market. And it was essential—we had our first—we also—the *Post Sunday Magazine* started during this period of time, the late 1980s or the early 1990s, and I went in that immediately. Went back ... I advertised in what was called the magazine market. It was right across from the crossword puzzle in the *Sunday Magazine*—the best money I ever spent on Eastern Market was there—for the first 10 year run of the *Sunday Magazine*, which is probably by now only been with us 15 to 20 years. They are maybe celebrating their

20th anniversary. Now ... so we didn't actually go on to the playground of the Hine school until about 1997, and what happened—or 1997 or so—and what happened there was another community ... another attempt was being made to weaken Market 5 Gallery and to take over the cash flow from the outdoor markets and bring new management to Eastern Market. And some of the people that have formed the community organization, which eventually got supported ... which got pulled into Capitol Hill Restoration Society leadership over new writing of legislation for Eastern Market, that were dealing with...

DANTZIC: The Eastern Market Act?

RALL: ... the Eastern Market Act, which was labeled 1997; I don't think it actually passed until 1998. The transfer of management from the Arts Commission to the new Office of—we got caught right in there 1997 or so, we got caught—the city went bankrupt, and the city council was actually, and the mayor were actually disenfranchised. The Federal Government created something called the Control Board to run DC. And it was at this period of time when the Control Board was trying to bring the city back to financial stability, that another effort to change Eastern Market and to write this legislation had begun. And at that time, oh, at that time they questioned the use of the space—the outside of ... outside of the Hine school fence—and in fact, they questioned why the money was going—from the outdoor markets—was going directly to the school itself. And eventually the—well, the community organization got, said to the Principal of the school, said to us, “You didn't get a public space permit to use this area outside of the fence, adjacent to the school. And you've got to get out of here.” And, in fact, they brought in police to disperse us. And this happened two or three times.

DANTZIC: And this is the second crisis you were speaking of?

RALL: This is the second crisis leading up to the writing of the Eastern Market legislation. And so, at that point, on Sundays, we had enough exhibitors that it made sense to move into the schoolyard, that we thought the traffic flow would—and there happened to already be a gate into the schoolyard from Seventh Street, and Princess Whitfield actually widened the gate for us and widened the pedestrian entrance way from Seventh Street into the schoolyard.

DANTZIC: Was there already an entrance on Eighth Street?

RALL: There was an entrance on Eighth Street as well, and that entrance has stayed unchanged. Although I did notice, actually today, that now there's a larger gate down there than what there had been previously. It was just sort of a four foot or five foot wide walkway with that sized gate off of Eighth Street. And the school system itself took over the cash flow, and we signed—oh, I don't know how many

years ago, 10 or ... this is our 16th season at Hine school, and probably about 11 years ago, or 10, 11, 12, years ago the school system itself took over the contract and took the money into their general funds, and unfortunately a lot of that money did not get back to the school. And that's been one of the more distressing things of the whole thing, at least in terms of ... But now, we're facing the situation where the school itself is closed and the whole place is going to be re-developed. At any rate, it took us another five years after 1992 ... five, it took us really 10 years to fill our footprint on the schoolyard.

DANTZIC: Oh wow. So that was one of my questions I wanted to ask. When you were saying that you started a waiting list, how many exhibitors did you have every weekend at that point? That required the waiting list, and then as you grouped, kind of, what were your maximum?

RALL: Well, you could sort of follow this in my advertising through the years. After two and three years, I advertised in the *Post* that we had dealers from five states. And those were essentially Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, the District, and Virginia. And once we started to bring the arts and crafts contingent in, within a very short period of time, by the end of the 80s, I was advertising that we already had exhibitors from five continents.

DANTZIC: Wow.

RALL: And by the time ... by 1991, we were probably in the 60 exhibitor range, total, on Sundays. I have very exact records, I could ...

DANTZIC: But no, just kind of ball-park them. Just I'm curious how many—so you had about 60, but now, in the schoolyard, when it's full, on a sunny day ...

RALL: Well, now, in the schoolyard, we're running, I think we're going to make 100.

DANTZIC: Wow.

RALL: Right. And we were already running a ... I was advertising—I ended up, the last print advertising I did, I was advertising 175 exhibitors.

DANTZIC: And that would be from the North Plaza all the way through the flea market?

RALL: Yeah, yeah, that would be, that wasn't including the farmers that were there, either. That would have been all of the North Plaza, the North Hall, all the spaces that we occupied around the building and the Hine school, total. And our total number of exhibitors at the end of 2008 were running—when I was evicted from managing the market on the Eastern Market side of the street—was running around 200.

DANTZIC: In total for the ...

RALL: For the whole Sunday flea market. Not including farmers. And there was another—by then, the farmers' line had built up to 25 exhibitors, probably.

DANTZIC: And when you said the farmers' line, is it just farmers? Cause there's never been 25 farmers as far as I can see.

RALL: Well ...

DANTZIC: I mean, in my experience, but do you call—like the coffee guy and the pickle guy—are they considered farmers?

RALL: Yeah, they're all considered farmers.

DANTZIC: Oh, okay. Then that makes ... that seems ... I can add it more quickly then, particularly on Sunday, because there's just fewer farmers. I guess Saturday was farm day.

