



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Chris Calomiris

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

October 15, 2001 interview

WOLF: ...about his time at the Eastern Market. Thank you for talking to me, Chris. Tell me first, where do you live? You don't live on—in the neighborhood.

CALOMIRIS: I don't live on the Hill, no. I live in Bethesda now. I moved there when—from my father's house. It used to be on Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring. But, originally, though, I lived on First Street, 221 First Street, Northeast, across from the Russell Senate Office Building.

WOLF: Oh, really. Is that where you grew up?

CALOMIRIS: For twenty years I lived there.

WOLF: From when you were a little boy?

CALOMIRIS: I was born on that block. I was born in the room where the Vice President's office is, presently, now, in the new building.

WOLF: One second. [Tape is stopped.] Go on. You were born where?

CALOMIRIS: I was born on 221 First Street, Northeast. That was right across the street from the Russell Senate Office Building, which is the old original one. And there was a row of houses in those days across from the Russell Building. Now they took it all down and made the new Senate office building there. And I lived there, I was born there.

WOLF: Were you born in the house?

CALOMIRIS: In the house, with a doctor producing the birth. I was born in the room that the Vice President's office is. [Unintelligible] somebody told me that exact position, we pointed to the window, he said that's where the Vice President's office is today. I don't know if it still is presently, but...

WOLF: The Vice President of the United...

CALOMIRIS: Of the United States.

WOLF: Oh, really. Had an—in the Russell Office Building?

CALOMIRIS: Well, they had, evidently, an office in the Senate Office building. I don't know if they still do that or I've got the wrong information, but someone told me that.

WOLF: Well, there probably is an office. I'll have to...

CALOMIRIS: I don't know.

WOLF: Oh, really.

CALOMIRIS: It's just hearsay, but someone told me that.

WOLF: So, you were born across from where the office is now.

CALOMIRIS: I was born across from the Russell Building.

WOLF: Across from the street—Looked right into the...

CALOMIRIS: Which, after they decided to make a new Senate office building—what is that the Sam Rayburn? What is the name? [ed: the Dirksen Senate Office Building]

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: That took the place of all that whole block that our houses were. There used to be row houses there on First Street, and...

WOLF: Oh, really. Where the buildings are now, there were residential...

CALOMIRIS: Row houses, one of our houses was, where I was born. And I could see directly where the fountain is in the Russell Building. There's a fountain that, if you look out the window where I was born, you can see direct across the street to the Senate office building which had a fountain right in the middle. It was the—Right now, that building, the Russell Building is—In those days it had a horseshoe effect. It used to be open. And you could see right back in the fountain. But they put a wing to it and closed it off...

WOLF: Oh, I see.

CALOMIRIS: ...with gates. And we used to watch the workmen as a view, a few kids, go up, like a trail of ants going up at different levels with brick and mortar on his shoulders and we used to laugh.

WOLF: Really.

CALOMIRIS: That's when they were building that wing.

WOLF: They built it—it wasn't as high tech as they build now. They actually carried everything...

CALOMIRIS: No. Now they have cranes and one crane does all the job of the lifting and so forth.

WOLF: And they carried it on their backs? The bricks.

CALOMIRIS: They carried their funny shaped things and, of course, they might—we don't have [unintelligible]. We might have other smaller [unintelligible] heavier equipment, but...

WOLF: What year were you born?

CALOMIRIS: It was 1924, November 14th.

WOLF: How many—so, you have a birthday coming up.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, I'm getting older.

WOLF: Aren't we all. How many children in your family?

CALOMIRIS: There's—I've got three children, two boys and one...

WOLF: No, when you were born.

CALOMIRIS: In that house?

WOLF: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

CALOMIRIS: I've only got one brother and another brother which died. He was my twin brother.

WOLF: Oh, really. You had a twin...

CALOMIRIS: Yes. He died when he was about a year and a half old.

WOLF: Oh.

CALOMIRIS: From whooping cough, or something...

WOLF: Really.

CALOMIRIS: They didn't have ways to do anything in those days, you know.

WOLF: Wow.

CALOMIRIS: But, in that same house, we had my first cousins. Everybody, when I tell them how long we lived together, they don't believe it. Because we lived with them twenty years. My cousin's father and my father were brothers that bought the house together and we had split—they had half of the house and my father had the other half.

WOLF: Really.

CALOMIRIS: We lived twenty years together.

WOLF: Good grief. So, how did that work? Did you have one kitchen? Or...

CALOMIRIS: That's the funny part of it. People aren't going to believe what I say. Well, there were actually more of them so they actually got the benefit of more space, maybe, than we did. Because they had five children, my uncle had five children. And we were only two. So, we just split the thing in half and we had a small—up on the third floor, we had a kitchen, real small kitchen and one, not a full bath, but one to wash your hands and shave. And, on the second floor, the middle floor, there was a full bath. And that full bath, we took turns using it because there was no other full bath in the house. So, our two families would, sort of, somehow got together and they shared that.

WOLF: You took turns.

CALOMIRIS: Took turns whenever we could.

WOLF: Was there a bath tub?

CALOMIRIS: There was an old fashioned bath tub.

WOLF: With the feet?

CALOMIRIS: Yes, with feet, funny, isn't it? Funny thing.

WOLF: But, running water.

CALOMIRIS: Running water and everything.

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: Downstairs they had their own kitchen. My uncle had his own kitchen. And he had a living room and a dining room and a bedroom, and...

WOLF: Did you all use—was that a common area? You used the living...

CALOMIRIS: No, no.

WOLF: You had your own upstairs.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, we had a small kitchen and two bedrooms.

WOLF: But, what about for a living room if you...

CALOMIRIS: For a living room we had one of the sections, the front—the second floor, the front, that was the room I was born in, that was—we made that for the visitors, a living room. And they had their living room downstairs on the first floor, looking out towards the Senate office building, too.

WOLF: So, but did you do—did you eat together, did you eat your meals together as families or did you eat separately?

CALOMIRIS: Well, we more or less—my mother and my brother's [ed: uncle's?] wife, they seem to have gotten along fine and they would exchange food a lot of times. And being there twenty years—today...

WOLF: Isn't that something.

CALOMIRIS: ...when all these people can't even live one year together from what I see now. So, that's—people won't believe that that happened.

WOLF: Did your father and his brother work together?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. They didn't work together, but they came as immigrants right [unintelligible].

WOLF: Where did they come from?

CALOMIRIS: They came from Greece.

WOLF: Where in Greece?

CALOMIRIS: From Sparta, Greece, and my mother came from Sparta, Greece, too.

WOLF: So, they all came together as couples from Greece?

CALOMIRIS: No, no.

WOLF: They met here?

CALOMIRIS: Evidently they met here. My mother has—I think my uncle got married here, too. I'm not sure. I think my uncle must have married in New York and they all migrated to D. C.

WOLF: How come—why did they come to Washington?

CALOMIRIS: Well, Washington they seemed to like because it's something is—they didn't—New York was more or less a lot of immigrants and it seemed too much for them. They didn't understand English and they had one sister, I think, here, my father. And they, more or less, were attracted to that one sister. And, most of the Greeks that came to Washington didn't speak English. They, literally, lived in these so-called courts around here.

WOLF: The courts?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. You know, the alleys.

WOLF: Oh, really. Oh, I know that there were a lot of people who lived in the alleys.

CALOMIRIS: Italians lived in...

WOLF: I'm sorry, who?

CALOMIRIS: Italian people.

WOLF: Lived in the alleys.

CALOMIRIS: The immigrants, and they didn't have any money, they didn't know the English, and they're the ones you've got to give a lot of, lot of medals.

WOLF: Oh, boy.

CALOMIRIS: Because they had no help from anybody. They didn't have no programs to go by and they worked hard. There was no such thing as eight-hour work for them. They worked from morning to dusk. The salary was as crazy as—I mean my father was getting by with, what was it, about twelve dollars a week.

WOLF: And what was he doing?

CALOMIRIS: Well, they all seemed to end up in restaurants or produce.

WOLF: Yes. Is that what they had done in Greece, also?

CALOMIRIS: Well, no, they were just—they came very young, around fifteen. But, there was no opportunity there and the system in Greece, they had to give dowries to the girls and a lot of them couldn't afford it. And, so, a lot of the children, they got to an age, they had the opportunity to go away from Greece to find elsewhere, you know, a livelihood. And my father's family and my mother's all seemed to have been brought into the U.S.A.

WOLF: So, your dad came—your parents both came when they were teenagers?

CALOMIRIS: My father did. My mother came a little later.

WOLF: Did they come with their parents or by themselves?

CALOMIRIS: No, no. They came by themselves. It's a wonder how they even got here really.

WOLF: That's something.

CALOMIRIS: They only did what they knew what to do, anything that's available. My father came over as a youngster with his brothers, which were older, and they opened up, as far as I recollect—I heard tales of them going with the horse drawn wagons for produce and they would go to Takoma Park and sell through the wagons that had the produce on it.

WOLF: So, they would take produce out to areas like Takoma Park to sell?

CALOMIRIS: Yes.

WOLF: Where did they get the produce?

CALOMIRIS: Well, in those days, everybody had produce. It's—that was the livelihood for the city.

Of course, that was certainly...

WOLF: Did they get it from farmers?

CALOMIRIS: Yes, farmers.

WOLF: Who would come in from the...

CALOMIRIS: Come in, because all Georgetown would fill up with farmers.

WOLF: I see.

CALOMIRIS: If you study the history of Washington, it's originally from produce, to provide produce for a living. There were farms where Rock Creek Park was, where Walter Reed Hospital was, there was nothing but farms. So, it was literally anything—there was no such thing as people going to school because most of them were illiterates.

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: And they didn't have that schooling to cope with. They only tried to make a livelihood. So, I imagine all immigrants have the same problem. And they...

WOLF: So, your father and his brothers got here and they right away went into the produce business, and they...

CALOMIRIS: And then one of the brothers went into the restaurant business. In fact, one of them had—you know, where First Street and B Street, where the new library is, there used to be nothing but restaurants.

WOLF: The Library of Congress?

CALOMIRIS: Yes, right across the street from the old one, that street on the other side used to be a lot of restaurants. In fact, one after the other.

WOLF: Oh really.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. And my...

WOLF: When was that? What year was that?

CALOMIRIS: Well, it must have been in the '30s, as far as I can remember. They must have had it before I was born because they were talking about it and they—as I got older, they would show me the spot where he had it. It used to be right on the corner of B Street, I guess.

WOLF: There is no B Street.

CALOMIRIS: Independence, whatever it is. That corner. It's Independence, okay? And that was right across, directly across the street from the Library of Congress.

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: The Library of Congress, across the street was that row of restaurants, and my uncle's was directly across the street.

WOLF: Do you know what it was called?

CALOMIRIS: I'm afraid I don't know that.

WOLF: It was a Greek restaurant?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. He operated it.

WOLF: Did he cook?

CALOMIRIS: Well, they all seemed to have—they had to cook in those days...

WOLF: Sure.

CALOMIRIS: ...even the male, to survive. So, that's the reason why most of them went into restaurant business and produce.

WOLF: What other kind of—that row of restaurants was, what other kind of...

CALOMIRIS: Oh, they had other restaurants. I don't recall too many of them. But, as I got older, I saw Sherrill's Bakery, but they were one block over, across the street. But I'm talking the main street before...

WOLF: Right, right.

CALOMIRIS: ...used to be all restaurants.

WOLF: So, is that on what is now Independence right where the Library, where the new building of the Library of Congress is?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. Say this is the Library of Congress, this whole city block, then directly across the street there were restaurants and places of business right across the street. And my uncle's was right directly, right on the corner.

WOLF: This was your uncle who you lived with?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. My uncle George, who was called Chris Calomiris, too. And, they would always tell us tales of how long they worked, the hours and everything.

WOLF: Who used to come into those restaurants?

CALOMIRIS: I really don't know. It was before my time actually.

WOLF: And they didn't tell stories...

CALOMIRIS: They didn't tell who...

WOLF: the President...

CALOMIRIS: No.

WOLF: ...members of Congress.

CALOMIRIS: No, not that I know of. And then I know they had also another Greek stand. They used to sell souvenirs, I forget his name, on that same block. Then on the other side of the same block, on the other corner, was, later on in years, my first cousin, only his name was Kalavritinos because his mother was a Calomiris and he married a Kalavritinos.

WOLF: I see.

CALOMIRIS: So, they had a restaurant right on the corner, too, and I used to joke about him, competitive with my father.

WOLF: A restaurant, also?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. So, most Greeks were restaurant oriented.

WOLF: There's one Greek restaurant, now, on the Hill. Do you know—are you related to them?

CALOMIRIS: No, no. But I know them well. He's a nice man. It's very good.

WOLF: Yes. Is it good? Is it real Greek food?

CALOMIRIS: He's been in—he has good food. For him to be that long in business, he must be doing something right.

WOLF: Has he been there for a long time?

CALOMIRIS: As far as I can remember, he has.

WOLF: Yes. So, your father didn't go into the restaurant business. He stayed...

CALOMIRIS: Yes, he did.

WOLF: Oh, he did?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, yes. I mean—you see, they had to struggle so much, they had to define [?] one thing against the other and end up, as their children got older, they either died or their children took something else—went into real estate or went to college. They got a little better. But the original immigrants, they struggled in their heart [?].

WOLF: Oh, sure.

CALOMIRIS: And they worked hard, I'm sure. Every nationality had that problem, too.

WOLF: Oh, yes. Well, did they—so, they got here and they both went to the farms and they loaded up wagons with produce and went around the area..

CALOMIRIS: The original—as far as the tales I heard, that's before they opened up another stand, where—you know where the Archives, the building, is? The FBI and all those buildings?

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: That was all squares of markets.

WOLF: That was the Central Market?

CALOMIRIS: They used to call the old...

WOLF: Was it Center or Central?

CALOMIRIS: Old Center Market, as far as I know, they were saying. The Old Center Market

WOLF: That was a great big market.

CALOMIRIS: That's a big market where all produce from all over the area, Maryland and Virginia, would come in and show their wares, and sell it.

WOLF: Do you remember that market?

CALOMIRIS: Yes, I remember when I used to live on First Street, my mother used to take me to see my father, and his brother had a place there, too, with partners. And we used to go to that place. And I remember where the—right next to my father's stand was this grocery place. And its windows were adjacent to my father's and my uncle's stand. And there used to be thousands of flies. And I was a little kid tapping on them to move them, you know, to go in another direction.

WOLF: The flies.