RALL: Right. Right.

DANTZIC: So. How did you manage the exhibitors, in terms of, what was it like for an exhibitor to come on Sunday to exhibit? Do they ...

RALL: Well ...

DANTZIC: ... do they have a standing place? Do they ...

RALL: Right. You'd have to ... you'd have to ask them. Myself, I've been an exhibitor this whole time. I'm still an exhibitor at Eastern Market. I've changed my product line considerably, and I think ... I don't know if I mentioned initially I was primarily a furniture dealer, a specialist in furniture and accessories of the Empire period through the Deco period, primarily—1840s through the 1940s. But over the last 10 years I've changed completely away from furniture and am now doing something else. But so I was an exhibitor this whole period of time, and that helped, because we went through all of the exhibitors, and myself and my growing staff went through the same thing every week. I mean, we suffered the 100 degree days and we suffered the rain, and the wind, and the variety of unpleasant weather that you can have in Washington. Interestingly, also, we ... that was not true through the development of the Sunday markets. Initially we had a March—an April through November season and then we went March through November, and then we added through the Christmas period, and worked out with the Christmas tree dealers, an arrangement. And then, just a few—it's been since the start of the 21st century, I think, right around 2000—we've gone year round. You know, every Sunday year round. And I ... where was I? I have no idea where we segued from ...

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

TAPE 2/SIDE 1

RALL: ... asked me that.

DANTZIC: Okay, so, in talking about the exhibitors, how could the exhibitors count on being able to show their wares every week?

RALL: Initially they pretty much needed to show up. I mean, we had all this space. I mean, we were using the whole city block around Eastern Market. Eventually we were using some of it inside the building. You know, we actually went back, after about 1992-93, we actually re-acquired the space adjacent to the South Hall, as well as expanding. So we were in this expansion mode really from 1984 to 2004. I mean, the Hine school playground was a large lot, you know, that was a half acre lot. It may be a little more. So ... and that was a half of a city block, you know.

DANTZIC: Right.

RALL: An empty half of a city block that we were filling up. So we did find, once the number got to a certain number, and I'm not sure exactly when that was, but it was—at the time we had reached 100 exhibitors or so, and had begun to move over to Hine school—I started to hire management help on Sundays. [added: In particular, I would like to mention Vernon Burnett, William (Rudy) Coates, and Charles Ellis.] It was overwhelming, one person. And also we got ... we got ... we hired a computer consultant in the mid, oh, around 1995 or so. And we began to make site-specific space reservations, and we went to a pre-payment system, which—because the hoards of people waiting for set-up—I could be walking around on a Sunday morning with 25 or 30 people following me around, looking for space, and we realized that this wasn't an efficient way to run a market. What, for me, one of the most fascinating things about my experience with Eastern Market has been how to manage outdoor markets, of what's actually required to manage outdoor markets. To manage any large group of people, on a weekly basis, that are coming from 50 countries around the world, many of them not speaking English at all, to create an experience that people—both exhibitors and customers—want to come back to. And more and more, we realized how we had to pre-plan the market each Sunday, and how we had to pre-reserve spaces. And eventually we got into a system of the majority of the spaces in the market were actually assigned to people on a permanent basis—what we called permanent exhibitors. And that's still how we operate in school playground today.

DANTZIC: Where people are kind of in the same space ...

RALL: Yeah, they have the same space. We ... there are one or two exhibitors that are still at Eastern Market that have been there for 25 years in a row.

DANTZIC: Who are those folks?

RALL: Oh, well, there's Doris Little, the bead lady ... or, the button lady.

DANTZIC: Oh, the button lady! Yes!

RALL: The button lady is—Doris—is still there.

DANTZIC: Wow.

RALL: And farmers—Angie Brunson showed up the second season. Ma Brown showed up the second season. I've been there the whole period of time. There's some others that—I mean, there's been a lot of attrition from that initial group, the first couple of years. And people were so devoted in the exhibitor community, that they literally worked the market until their last week of life. [chuckling] And I had been hopeful that I would be able to do that. Right now I'm not certain that I'm going to be able to do that because I'm not ... my space assignment is in doubt as we speak. And of course, I'm not going to be able to manage the Flea Market at Eastern Market more than another year or two because I've already been evicted from half of the space and the other half of the space is going to get re-developed by the city. So, you know, I don't know whether I'll be able to last until I'm ... to have a space at Eastern Market until I'm 70 or 80 and make my last ... last week of my life at Eastern Market, like I've seen so many through the years.

But, you know, I guess, I'm flexible.

DANTZIC: [laughing] I think you would have to be ...

RALL: Yes, and that's ... that's one of the very important things about market management—that people—that I learned. And that is, that a market is better run with flexibility than rigidity. At least in my opinion. Some market managers will disagree with me on that. But we ... Eastern Market happened out of anarchy, it happened because the city wasn't paying attention to—I'm talking about the outdoor markets...

DANTZIC: Right.

RALL: You know ...

DANTZIC: Well, even ...

RALL: ... and we did welcome ...

DANTZIC: ... the inside was ...

RALL: ... we did welcome everybody. I mean, we made a decision—it was a conscientious decision early on—not to turn anyone away.

DANTZIC: And that's with the flea market on Sunday, and that's why you see such a hodge-podge of ...

RALL: Well, it's one of the most diverse markets in the world. And it's being celebrated for that. I mean, in—by 2000, the Public Broadcasting System was doing a documentary on the ... called the *Flea Market Documentary*, that's still being shown today. Last week, my mailman in Arlington came up and said, "I saw you on television this week!"

DANTZIC: Oh, wow!

RALL: You know ...

DANTZIC: I'll have to check it out ...

RALL: ... from ... I mean, where, by, 2000 we were already known as one of the best outdoor markets in the country.

DANTZIC: It's my favorite! [laughs]

RALL: I mean, we're ... we're internationally known. The last couple of years, when the Euro and the Sterling were strong against the dollar, 30% of my sales were to Europeans, and ...

DANTZIC: I totally remember that! I remember just having to comment, that I heard so many European accents in the market when the Euro was so strong.

RALL: Right, and, you know, that's been—the whole thing is just, has been fascinating to me, and it's been a wonderful thing to be a part of. I mean, I grew up in a small town in Appalachia, and I never, in the world, envisioned that my life's work would be working with people from all over the world on a weekly basis. And I think our attitude—and I don't want to criticize the Eastern Market legislation and where Eastern Market might go from here—but the attitude was tremendously important, that we had. That we did welcome all races, and all cultures, and all artists, and we let all craftspeople—the retirees, the people like myself who saw it as an urban outlet for rural businesses, the people who were incubating businesses that have taken all the brick and mortar ... dozens or brick and mortar buildings around the city in the metropolitan area, that have developed into chains of businesses nation-wide, that were incubated at the outdoor markets at Eastern Market. That all of this happened because we made this conscientious decision to accept everybody, with the exception of pornography, and with the exception of

weapons, and two or three very—live animals—although we’ve certainly not kicked out the Humane Society when it wanted to have an adoption program.

DANTZIC: Oh, that’s ...

RALL: This decision to be broad, you know, was a very important attitude that really shaped the uniqueness of Eastern Market. That we didn’t stay into that antique and collectibles nook, that was extremely important. That we were open to taking the importers. You know, whole villages in South America are supported by sales at Eastern Market, you know. The women’s cooperatives in south India are supported by Eastern Market. We were open to this whole fair-trade idea, and we let the market decide who would be successful. The customers actually decided what Eastern Market would become.

DANTZIC: Because ...

RALL: By supporting the 200 small businesses that are making many of them their sole livelihoods, outside, on the streets around Eastern Market. It’s an incredible story.

DANTZIC: It is.

RALL: And that’s one that I’m tremendously proud of ...

DANTZIC: As you should be.

RALL: ... and will be for the rest of my life.

DANTZIC: Well, I hope that the future of the market has as much openness and growth.

RALL: Well, I do too, but I’m concerned that it—I’m concerned that it’s not. And actually, some of this relates to the way the Capitol Hill neighborhood has changed through the years. A change that was ... that went hand-in-hand with the revitalization of Eastern Market. The term “gentrification” applies to the Capitol Hill neighborhood. You know, this ... the 20003, the 20002 zip codes in 1969 when I first moved to Capitol Hill, were not zip codes that competed in a per capita income and educational basis level with Georgetown, for instance. And today, these zip codes compete very favorably in every demographic—in every one of those demographic aspects that Georgetown was ... flaunted. And I think because people were attracted to this diversity at Eastern Market.

DANTZIC: Yeah, I would ... I would have to guess that—that’s why I moved here. [laughs]

RALL: However, with the demand for the space, there’s a demand to improve the quality, there’s an attitude that is different from the attitude that we had developing the market. And this is the stick—that

you're going to limit certain types of merchandise, certain types of exhibitors—I wouldn't want to say class and ethnic group—but there's a threat, by over-organizing, by over-writing rules and regulations, by over-managing, that the diversity of Eastern Market is going to be much less in the future.

[Phone ringing]

DANTZIC: Let me just stop this.

RALL: One, I guess, one example of how that changed, was when I first became aware of what was going on in the farmers' line, and one of my very good friends, one of my oldest friends in Washington—Kent Ash—moved out to the country, and his idea was to start—he was from Indiana originally—and he started the organic farm business that sold at Eastern Market, and so I began to get an idea. But one of the things that—early on, in the 70s and 80s—the farmers' line accepted food stamps, for instance. And the—something called WIC.

DANTZIC: Right, Women and Children ...

RALL: Yeah, right.

DANTZIC: Right.

RALL: And eventually—and I'd, you'd have to talk to somebody from the farmers' line—at any rate, today neither of those are accepted on the farmers' lot, and I'm not sure about the indoor merchants, whether those programs are still being accepted or not. So that clientele has left the market over the years.

DANTZIC: But the market has a clientele that's much greater than the Capitol Hill neighborhood, wouldn't you think?

RALL: Oh, well, sure.

DANTZIC: Mm hmm.