CALOMIRIS: That was a good market there. And, also, my uncle, Chris Kalavritinos, he had a stand about half a block up.

WOLF: Oh, really. Now, were these permanent stands like you have now at the Eastern Market?

CALOMIRIS: They had permanent ones, they had—yes. But, they were operated mostly, partly on the curb [?] and if they were lucky enough to have a building they would go back into the building to close up with or put their stock. But, say this is the building, they would have—and show display here in front and also on the other side of the aisle they would have another display. And that was part of the same stand.

WOLF: That was a big market, wasn't it? Many levels, or two levels, didn't they...

CALOMIRIS: No. I don't know—there were some parts that I didn't even realize were there until I was told. But I only can say what I see with my own eyes. I heard they had—it was so big they had different complexes. I don't know how. But it was a real big market where all produce would come to the city and be sold there.

WOLF: How did your father and his brother get over there every day?

CALOMIRIS: Walk.

WOLF: They just walked from First Street.

CALOMIRIS: That was one of the things they were [unintelligible]. In fact, we used to walk on First Street on the Northeast side of the Capitol, you know. And we used to, as kids, go around the Capitol, hit the Capitol grounds and commence into the west side, which is where the markets were located.

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: And we used to walk all that distance, say, from First Street, Northeast, to, I guess, up there where the Archives started, around the 600 block or the 700 block, where the FBI Building or buildings are standing. [?]

WOLF: Right, right.

CALOMIRIS: ...up to there 'til we got to the stand that my father was at.

WOLF: What kind of—he sold all kinds of produce?

CALOMIRIS: Everything you could, yes. The only drawback was, in those days, there wasn't much food that could be transported.

WOLF: Right. Not much refrigeration.

CALOMIRIS: Refrigeration. So, they had to work with everything that's in season. Then, in the wintertime...

WOLF: That's nice.

CALOMIRIS: ...they would sell potatoes or—that's before they had transportation and could bring other things that's grown elsewhere over. But, then they didn't have that type of...

WOLF: So, it was all local and all seasonal.

CALOMIRIS: All local, all seasonal.

WOLF: When did they tear down that market?

CALOMIRIS: Well, I'd say, with exact dates...

WOLF: Was it in the '50s, after World War II?

CALOMIRIS: I think that is was just a little before, before I think.

WOLF: I'll have to look it up. I can't remember.

CALOMIRIS: I've got some stuff here. I didn't have a chance to look. Maybe you can find out.

WOLF: Great, wonderful.

CALOMIRIS: I just hit and miss picked up a few things because I knew you were going to ask me dates and...

WOLF: No, I'd love to take...

CALOMIRIS: I can't even remember dates anymore. I just thought...

WOLF: Oh, I don't—you're doing great. I'd love to look through that and get it back to you.

CALOMIRIS: It's okay, if you want to.

WOLF: Well, after he—how did he get to Capitol Hill? Why did he and his brother, when they came to Washington, why did they move onto Capitol Hill?

CALOMIRIS: You must realize Washington was just a city. Half of it was not even built on the east side.

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: They had planned for it to go to the east side, but, what I hear, they were asking for too much money or something so it didn't develop. It developed on the west side and that's where all the markets are. Then, the people who were running Washington in those days, they said, they decided to have somebody for the east side, which they included Eastern Market. That's why they—so, I think they then, too, were trying to fit to the needs of the city on the west side, which was the one I'm talking about, and also this east side where they expected more development didn't occur, the Eastern Market. And I think that's why—the Eastern Market. And, also, when these markets were torn down for the renewed buildings, there were about fifteen other markets that sprang up the west side of the building, on the northwest side more than they did on the east side.

WOLF: So, after they tore down the Central Market, where did your dad go?

CALOMIRIS: Center Market?

WOLF: Center Market.

CALOMIRIS: Then, he worked different places trying to make a living. There was—I know he worked at O Street Market, 7th and O. He used to work for Charlie Pizer [?]. And he also worked Florida Avenue Market, that's later on...

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: ...on Morse Street, which is adjacent to Florida Avenue Market. He had a place there, a market stand. And on Florida Avenue, he used to have, right now there used to be three sheds, if you're familiar with the Florida Avenue Market.

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: That was a good market. But, now, it's nothing like it used to be.

WOLF: No.

CALOMIRIS: It used to have, I think, three or four long sheds, from one end of the square block down to the other. One side vegetables and one had where they sold poultry and then chickens, a lot of chickens.

WOLF: A lot of chickens.

CALOMIRIS: A lot of chickens [unintelligible]. And people used to go there. And down below there was that open lot. I remember the circus used to get that.

WOLF: Oh, really.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. Then, on the 5th Street side there used to be nothing but wholesale houses, produce and meats. I remember that real well. Because the way markets operated then, say from 10:30 until 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning, there was just wholesale business occurring, which was the wholesale houses right across the street, a whole row of them from 4th Street on up to the hill. Oh, you can see—that's not to show you, it's hard for me to explain.

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: But, anyway, they had wholesale houses operating for the benefit of people that operate after, say, from 6:00 in the morning until 7:00, retail. The retailers would go to these wholesalers...

WOLF: I see.

CALOMIRIS: ...and get their, whatever they wanted to buy from these wholesale houses or from any other way. And go to Baltimore. They used to bring something in, which had the same system, too, of wholesale houses open only early in the morning. At a certain time they would close and the retailers would operate their stands. And my father had these houses here, where the wholesalers used to come in, and, also, farmers used to come in. They used to come early in the morning, too, the farmers, to sell to wholesalers or to guys like my father that would sell at a later time of the day. So, the farmers would come just anytime, say, from 10:00 in the morning and stay there until about 7:00 or 6:00, just catering to potential retailers, or wholesalers would come over and buy from them, too, so they could sell it to us. And that was the way the system was then.

WOLF: Is it different from that now at Florida Avenue?

CALOMIRIS: Florida Avenue—if people that worked in those days—would turn over in their grave. There's nothing there, of a system there. It's mostly now wholesale houses for Oriental import stuff. All the—just about all the wholesalers that I knew very well, it was quite a few of them, none exist anymore. Either they died or their children didn't take over or they just closed up and the Oriental business just took over and they went into their stalls.

WOLF: When you were growing up, how many—were there three markets in the city?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, gosh, it's so many of them.

WOLF: Oh, there were a lot of markets.

CALOMIRIS: As far as I remember there was, like I said, O Street Market. There was 5th and K Market, that was what they call the New Center Market. There was R.K. [?] Market. There was Morse Street Market. There was Florida Avenue Market. There was one, what do you call it, down at the—where the wharves are at?

WOLF: Maine Avenue?

CALOMIRIS: Yes, there used to be a market down there.

WOLF: Oh, really. Not just fish.

CALOMIRIS: No, there was a market right close to it, across the street. In fact, my father had a stand there, too.

WOLF: Was he at every market?

CALOMIRIS: Well, just about. They were so close, you could either go here or there. There was no other place to go. At their life span [?], you know, what they could earn a living. But, he was at there, too. He was at Morse Street, he was at Florida Avenue Market. In fact, he had a restaurant on Fifth Street.

WOLF: Fifth Street, Southwest?

CALOMIRIS: Northeast. My uncle had a restaurant, too, up there on the corner of it, called George's Lunchroom.

WOLF: George's?

CALOMIRIS: Yes, George's Lunch.