RALL: I mean, it's a historic gem. It's the antidote to the mall! I mean ... [laughs]. Eastern Market appeals to everybody in the region, I mean, not just ... And there is a lot of regional food shopping going on at Eastern Market. The Capitol Hill customers are still the heart and soul of Eastern Market, it's just that Capitol Hill customer clientele has changed over the years. It's a wealthier crowd now; it's a less diverse crowd now. It's more children now, it's more dogs and pets now, than what it was then. And, you know, we never had a policy—in fact, one of the businesses that we incubated is Chateau-Animaux ...

DANTZIC: Oh, really.

RALL: Yeah, they got their start with us with a stall at the Sunday Flea Market, under the shed. You know, we've never turned away people strolling with their dogs, and we've welcomed people with their strollers, and ... so it's a younger crowd now.

DANTZIC: Is it a bigger crowd?

RALL: Oh, sure, much bigger. Gee, like that first year—1983, when you could put that bowling ball down, all the way, literally, all the way down from North Carolina to Pennsylvania Avenue, and there wouldn't be a soul walking. There was a little Safeway across the street that went out of business ...

DANTZIC: Oh, really?

RALL: Yeah, it went out of business. It's now—on the corner of the alley there—it's been redeveloped into the office building.

DANTZIC: Oh, really? That was a Safeway?

RALL: It was a Safeway, and then, actually, an indoor antique mall for a little while, where I had a stall and a couple other of the exhibitors that are still on the Hine school lot, actually. And back, up where Bread and Chocolate was, now, was a Kresge store, that became an antique mall for a while, and the fellow who was one of our exhibitors did auctions there for a while, before it became Bread and Chocolate, and that whole corner of Pennsylvania and Seventh Street was redeveloped. So there were no crowds. There were none. I mean, you know, and it was ... I remember 1984, somebody driving up, pulling up to my stand, parking right next to the canopy, getting out of the car and looking around, and says, "I thought there was a flea market here."

DANTZIC: [laughing]

RALL: I said, "Well, you're here!"

DANTZIC: We're the market! [laughing]

RALL: The half dozen of us are the flea market. I would say, the last time I counted, I actually did a customer count, that I did a count, was three or four, five years ago, and we were running 12,000 to 15,000 customers a day. And two weeks ago I did an abbreviated count, and I'm certain we're running 20,000.

DANTZIC: Well, that was the day I met you, when you mentioned that there had been 20,000 people, and it just made me start to realize how many people come through there every day.

RALL: Right, right, right. We've become the—next to maybe—even—we're rivaling the Verizon Center, and I don't know if I mentioned to you, but I should mention to you, that about three years ago, Eastern Market was voted in the washingtonpost.com poll, the best place in the Washington area to take an out-of-town visitor.

DANTZIC: Mm hmm. [laughs]

RALL: That means that Eastern Market, in terms of our local reputation, and our regional reputation, surpasses the Smithsonian Institution.

DANTZIC: Wow.

RALL: [chuckling] You know. I mean, only the Washington Redskins as a private venue draw more people on a Sunday than does Eastern Market. I ... that's going to change. That's going to change because of the redevelopment of the Eastern Market neighborhood. I mean, the ...

DANTZIC: With the Hine school redevelopment ...

RALL: Yeah, with the Hine school redevelopment, I mean, there's no way that the existing footprint after that is going to be able to continue to attract the crowds, I don't believe, you know.

DANTZIC: I can't imagine what will happen then, you know, to that flea market. I mean, I might have to leave the neighborhood! [laughs]

RALL: [laughs]

DANTZIC: It's the one thing I have to do every week, even though I don't need a thing. I need, I like, I have to go through and see who's there and what they've got.

RALL: Well, right, and it's the social place. You see your neighbors there.

DANTZIC: Mm hmm.

RALL: And it's great people-watching, isn't it? [laughs]

DANTZIC: It is! [laughs] Yeah, at my friend Leah's booth the other day, and it was the first time I actually was a vendor for a moment, and I'm reading a book that Berman gave me: *When Culture Goes to Market*, and I was just kind of laughing, thinking, "huh". I'm a great salesperson, but ... anyways, I shouldn't be talking about me! [laughs] But I was scared! I was scared! [laughing]

RALL: Wow.

DANTZIC: Just because I didn't want to be too pushy, wanted to let people come, and, you know, but I did all right. I made one sale for Leah while she was in the restroom, so that wasn't too bad.

RALL: [laughs] Well, everybody has their own style, and ...

DANTZIC: It's true.

RALL: ... that's great, too, and that's another of the reasons that the outdoor markets appeal. As I said, they're the antidote to the mall, and one of the reasons for that is that the people that are selling things know what they're selling.

DANTZIC: Right.

RALL: [laughs] They're all ...

DANTZIC: It's so interesting.

RALL: I say over and over when I'm getting interviewed, and I get interviewed a lot, I used to get interviewed a lot, although it'll be less so as the next year or two as my involvement in the market winds down, but one of the things that I've always said is that there are no bar codes.

DANTZIC: Mm hmm. [laughing] Yeah, and I always make sure I grab all the cash in the house when I go, because you do much better with cash. [laughs]

RALL: Well, yeah, but most of the merchants ...

DANTZIC: Yeah, everybody's taking ...

RALL: ... are taking MasterCard, Visa ...

DANTZIC: ... Visa, of course ...

RALL: ... and check as well.

DANTZIC: Right, but there's definitely ...

RALL: But cash is still ...

DANTZIC: So some of the things that I heard from Michael Berman, and I was curious, of course it exists, but the whole market lingo. What are some of the terms that you guys, as vendors, have for some of the customers?

RALL: [snickering]

DANTZIC: [laughs]

RALL: Well, that's interesting, because you can't characterize them. I mean, the customer base is as diverse as the exhibitor base.

DANTZIC: Right.

RALL: I mean, it's people ... I mean, your customers are people from all over the world, you know. Your customers are as diverse as the market is, as diverse as the world. So I don't—maybe some of us have a lingo—but I certainly haven't adopted it. I just sit there—and I think most of us do—we sit there in amazement, that we have found ourselves in this atmosphere. I mean, here is mankind, living in peace and harmony. You know, [laughing] right on our earth! I mean, I, you know, I've had this Serbian set up next to the Croats, and it's been interesting watching it over the years, see where America has been at war, and the immigrant—waves of immigrants, from Vietnam, for instance, or from Croatia, Serbia, from Afghanistan, and the Middle East—literally, you know, every place that has had an insurrection, people from there have ended up at Eastern Market. And one of the other things that I didn't realize was ...

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TAPE 2/SIDE 2

DANTZIC: ... didn't realize ...

RALL: ... was how important outdoor markets are in most of the cultures of the world, as opposed to this artificial environment that we've developed in our malls and the way we live in America. And ...

DANTZIC: It's this cultural thing we can meet on, in a way.

RALL: Right, right. I mean, and it's—I didn't realize that the outdoor markets were as old as civilization when I got started in this thing. I mean, you know, the agoras in Greece, and the forums in Roman times were essentially—what they were was outdoor markets, outdoor gathering places. And of course every temperate climate in the world has their outdoor markets. I go to Jamaica every year and the whole country is nothing but an outdoor market!

DANTZIC: We were in Turkey this year, and we got to go to the Grand Bazaar, and if that is something you haven't done ...

RALL: I haven't.

DANTZIC: You need to. Have you been there?

RALL: I've read *Goldberg's Angel*, which gives a beautiful description of it, and I've talked to many of our Turkish visitors about—Enise Han and Mehmet Yalsin, who incubated at Eastern Market and now has a brick and mortar place. Enise, who's showing all around the country in the great ur-line (?), and the great department stores. I have two or three Turkish exhibitors even now in the Hine school playground, selling the copper items and things like that. And all of them have invited me to visit with their families in Istanbul.

DANTZIC: The day we decided to go to Turkey, I went to Eastern Market to grab something, and I met Mehmet, and I was like, "Oh, we're going to Turkey!" But it was just very neat to have the world right in our back yard. Thank you for that.

RALL: It is, and we're not the Grand Bazaar. I mean, we're a fraction of what the Grand Bazaar is, and we're not the crossroads of civilization between two great continents like the Bosphorus area and Istanbul is. And I would never be as outrageous as to suggest that, but in microcosm, Eastern Market can suggest to somebody what the Grand Bazaar at its greatest, is.

DANTZIC: Mm hmm. That's true. You've mentioned a few times the different folks who had incubated at Eastern Market. And just for posterity's sake, can you name off some of those?

RALL: I can try, but I'd ... the mayor's Office of Economic Development. I mean, this is really, it needs to be a funded study. I mean, it's ... I can ... there's no way I can come close to naming them all. I mean, they're kiosks in malls, they're on Capitol Hill alone. There's Chateau-Animaux, there's the sporting goods store across from the Marine Barracks, there's Mehmet Yalcin's business, there's three or four that have closed recently or gone to other locations, like Adams Morgan. There's the Peruvian Toro Mata shop in Adams Morgan. There were a couple of used consignment clothing stores—Mustard Seed is still big, up in Bethesda. It's got a 15 year history in DC now. There's Enise Han's business, Silverado, that's in the airports and kiosks throughout the area. There's Taxco, probably the largest incubator is Taxco's silver company ...

DANTZIC: How ...

RALL: ... which is in all the top malls with big stores. I went out to visit them a few years back, and they had just opened a store in Tyson's Galleria, the new Tyson's mall there in the old Tyson's mall. Pentagon City ... Michael Berman and I went to a conference on markets run by an organization called Project for Public Spaces, when Mike first started working with me five years ago, and we went to see a market in Union Station, and we come out of the subway, there's a Taxco silver.

DANTZIC: [laughs]

RALL: He has 50 or 60 stores, last time I knew.

DANTZIC: Wow.