WOLF: So, this was not the—this is different from the restaurant they had...

CALOMIRIS: The one in Southeast. That's different altogether. That was the same uncle, but he later had...

WOLF: And what were these—were these restaurants for workers for lunch or for...

CALOMIRIS: For anything.

WOLF: Lunch, dinner, breakfast.

CALOMIRIS: Mostly for breakfast and lunch. For the working people most of the time because...

WOLF: What kind of food?

CALOMIRIS: They had their [unintelligible] whatever they want. Now, my father had—in those days, the colored had to be in their own, they couldn't go into with the white, and they had...

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: If you had—like my uncle, he had a restaurant on the corner like I said. It operated for the white only in the front. In back he had, you could go in the back, there was another door entrance and a showplace where the colored people came in. That's the way it was in those days.

WOLF: Oh, yes, I know.

CALOMIRIS: And my father catered to, about a block down, just to colored only. So, he used to sell hog maw and pigs' feet and stuff, things that they loved, you know. See, you had to do that. You had to make a living somehow, you know. So, he had been in and out of restaurant and produce businesses.

WOLF: So, both brothers were always doing restaurants or produce or...

CALOMIRIS: Yes. And there was a third brother. He did produce, too.

WOLF: And how—when—how long did your dad live?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, gosh. He lived 'til he was around 60, 64 years old.

WOLF: Oh, he was young.

CALOMIRIS: To them [unintelligible] in those days is old. They were dying at 45, 50.

WOLF: And were you—how long did you live—tell me a little bit. So, when you were growing up, where did you go to elementary school?

CALOMIRIS: I went to Peabody.

WOLF: You did.

CALOMIRIS: I finished Peabody. I think her name was Mrs. Wood, was the principal. And she had, under her jurisdiction, three schools that were close by—Peabody, Carbery, and Hilton.

WOLF: Carbery is now apartments.

CALOMIRIS: It's apartments and, then, Hilton must be torn down, I guess. But Peabody is still there, I know because they come to our place.

WOLF: Yes, sure.

CALOMIRIS: So, I went to that school.

WOLF: How'd you like Peabody?

CALOMIRIS: I loved it.

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: I remember I used to play baseball where the fence is on the side and I was small, built small, everything. My cousins were twice what I [unintelligible]. I was a small person.

WOLF: Oh, that must have been annoying.

CALOMIRIS: In a way. It was. And there was just a fence only a matter of a few yards. They would hit it over the fence. I'd always hit the net before it went over. And I remember trying to hit the thing, you know, to be in the same ball game as they were.

WOLF: Sure.

CALOMIRIS: And I used to push myself, push myself.

WOLF: So, then you played baseball right there in the Peabody...

CALOMIRIS: Oh, yes. They had—I played other sports there, too, as much as they accommodated.

WOLF: What other sports did they play?

CALOMIRIS: Also, we used to go every year to Sherwood Playground. Is that still around? Sherwood?

WOLF: I don't know. Where was that?

CALOMIRIS: It was close by. We would have meets, all the schools in the city, to, say, relays for running and jumping and baseball. We used to have a contest between each school in the city.

WOLF: And that was on Capitol Hill? Sherwood Playground?

CALOMIRIS: Sherwood Playground—it must be something close to it. You can probably look it up.

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: Sherwood. And every year they would have meets against other schools, anyway. One school would try to beat the other school and it was nice. It was real good.

WOLF: So, Peabody went through the sixth grade?

CALOMIRIS: Yes, from kindergarten...

WOLF: First grade, whatever.

CALOMIRIS: For me, I went to—me and my cousin, we started late because our parents didn't know the procedure. They couldn't speak English too well.

WOLF: Sure.

CALOMIRIS: They were always a close clan and they never would...

WOLF: Did you know English when you went to school?

CALOMIRIS: Well, I knew it, a little English. But, it kept me back, kept my cousin back.

WOLF: I'll bet, because you spoke Greek at home.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. We were pretty close families. And we used to laugh, we can laugh about it now because they would have groups of—red, white, and blue groups. Red is danger for reading, and so forth.

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: And the teacher would always—we were put in the red group because “needs work”. The teacher would call up and “Well, come in the blue group.” We would go up there. They would say come

in the blue or one of the others. But, we wouldn't go to the red—not intentionally, but we just didn't understand. So he says, "You boys have got to understand you belong in the red. You need work."

WOLF: Were there a lot of immigrant children at Peabody?

CALOMIRIS: I imagine there were. Yes, I imagine they had. But, after the first grade, I don't know what happened. We were, me and my cousin, we were on top of the list of good grades.

WOLF: Really? That's great. Well, --

CALOMIRIS: What was the problem is the language would be what was holding us back. But, after that, we did pretty good.

WOLF: Did you play with other children in the neighbor or mostly with family?

CALOMIRIS: No, we played—the one thing about, as far as the life on First Street was really—really, really I loved it. Because kids, the neighborhood [unintelligible] questioned who are you and who am I? Every 6:00 or 7:00 we had the—all the neighborhood, or especially the Greeks and Italians, were coming to our bench. Somehow they would always meet at our house. And you could hear—I would try to get some sleep on the third floor, all I could hear them yapping away. But, kids got to go along, got to get together. We had problems, like with—one thing was fortunate. We didn't have any dope problems.

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: We were fortunate for that.

WOLF: And it was a lot of Greek and Italian kids?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, yes. All of that area. It's a mix. And the Jewish. But we never had problems with that.

WOLF: So, it was a lot of ethnic...

CALOMIRIS: Ethnic—in fact...

WOLF: A lot of immigrant, families of immigrants, new immigrants.

CALOMIRIS: And we all had the same problems. We all got along fine. But, where we lived right next to an alley, one house away from the alley, used to be this court I was telling you about, called Schott's Court.

WOLF: Oh, I read about that.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. There was sort of all colored back there. Originally they were all ethnic but they moved out, then they filled in. And we had made so good friends with our—say this is our back yard with the fence and right by the fence that separated it was this colored house with the same fence. And we used to throw old clothes to them and stuff. And we got along fine with these people. And to go through there in the alley at dark you were taking a chance. But, somehow, when we would go through there, we didn't—it was no fear. We could just go right through, no problem at all.

WOLF: And did—well, I guess you didn't go to school together because the schools were segregated.

CALOMIRIS: No. The schools were segregated. There was—we didn't have a problem like that. But, anyway...

WOLF: You played together.

CALOMIRIS: We played together. We would play on the Senate Office—across the street direct was a lawn, all green, okay. We used to have these boys, two or three boys, come there. They'd come to play football with us and baseball at some point. So, we had no problem on that. In fact, we didn't have a problem, even with the police there. Because they used to have police guards, guys going to college. There was no urgency or anything. It was a joke with them and when they weren't there they knew we

weren't going to bother anybody. So we got along with them. And then right across the street was this balcony where the Vice President Garner used to be, the Vice President for Roosevelt.

WOLF: Oh, really.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. He used to come out and watch us play football and he would...

WOLF: Is that right?

CALOMIRIS: We would throw the football up to him. It's just a little balcony, maybe about twelve feet high. But, anyway, he would come out and...

WOLF: He'd catch the ball?

CALOMIRIS: He'd catch the ball and throw it back to us.

WOLF: Is that right?