RALL: There's the designers that have gone on to ... that have been scooped up by Barney's and the big department store chains. There's dozens of jewelry designers whose products are being sold in many locations besides Eastern Market. There's all of the artists studios that Eastern Market supports. You know, Mike Berman has made somewhat of a business of that. You know, there's the Downtown Artist's Coalition, there's Stevens Carter's place, Simi Knox, the top portraitist that did President Clinton's official portrait that hangs in the National Portrait Gallery, sold for many years at Eastern Market. Jonathan Blum, who still comes back—I saw him a couple of weeks ago—he had a space on the Eastern Market side of the street, has a storefront in Brooklyn. Ann and Leo Gallarano for many years had a store—an antiques store—in Berkeley Springs, and still in retail in Berkeley Springs, but out of antiques. Many spaces in antique malls and antique stores all around the mid-Atlantic region, especially on the shore areas, the routes to the shore areas. I mean, the list, it literally—that was not something—and that's something that the city's only beginning to realize now—is the economic benefits to the whole city and to the whole region. I mean, not just in our weekly sales taxes that we generate, but the retail ... the real estate taxes that get generated just by the regeneration of a neighborhood such as Capitol Hill.

The 400 and 500% appreciation of houses in this neighborhood where we sit, but probably this house right now, that we're sitting in, that you're living in, has probably since I came to Washington in 1969, has certainly seen a 500% appreciation, and it may be 1000. And this happens, you know, this is a snowball effect of what a good outdoor market can do—a good market in itself. And I don't want to take away from the heart and soul of Eastern Market, which is the food vendors of the South Hall, at all. You know, because they're integral to the neighborhood as well, and have been, going on a century and a half now, since 1873, whereas the regeneration of the outdoor markets has only been in this period that we're talking about, since 1975. Which is not ... which was also, not to say that nonfood markets weren't always there at the beginning, because if you study the DC market system, of which the Center Market was the largest and the most written about, and I've become interested in markets in DC—it's one of my subspecialties now in terms of—I have a little DC history interest in my business at Eastern Market. I sell a lot of things related to DC history, and I studied a little bit—old maps, for instance—you know, that have the markets ...

DANTZIC: on them.

RALL: Yeah, that have the markets on them. At any rate, when you look at period accounts of places like Center Market, Eastern Market's never really been written about until the last half ... the last quarter of the 20th Century.

DANTZIC: Wow.

RALL: You know ...

DANTZIC: And it's the only one that's still running ...

RALL: It's the only ...

DANTZIC: It's the only one that's maintained as a market all those years.

RALL: Right.

DANTZIC: Isn't that interesting.

RALL: But it was just ... it was a fixture. It was not something special, like the Center Market, which took up the whole city block where the National Archives are located now. When you look at those contemporary late 19th Century accounts of Center Market, you see they had what they called hucksters back then, and these are essentially the people like myself, who sold nonfood products at the markets.

DANTZIC: Hucksters!

RALL: Hucksters, yes.

DANTZIC: I've never heard that. I love that term.

RALL: Yes, hucksters. We were hucksters. And we still are hucksters. You know, and they've been in the market system since the very beginning, although Eastern Market is the only place that has continued to exist and where the revival has happened for the nonfood products.

DANTZIC: Wow. Well, I applaud your work and your history. I just think it's just an amazing market, and I'm curious and hopeful for its future.

RALL: Yeah, well, so am I.

DANTZIC: Can I talk to you a little bit about the fire, and just some of your memories associated around that, and I guess the first question would be, you know, how did you hear about the fire?

RALL: One of my assistant managers called me at five o'clock in the morning, to say, you know, Eastern Market was ... Eastern Market had burned down. The South Hall, at least, had burned down. And of course, that ... it actually happened on a Sunday ...

DANTZIC: On a Sunday night ... right.

RALL: ... night, April 30, 2007, after a day at the market. We had been at the market. I noticed, by the way, that the insurance company is suing the previous market managers. That just came out.

DANTZIC: Oh, I wondered if they would ever ...

RALL: Yeah, and you know, there were problems with the management of Eastern Market, and I'm not going to put myself in a litigious position by saying something about it other than that I fielded a lot of complaints on a weekly basis prior to the fire that were conditions that would contribute, that were dangerous. And indeed, indeed that may have been the situation, I don't know for sure about it. Arson investigator, of any type, certainly, that's out of my field.

DANTZIC: [laughs] Just barely.

RALL: But it was a real crisis, I mean, the market master was on vacation in Arizona, refused to come back, just resigned after the fire.

DANTZIC: Oh really. The market master, that was through the Eastern Market vendors contract?

RALL: Yeah, yeah, and somebody should, if they were an investigative reporter or interested in the history of that particular corporation, might really look into ... look into the corporate structure of the management of Eastern Market during that time, because the name changed. The name changed somewhere, and I don't know where, from Eastern Market Joint Venture to Eastern Market Venture. That may have been before ... it was probably after the market master left the market, after the fire, that the name changed, because his partners then took over the management of the market until they were evicted at the beginning of this year as well. So, that was ... so, there was a crisis of management, for one thing. There was nobody ... there was nobody really on site to manage the outdoor markets, the repercussions to the outdoor markets from the fire, which were considerable. And a zone went up—scaffolding went up, fences went up all around the Eastern Market building where exhibitors like Mike Berman had had their stands. Dozens of exhibitors were affected, and dozens of large farmers' stands were affected. The whole area that had become a single farmer area pretty much along C Street was closed. And I spent ... literally there was a management vacuum, and my management team had to step in, at least to try to make some sense of it, beginning that very next Sunday, and you know, it cost ... it cost ... it cost me thousands of

dollars in extra management fees to plan on a week-to-week basis. And we talked a little bit about how the staff grew, and people don't see the staff that it takes to run a large—even a medium-sized outdoor market like Eastern Market is—but before the fire, well, we were running eight or nine people, staff people, were supporting the overall market on a weekly basis, you know.