CALOMIRIS: He had a big Texan hat. He was nice. I tell you, there's no place—we used to sell Liberty Magazines, too. We needed the money. We used to make a little bit of money. We used to go from office to office in the Senate office building and knock on doors. We were little youngsters and they would feel sorry for us and laugh and joke with us, you know, the people working in there.

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: They were real nice. And we used to say "Liberty five cents".

WOLF: What's Liberty magazine?

CALOMIRIS: Called the Liberty Magazine. It was the name of it.

WOLF: What kind of magazine was it?

CALOMIRIS: Liberty Magazine is something like the—almost like the same thing that you—any information for the city and so forth. It was a city magazine.

WOLF: And you'd go door-to-door and they wouldn't shoo you away. They'd...

CALOMIRIS: No. I went door-to-door...

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

WOLF: So, you'd go door-to-door in the office building with the magazine.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. And so you'd—we used to sell other magazines, too. But, that's the easiest way to say it. What other magazines did we have in those days? Liberty and they had the McCall's or something, those kinds of magazines that you would find on a stand.

WOLF: So, is this while you were in school, you would also—you were selling magazines and newspapers and...

CALOMIRIS: While I was in school, all that's while I was in school.

WOLF: Did you go to school after Peabody?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. I went to Stuart Junior High.

WOLF: Right. That's now Stuart-Hobson. I think it's a middle school.

CALOMIRIS: I don't know what it is. Stuart Junior High. I managed to finish that.

WOLF: Wonderful.

CALOMIRIS: Okay. Then, the next step would have been high school, but then things weren't too good. I decided I'd go to a vocational school to learn a trade, which they said maybe is your best bet.

WOLF: That was a very good thing to do.

CALOMIRIS: So, I went to Chamberlain Vocational—it's now a high school, I think. I don't know if it's still in existence but they...

WOLF: What was it called?

CALOMIRIS: Chamberlain—it's in Southeast somewhere. And real close by. And we went there.

WOLF: Did your cousin go with you, too?

CALOMIRIS: No, no. Then they went...

WOLF: Your brother?

CALOMIRIS: My brother, no, they—oh, yes, my brother went to Chamberlain. Yes, he did, because I followed him. But, my other cousins, see, went into regular high school, Eastern, I think it was.

WOLF: What did you study at Chamberlain?

CALOMIRIS: Electronics and radio. I went there, I think, for about two years. Then...

WOLF: What year are we now?

CALOMIRIS: This is right after junior high school.

WOLF: So, that was probably what, 19—late '30s, still before the war?

CALOMIRIS: It's still before the war. But, I thought I had come across one of these [unintelligible] my mind way back. [Going through some papers.] You know who this is?

WOLF: No.

CALOMIRIS: That's Patricia Harris. I think she was the—she used to come and buy at our stand from us. She was the first one to be a non-voting Senator or something. Is that...

WOLF: Oh, right, right. Patricia Harris.

CALOMIRIS: She was well known in the city. And she was a real nice lady. She used to come and talk to us a lot.

WOLF: So, you went to the vocational school for what, two years?

CALOMIRIS: Let's see. I took a few notes back there, but they're [unintelligible]. Let me see. Chamberlain Vocational School. Started February 4, 1941 to September 21, 1942, I went there. Stuart Junior High School, I went to January 31, 1941, which—I must have got that right, because I started Chamberlain right after that in 1941.

WOLF: It's great that you kept those notes.

CALOMIRIS: Well, I don't know what I—Eastern High School, I went when I came back from service because I had decided to finish high school.

WOLF: Good for you.

CALOMIRIS: And they were giving a program for veterans that didn't finish high school to get a diploma. Now, Chamberlain when I went was not a high school. It was just a vocational school.

WOLF: I see.

CALOMIRIS: But, after I left, they changed it to a high school. So, I decided that at least I would have a diploma in my hand to do something, you know.

WOLF: So, after you were done with Chamberlain you went into the service?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, yes. I've forgotten that's what happened. I see, I started the service...

WOLF: Where were you during the war?

CALOMIRIS: Let's see. I wrote something down here. Okay, I've got my rank, Technician 4th Class, my serial number, entering into service Camp Lee, Virginia, August the 12th, 1943. I was in the Infantry branch, and I was separated at Fort Meade when I came back. That was on January 9th, 1946.

WOLF: Three year.

CALOMIRIS: Three years.

WOLF: Where were you? Were you in Europe?

CALOMIRIS: No, I was in New Guinea, Leyte, Luzon, and Japan.

WOLF: Wow. Very exotic places.

CALOMIRIS: Oh, it's the worse place a person could live in that exists, believe me. New Guinea, they died at the age of 24. You'd see them, these real strong youth. You'd see them but they say they die very early. There, New Guinea is so much jungle. It's a—we got more rashes and disease even, the troops, you know.

WOLF: Oh, I'm sure.

CALOMIRIS: I went to the Philippines, Leyte. Please, can I have a glass of water?

WOLF: Yes, absolutely.

[Tape is stopped.]

CALOMIRIS: Do you want to do the campaigns I've got listed here? New Guinea, Leyte, Luzon, Japan. This is decoration citations. I got the—you want to hear this, too?

WOLF: Well, sure.

CALOMIRIS: Good Conduct Medal, everybody, Distinguished Unit Badge, Combat Infantry Badge, Victory Ribbon, Asiatic-Pacific Ribbon, Bronze Star Medal, Philippine Liberation Ribbon.

WOLF: So, you came—were you married before you left?

CALOMIRIS: No, I wasn't. I got married after I came out of service.

WOLF: You came back and, see—you left the service. You came back to the same house on First Street?

CALOMIRIS: We came, but not for long. The children were getting big and there were rumors that they were going to take it anyway. So, the two brothers—one of the brothers died and then my father was left and everybody went on their own. The family split up. My cousins went into real estate. I stayed in produce because I was that age I've got to support my mother. I came out of service, I had to continue something my father started.

WOLF: Your father had died while you were away?

CALOMIRIS: No. My father died when I came back.

WOLF: I see.

CALOMIRIS: And he had a...

WOLF: Had you worked in produce before you went away? You'd worked with your dad and your uncle.

CALOMIRIS: With my dad. And I'd worked for, let's see, what is this? You know there's a place in Georgetown, the market that's an old one that resembles Eastern Market.

WOLF: Oh, yes. Where they now have—now it's a fancy...

CALOMIRIS: Yes, a fancy one. I worked there, me and my brother had worked there once.

WOLF: Oh, really.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, for produce. They had produce then. Now, of course, I worked at all the other markets, too, just about. The Florida Avenue Market, the Morse Street Market.

WOLF: So, you came back. Did you go right to work or you went back to Eastern High School then?

CALOMIRIS: When I came back, I went to Eastern High School to try to finish it up. There was a date on that.

Oh, here, I guess.

WOLF: That must have...

CALOMIRIS: I went to Eastern—I started February—after I came out of service in 1946.

WOLF: What was it like to go back to school after you'd been in the service? It must have been...

CALOMIRIS: I tell you, it's really—it was an experience. I went back and then they didn't have enough teachers just to cater to veterans. So, the few veterans that returned back like I did, to finish high school, they had to mix us into the going-on students in those classes. So, I went into—kids were the age, for example, what is it? Eighteen? Whatever it was.

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: And I was sitting—I was so bashful, I would always sit in back. Okay?

WOLF: And, here you are a veteran of this terrible war.

CALOMIRIS: Oh, yes. I thought, you know, what am I doing here? You know. You felt, you know. So, one day the teacher—it was in social studies—was on geography and they were discussing different parts of the world and the teacher turned back and said "Mr. Calomiris, would you enlighten us. You've been in that part of the world." And, you should see, I wish I'd had a camera. All heads in unison turned back. I felt like [unintelligible].

WOLF: That was a good teacher, though, who knew to ask you to share the...

CALOMIRIS: Yes. She was nice.

WOLF: That same Eastern High School that's on East Capitol Street.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, same one there. There's only just two or three people that I remember. Moody—What was his name? Moody, his first name I forget. Well, anyway, he was my age, that's the reason [unintelligible]. You know, there was another one my age, too, and what was so ironic was when he had—we were students in elementary and we met at Eastern.

WOLF: Really.

CALOMIRIS: And he was taking a course. But, you know, I had another surprise in my life. That guy, I shouldn't use the word stupid, but up to then he was really not too good in those years, in those formative years. And that guy was so good in math and everything else the teacher was complimenting him right and left. In fact, she would get information from him on the studies that she was supposed to be teaching him. His name was Ralph, but I forget his last name. But I have to laugh, I say you don't know what life has in store for you.

WOLF: No, no.

CALOMIRIS: And he was really sharp. He was really bright.

WOLF: Isn't that something? So, did you finish at Eastern.

CALOMIRIS: I finished, or I guess what I could, I started. Did I make a little note out of it? [Looking at papers.] Started February 4, under the GI Bill of Rights, 306 or 30—or to June—Can you see this Chinese? My glasses aren't too good.

WOLF: Let me see. Mine aren't so great either.

CALOMIRIS: The pencil.

WOLF: [Reading from papers.] Eastern High School, 17—Started February 19th to, oh, June...

CALOMIRIS: Something.

WOLF: ...1946.

CALOMIRIS: Okay. That seems right.

WOLF: Okay. Then, you went to Central High School?

CALOMIRIS: As part time, for my radio.

WOLF: Oh, you continued that.

CALOMIRIS: Went for a while, just because—sometimes these various schools had good classes and you could take it at night if you wanted.

WOLF: Did you do that because you wanted to pursue—you wanted to do that...

CALOMIRIS: Enhance what I had started.

WOLF: So, at this time, when you were going to these schools, did you—where were you living?

CALOMIRIS: I was still living on First Street...

WOLF: Still on First Street with your mom.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, father—mother and father and brother. Then, I went—I found work at Lansburgh repair shop at Chevy Chase [unintelligible] and Electric, just before I went in service, I guess. And, also, you know I worked at Social Security Building.

WOLF: Oh, really.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. That's now no longer Social Security, it's Voice of America. It's on Independence Avenue. I worked there under the War Production Board. That's before I went in.

WOLF: So, when did you finally settle down to do produce full time?

CALOMIRIS: When I come back from service.

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: I knew I had no choice. I had to...

WOLF: Support your mom?

CALOMIRIS: Support my mom. She had a house and my father was gone [?]. So, you know...

WOLF: Was your brother working with you?

CALOMIRIS: My brother—no—he lucked out in a way. He went—right after junior high school he got a chance to go into the—it was time of the war period, and you were ready to be inducted and so forth. He decided to volunteer in the Coast Guard. And they had an electronics course, radio and TV. And my brother, we worked as radio repairmen, too, but he was so good. In fact, even the people like GE and

Philco and so forth would go for him for something—they'd come to him with a lemon they couldn't repair. They would come to him. He was very good at it. But, then, he decided he'd volunteer. He went into Coast Guard for electronics. And he lucked out. He even went from one school, college to the other, advanced because he was pretty good as he went. And, he became an electrical engineer in radio.

WOLF: Did he stay—was he also living with you?

CALOMIRIS: No, when he got married, then he moved from us.

WOLF: So, how long—so, now you're back from the service and you're working in—where were you working?

CALOMIRIS: When?

WOLF: When you came back from the service and you were helping your mom out.

CALOMIRIS: Oh, then I went to my father. He had a stand at 5th and K, this other market.

WOLF: I see. That was the new Center Market?

CALOMIRIS: New Center Market, and my father was in partners with another friend of his. And then—that was where the family was making their living when I was in service. My father was working and paying the bills. When I came back, he was still there.

WOLF: I see.

CALOMIRIS: I came back to work to help him out. I didn't know what I was going to do anyway. So, I went back in the—my father had a little difficulty with his partner. [unintelligible] But, anyway, they split up and my father was getting old and everything and I decided to give him a hand, to see, just go along with him. And he had three stands where my father was in partners with his partner. So, I said—but my father made a mistake. He didn't have any papers to show he was a partner. And then his sons—he had five sons—and they messed up everything, came in and did what they wanted. And I told my father, I said "I cannot come work with you all any more without it [?] in the long view affect the set up." I said, "You'd better find out if you're a partner or not. If you are, fine. If you want to stay, fine. But, I'm not going to stay here without papers." I said, "If your partner decides to draw a line and become partners, I want it in writing."

WOLF: Now, was your father Thomas?

CALOMIRIS: Yes.

WOLF: So, that's the Thomas Calomiris and Son.

CALOMIRIS: That's the original, yes.

WOLF: You're the "and Sons".

CALOMIRIS: Yes. I'm the "Sons". Okay. So, one thing led to the other. He made papers and everything, but they didn't live up to their promise. So, we had to split up. I said the only way to split up, you've got three stands, they've got six of them, we're two of us. We take one-third of what's there; they take the two-thirds of the six stands.

WOLF: Seems fair.

CALOMIRIS: So, we went on from then and I never separated from then and I stood with my father.

WOLF: But, you were still at Fifth and K?

CALOMIRIS: Fifth and K. And we did pretty good.

WOLF: Is Fifth and K Southwest?

CALOMIRIS: Northwest.

WOLF: Northwest. Okay.

CALOMIRIS: And we did pretty good. We worked hard, worked like a horse. My father was a worker, jeezy.

WOLF: It sounds unbelievable.

CALOMIRIS: It's almost [unintelligible] if I tell you some of the [unintelligible]. But, anyway, we did so good we knocked out the other guy in the business. Anyway, that's beside the point. And we also—the Market meanwhile was deteriorating kind of, the economic conditions of the time, and the Market was old, too. It was a nice big market.

WOLF: Is the building gone?

CALOMIRIS: They took the whole thing. That was the biggest mistake they ever made.

WOLF: Take those beautiful buildings down.

CALOMIRIS: I think that building—in fact, it originally had a dome like the Union Station.

WOLF: Really.

CALOMIRIS: It was exactly like that the length of the building. Upstairs was a convention alley. In fact, they named it Convention Hall, where people would meet and give conventions. But, towards the end they made it into one bowling alley, a whole block long, with spotlights down, with grandstand seats around it. When I was a little kid, I used to go there and watch them play, the bowlers.

WOLF: The bowlers.

CALOMIRIS: And hear the thunder of the bowling alley and the lights down on each individual alley. It was beautiful and you could watch it from the stands.

WOLF: This was at Fifth and K?

CALOMIRIS: Fifth and K. That was just the top part. The bottom, they had over, I think, over 200 dealers.

WOLF: Is that right?