DANTZIC: Wow.

RALL: And since we were really the only on-site management, at least on Sundays, there never really was much on-site management, in fact, very little from the previous manager of the market. So it befell upon us to, you know, to redraw the maps and then, shortly, of, they did—the city did make the good move of closing down Seventh Street to pedestrian traffic, or to vehicular traffic on the weekends, and that helped a lot, because that gave us a place to put the displaced—many of, most of the displaced vendors. But then pretty rapidly after that came the movement to build the East Hall, which greatly affected the footprint of the Hine school, because it took that large chunk—a South Hall sized chunk—of the flea market away, which was all of ... pretty much compensated for by taking out the tennis courts and the basketball courts and expanding the area that was available on the playground. But we had to pocket all of that expense. We had to pocket all of that management expense to re-plan the transition, which of course, we weren't reimbursed for, like the merchants—and I don't—the city did a wonderful job. The city has done a wonderful job, and although there are problems with reconciling the Eastern Market legislation to the future of the market—there are a lot of them.

For instance, the cost of the utilities at the East Hall was not figured into the computations. Whereas just recently it's been admitted that the, all of the rents of all of the merchants in the East Hall, the head of OPM just recently admitted, as we pretty much knew, that they're not covering the utility bills. So ... and whether that equation has also been studied for the new re-opening of Eastern Market, could be a real problem, because the North Hall alone is a cavernous space. I mean, Eastern Market is a cavernous building, and now you're going to heat and air-condition spaces that previously weren't in there, and how that's going to get paid for is ... I'm pretty ... well, they're hoping that the income from the outdoor markets will cover it. You know, but at the same time, they're realizing that it's not easy to manage outdoor markets on limited staff. I mean, what they're putting into it—I mean, they're doing ... it looks like they're doing a decent job, but there's a lot of repercussions of the fire that in the long term haven't been thought through so well, but a lot of them has been buffered by the response of the community to the fire. And to me, despite the fact that I took a direct hit for thousands and thousands of dollars of management expenses as a result of the fire, and that I've lost a significant portion of my income as a result of having been evicted by the fire, since the fire, for the city to take direct control of the cash flow. And since I'm on the subject, I must say that I don't think the city is sending a good message to anybody

that they want to recruit to do business on public space in Washington DC. Because if you recruit somebody to do something on public space in Washington DC and they do it out of their own pocket, they put the hundreds and thousands of dollars into advertising over 25 years, they devote their life to it, and they develop something that is celebrated not only in the region but throughout the country and the world, and then they walk in and in a two week period take over all of the business that you had generated through all of that capital investment over 25 years—I don't know who's going to want to go and run shows at the Armory and put capital investment into anything, and all the public spaces—the convention center—any business that—and there are potentially hundreds of businesses that are not going to get a very good message about what happens to your capital investment when the city decides that they're going to take over your business. And I don't ... number one, I don't think it's fair—I shouldn't really go down this road, I guess, because it sounds like sour grapes, you know, but I don't think it's—they have a process in real estate called eminent domain. And the owners of that particular property at least are able to get reimbursed for a city action, you know.

DANTZIC: Right.

RALL: So I just think it would be fair that the Community Foundation, for instance, would have perhaps put some more money into subsidizing the outdoor markets after the fire. Which they've done to some extent, and it's all been helpful. They've started the music series on Sundays, which has been great.

DANTZIC: Didn't they do some advertising?

RALL: They've done some advertising that included the outdoor markets. I mean, it wasn't all just pouring money into the South Hall businesses. I mean, it wasn't the hundreds of thousands of dollars that they have done to support the people who were actually burned out, but that's really rewarding to have seen that happen. I mean, because it in a way, in a backhanded way, it verifies the work that I've done.

DANTZIC: It's an affirmation.

RALL: Yeah, it's an affirmation of the work that those of us on the outside have helped create all of this love for Eastern Market.

DANTZIC: Absolutely.

RALL: And not only love, but in terms of advertising, you know, the flea market for the last ... for the whole 25 years of its development, literally carried the advertising burden of Eastern Market on its back because very little was being done by the previous managers or by the latest managers of Eastern Market in that regard. The only website devoted to Eastern Market through, since the late 1990s, has had my

imprint on it, for instance. I mean, and it's drawing 3.5 million visitors a year. It has a subscriber list of 5,000, you know. And the city is going to wash this asset down the drain. Nobody—they're saying, "Let's develop a website from scratch." Here's what I'm calling EasternMarket.net, that was developed from scratch, that already ...

END OF TAPE 2/SIDE 1
TAPE 3/SIDE 1

DANTZIC: Okay, so you were saying ... ?