CALOMIRIS: And the—I still say the guy that designed that market was the same guy that designed—maybe you can look it up—that designed the Eastern Market, because its...

WOLF: Oh, and—Claus.

CALOMIRIS: Claus. Yes. He's—the big...

WOLF: And the Smithsonian. The castle he did, too.

CALOMIRIS: Well, you look it up and find out who did Fifth and K. Maybe you can find some past history on it.

WOLF: That was a fabulous market.

CALOMIRIS: That was a big market, but they had a fire in the '40s. I was in service; my father wrote and told me. And, the dome collapsed. So they made it a straight roof. But, it still was a very good market. But, this Mr. Bernstein was the name that bought the market. It was privately owned; it wasn't government owned.

WOLF: Really. It wasn't a...

CALOMIRIS: And I told my father when I was a youngster almost, I says, "Dad,"—there were rumors that he was going to sell it and so forth—"there's a few dealers left here. Why don't you get together, find out what he wants, and buy it. You can't go wrong." No one listened to me. All they had to do was put about \$5,000 apiece up, and...

WOLF: Wow. Oh.

CALOMIRIS: You know, if that place there, now, if they had it, would have been priceless.

WOLF: What's there now?

CALOMIRIS: Nothing. They tore it down. It's a lot, parking lot I think.

WOLF: Isn't that terrible.

CALOMIRIS: And it's a shame because that market was centrally located. It was real close to the library there. You know, that library that they want to make into a museum?

WOLF: Right, the Carnegie Library.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. It's only about a block away or so.

WOLF: And all where the Convention Center is now, and stuff.

CALOMIRIS: It would have been a nice place there and it got torn down.

WOLF: What year was this?

CALOMIRIS: Well, I guess it was the—it was after 1940, after I came out of the service, because we were evicted from there. Mr. Bernstein must have sold it or rented it out for a wax museum. They didn't make out too good. I don't know...

WOLF: A wax museum?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. In fact, that wax museum is still in existence somewhere in the city. You could get information, if you want, from them. But, they messed up on that deal, because it was a good market. It was high ceilings, big windows like we have at Eastern Market.

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: And along there they had little catwalks, you could look down at the market.

WOLF: And, weren't there places to eat, too?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. In fact, you know where the Eastern Market place is? The lady that had it before the Glasgows had it came from us. Twelve dealers left. When they tore it down, we didn't know where to go. So, twelve dealers decided to find some place to go. So, someone—oh, it was what's-his-name. Frenchie.

WOLF: Oh, who had the poultry.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. Poultry. He's the one was at Eastern Market, too, because I heard he got kicked away or something from Eastern Market before. Then, he went to our place. Then, he...

WOLF: Then you all came back.

CALOMIRIS: All came back together.

WOLF: So, twelve of you left...

CALOMIRIS: About twelve of us came a little after.

WOLF: And what year was that?

CALOMIRIS: I guess I should have it here somewhere.

WOLF: Just even approximately.

CALOMIRIS: It was 19—Well, when we left it was in '63.

WOLF: So, you've been at the Eastern Market since 1963?

CALOMIRIS: Since '63 until now.

WOLF: That's almost thirty years. That's a long...

CALOMIRIS: It's over thirty years. I guess, whatever—but, anyway...

WOLF: Pretty close.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. That's when I...

WOLF: That's a long time. So, who else came over with you.

CALOMIRIS: Twelve dealers. I can get that information from—you know we had to pay rent.

WOLF: Is anybody still there other than you?

CALOMIRIS: Other than me, is the only one left. It's the only one really left. Except the Glasgows. They had to be there because they had the lease and they gave it to the gang.

WOLF: So, the Glasgows were there already.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, just the brothers. And...

WOLF: Who—one brother just died, right?

CALOMIRIS: That's Charlie. He was the...

WOLF: Charlie. And there's one brother left?

CALOMIRIS: No, no Charlie. Charlie's still living. The brother that—where Bill is...

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: Bill's father.

WOLF: Bill's father.

CALOMIRIS: He died. Now, the other brother is still living. Charlie is still living.

WOLF: But, he's sick, isn't he?

CALOMIRIS: He's been sick, yes, he's been sick. Yes, that's the only one. But, the only one left of the twelve—now the original twelve, all the others are not original, are no longer there. Even Bowers, I read in one of the magazines somewhere that he was with the twelve. He wasn't with the twelve. Mr. Sweeney was with the twelve; he bought from Mr. Sweeney. I mean I'm just trying to keep the record straight.

WOLF: Oh, sure, absolutely.

CALOMIRIS: I don't want to take any credit. But, he'd been there long, too. You have to give him credit for that.

WOLF: When you were growing up, did you shop at the Eastern Market?

CALOMIRIS: No. I went and mostly did the shopping at a little grocery store that was around the corner on First Street. We did a lot of shopping there, every once in a while go to Florida Avenue Market. We did—when my fathers [?] had their stand, of course, they would bring in food, produce. Where there were big markets, they would have their own. So...

WOLF: Your mother did all the cooking?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, yes.

WOLF: She a good cook?

CALOMIRIS: My father was a good cook, too, but my mother was real good.

WOLF: They cooked Greek food.

CALOMIRIS: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

WOLF: What did they cook?

CALOMIRIS: Just about everything, everything you can name.

WOLF: What was your mother's specialty?

CALOMIRIS: Her specialty doesn't mean that the kids would like it a lot of time.

WOLF: Well, what did she like and what did you like?

CALOMIRIS: They liked a lot of meat and a lot of wine. You know, they liked—not too much pork, but beef. They liked a lot of beef.

WOLF: Lamb.

CALOMIRIS: Lamb. They liked a lot of that. And their feta cheese, their big old sours [?] which I got with the feta cheese and the olive oil. I mean the same old things they've got now. The Greeks and Italians seemed to have almost the same thing.

WOLF: Was there a Greek church in the neighborhood, on Capitol Hill?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, yes. They had their share of coming up, too. It was in Southwest, the one we were going to. And one was in Northwest, St. Sophia's.

WOLF: But nothing right in this neighborhood? Southwest was the closest?

CALOMIRIS: No, no. Southwest was the closest one. In fact, there were two. One they had on top of a house. Then they went and built a church on Sixth and C. I remember that because I was an altar boy there.

WOLF: Sixth and C, Southwest?

CALOMIRIS: Southwest, yes. I think they tore that one down. Now they're up on Sixteenth and Upshur Street, Sts. Constantine and Helen. Then St. Sophia's, down on Massachusetts Avenue, Cathedral.

WOLF: Right, I see that one.

CALOMIRIS: Then, there's more out in Maryland. There's St. George and two other Greeks. But, they all expanded and went out. But, we used to walk from First Street all the way around the Capitol grounds to the Northwest side to Southwest to Sixth Street to go to church every Sunday that we went.

WOLF: Really? You walked all that way?

CALOMIRIS: That was our walking all the time. We used to walk to school, too. That's why I can't understand what's all this hip-hip-hooray about this and that. No one's going to melt. And we didn't seem as—we were young. When you're young, you don't feel anything. So, we didn't feel undo stress.

WOLF: No.

CALOMIRIS: But, of course, when we get old or you're sick, you feel it whenever you go two feet, you know.

WOLF: Right. What else did you do when you were growing up and you were little for fun in the neighborhood?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, fun. Oh, gosh, for fun, we used to—Halloween would come, we were devils.