RALL: So, it's incredible to me that here's, you know, here's a—why start from scratch, you know? Here's an asset that's already the top space on the Google search engine, you know [chuckling] that already gets ... that gets the referrals from Wikipedia and about.com and yelp and every search engine in the world, you know. They're all pointing people to this website, Easternmarket.net, and has anybody suggested, "Well, is it for sale? Can we use it for Eastern Market?" No, you know, they want us to do what we've done all along, and that is be the face of Eastern Market and the advertising engine for Eastern Market, and take a huge percentage of the money that supported all of that, and use it to hire their own people and who knows what ways they're using that stream of income. They're not reporting on it. They haven't reported on the expenses yet.

DANTZIC: Since January, since they took over?

RALL: Since January, right.

DANTZIC: My guess is one reason why they wouldn't buy it is just because they don't have any money, so ...

RALL: Well, we were able to support it off of the same cash flow that they're getting. I mean, I ... but, that's going to be a problem for them going down the line, I guess. Not for me to—I'm sour grapes, and I shouldn't be upset, I'm sure.

DANTZIC: Well, I can appreciate ... your work has changed dramatically as a result of the fire, and it's probably one of the only things that wasn't a blessing, one of the things—I mean, I think people see many blessings in disguise from the fire.

RALL: Oh, certainly.

DANTZIC: And you know, obviously the buildings going to be restored ...

RALL: Yeah, it's going to be a 21st century building.

DANTZIC: Yeah, and ...

RALL: And it's going to look beautiful. I was just down there before I came over here today. I peeked in the North Hall for the first time; the door was open. You know, I saw the cobblestone on the streets. I saw the work on the sidewalks. There's going to be problems for outdoor vending that they haven't thought about on the North Plaza. I mean, I saw where the electric lines are going for the light poles, and the decision of where to put the trees, and that type of thing, has really—those types of decisions have been made without considerations for how it's going to be utilized for the outdoor markets, you know. They've been made for other reasons, and that's going to be problems—it's going to be problems for management of the outdoor market there as they go forward. I mean, it's going to call for a whole redesign of the vending area, for one thing, but I'm sure once they get all the light poles in place, and the trees up, they'll be forced to do that as we've been in the various different configurations.

DANTZIC: You've survived in the mud puddles, huh! [laughing]

RALL: Right, right.

DANTZIC: I think where there's a will, there's definitely a way. I think your work over these years has definitely proven that.

RALL: Sure, and the exhibitors, if they're making money they're going to be—they put up with a lot. They'll put up with a lot, so long as it remains worthwhile. And I think, you know, they should get a good boost from the reopen, and certainly, you know, the last 25 years of the work that I did there is—you can't destroy that overnight, and I don't think they will. I think that ... I think that the real problem will be what, at least in terms of the integration of the outdoor markets, will be what they do with that—whether they're able to accommodate the exhibitors that are there now and the future, you know. And it's obvious that there's a way to do that if ...

DANTZIC: Right, if you survived the last two years ...

RALL: Right, well, but just planning, you know. That was one of the things that I hoped I would be able to be involved in was why shouldn't Capitol Hill become an outdoor market neighborhood? Why shouldn't Barracks Row and Eastern Market be connected by a vibrant area that ...

DANTZIC: Metro plaza ...

RALL: Yeah, right. Why can't it, the outdoor markets, expand up the avenue and around the new community center that's going in at the Old Naval Hospital? You know, why not make the Capitol Hill neighborhood one of the best outdoor market districts in the whole world? And there will be an

opportunity to do that, and I hope they don't miss it. And I think, you know, I think there's a chance that that could still happen, and that there will be an accommodation of at least the existing exhibitors, and it could be done—all of the community spoke, saying they wanted an outdoor market presence in the redevelopment of Hine school—and all of the plans, the developer's plans, have an outdoor market component on the weekends in their design.

DANTZIC: Oh, that's good to know.

RALL: Right, and some of them, some of them are actually even thinking into trying to incorporate some of the public spaces around the Metro plaza and around the Seventh and Eighth Street corridor there for more, as being more active kept-up spaces. So, you know, it may all work out in the long run.

DANTZIC: Well, maybe somebody will start cutting the grass up there. [laughs]

RALL: Yeah, well, I mean, one of the developers has said just exactly that to us. They've said, "Look, we want to take over and, you know, cut the grass. We want to take care of these little parks that are adjacent to the property." You know.

DANTZIC: Well, as a resident, that's exciting to me, because I've made my phone calls about the grass. [laughing] I hate to be so petty, but it is a beautiful neighborhood and it's nice when people take care of it.

RALL: Yeah.

DANTZIC: Well, Tom, I have learned so much. [laughs]

RALL: Well, thanks, it was a pleasure.

DANTZIC: Yeah, it's a real pleasure and a real honor. And your, just your history and all that you've done is just so intriguing and exciting to me.

RALL: Well, as you can tell, I'm excited about it and always will be, and I love to talk about it, and I appreciate the time to do so.

DANTZIC: Well, thank you so much.

RALL: Uh huh.

DANTZIC: Alright.

END OF TAPE 3/SIDE 1
END OF INTERVIEW