WOLF: What was Halloween like in this neighborhood?

CALOMIRIS: Well, it was—we'd go from one house to the other trick-or-treat. And, if they didn't want to treat or anything, we would put a milk bottle, the next day, you know, when they didn't give us nothing. We'd just fill it up with water and just tilt it. When you open the door, the water's coming out, you know. And...

WOLF: Did people make treats? It wasn't packaged candy. People made things?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, yes. They'd give you whatever they could. And we had no fear of that then. That's one good thing about it. We weren't fearful about...

WOLF: Was the neighborhood as—were there as many people living here?

CALOMIRIS: Southeast? Yes, because I used to sell newspapers here.

WOLF: And how has the community changed? Are there a different kind of people than—different jobs, different colors, different...

CALOMIRIS: Well, as far as the people concerned, to me, it's human nature. You've got to understand human nature. You take the good and the bad with it. You can't find all good people, you can't find all bad people.

WOLF: Was it a more working class neighborhood at some time?

CALOMIRIS: It was working class, because in those days higher education, there was really no such thing. It was a privilege of the ones that...

WOLF: Right. And they didn't live in this neighborhood.

CALOMIRIS: I don't know where they lived. I was too young to realize what was going on. So, but, Southeast was good. They used to have their ups and downs. They used to have gangs.

WOLF: Really?

CALOMIRIS: Yes, Southeast gangs.

WOLF: What kind of gangs?

CALOMIRIS: Kids right at a young age.

WOLF: Were you in a gang?

CALOMIRIS: Well, I never was but I know a lot of my friends would be.

WOLF: What did they do with the gangs?

CALOMIRIS: Well, they act tough and everything, try to get into mischief, or be cocky with their teachers and stuff like that. But, not this great stuff with dope and stuff...

WOLF: Weapons?

CALOMIRIS: Well, they had—the most they'd have was a knife. Okay, a knife. And things were—they were controllable. I remember one of my friends, won't mention names, got in trouble—was in a Southeast gang. Anyway, I was a little older than they were then. And he was called, he and two or three others were called to a Board, a School Board or something, to answer to some charges, you know. So, all they wanted, from what I gathered being older, was to apologize. But they were cocky, especially [unintelligible].

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: So, they were saying this and saying what they had to say to get everything out of this thing. So, the one in charge—I don't know what you would call it, chairman or whatever—he says "Well, all we want from you is whether you think you did right or wrong here." I realized they wanted an apology. But [?] my friend was so damn cocky he started to talk and give his view. I kicked him so hard underneath the table. I said "You—just say you're sorry." Everybody [unintelligible] just started laughing.

WOLF: Did he say he was sorry?

CALOMIRIS: He said he was sorry, and they said "Everybody go home."

WOLF: Was there crime?

CALOMIRIS: Well, there was crime but not to the extent that—you know, we would feel safe at all times that time. You know, there were a few cases here and there, but crime wasn't to the point that we were—like it is today. These boys don't have a chance, their families and everything. Especially how it's set up now. I don't know what you can—I guess we're all at fault. My generation, probably, is at fault. But, I feel there should be a little discipline. I'm from the old school. I shouldn't say that. I tell that to my own children, too. But, they take it hard, too. But, I say "I'm going to say what I'm want to say. You don't have to live in it [?], live exactly like I tell you but how you fix your bed, you're going to live in it." I say, "I don't put nothing in my pocket." I say, "You don't listen to me, that's going to be your problem." And I say what I have to say and it goes against the thread of what psychologists say and everything else.

WOLF: You have pretty good kids though.

CALOMIRIS: They've got their [unintelligible], believe me.

WOLF: They're pretty good kids. So, the twelve of you left the Center Market and you came over here. Now, were you married at this point?

CALOMIRIS: Yes.

WOLF: Now, when did you meet the lovely Maria?

CALOMIRIS: The K Street Market.

WOLF: Oh, she worked at the Market?

CALOMIRIS: A little bit, yes. She was very—well, I don't know if you'll find anybody like that.

WOLF: Oh, she's wonderful.

CALOMIRIS: [unintelligible] a lot of time, a lot of things, but...

WOLF: She's pretty great.

CALOMIRIS: ...but I think she pushes herself too much.

WOLF: Was she—was her family—now, she came from Greece, didn't she?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. She came at a time when they were, after the war, when there were a lot of, lot of—what do you call it—refugees?

WOLF: Refugees, yes.

CALOMIRIS: What is the word they used then, I forget? Greece had a civil war then and they were letting people come in from Greece much more than they did, what they were supposed to. And a lot of people from Greece left, mostly I think for poverty, nothing to do—maybe the other countries did the same, I don't know. But, Greece, a lot of them went to Australia or a lot of them went to Canada and a lot came to America. And she must have chosen to come here.

WOLF: Did she come with her family?

CALOMIRIS: She came—her family, her brothers came first and brought them over. That's the first thing is, with the laws, you have to—if one comes in, then all the others, through blood, you know. So, she came in through her brothers.

WOLF: And her family had a...

CALOMIRIS: After I had married her, I wouldn't have had any problem, but she had to be here for me to bring her officially over.

WOLF: So, her family had a stand also at the Fifth and K...

CALOMIRIS: No.

WOLF: Or she was just working for someone?

CALOMIRIS: Fifth and K? No, she got married and went from—from Canada she came here. Oh, she used to work in Canada at a factory.

WOLF: But, you said you met at 5th and K.

CALOMIRIS: No, no. That's where—that job started with her [unintelligible].

WOLF: Oh, oh, oh. Oh, where did you meet?

CALOMIRIS: In Washington. Through the sisters and the relatives, you know how that works.

WOLF: Yes, I see. So, then she came to work with you at that—I see.

CALOMIRIS: When we got married, she went to work with me.

WOLF: And were you living on—where were you living then?

CALOMIRIS: With her, we were living on 10019 Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring.

WOLF: So, you moved after you—when did you leave First Street?

CALOMIRIS: Well, I left First Street, I have it written here. Then I went to Buchanan Street. That was in Northwest, Buchanan Street.

WOLF: You didn't stay in the neighborhood.

CALOMIRIS: What?

WOLF: Didn't stay in this neighborhood.

CALOMIRIS: No. I didn't stay. The only time I stayed in Washington the most was the twenty years. This neighborhood—I breathed more Washington air than I did in my lifetime because I always worked in Washington, either at the wholesale houses or at the markets. In fact, I've gotten more air in D. C. than I've gotten anywhere. Of course, the hours that I used to put in were terrific in market life. You know, you average about five or six hours each where you sleep, the others you have to be where you work. So, mostly—at school or whatever you're doing you know.

WOLF: So at the Center Market—on Fifth and K, where did you get the produce from?

CALOMIRIS: Fifth and K? We used to get it from Florida Avenue Market and in Baltimore.

WOLF: Oh. So, did you go early every morning?

CALOMIRIS: I went most of the mornings. When I felt there wasn't what I wanted in price or quality, I'd be forced to go elsewhere which would be Baltimore.

WOLF: Wow. That's a...

CALOMIRIS: It used to be such a hassle to go to Baltimore, believe me. And I didn't have the money to get big trucks or anything. And I would—so, with a small pickup truck, I loaded it up so much that a couple of times I had a flat tire, and it's for [unintelligible] pickup early in the morning...

WOLF: What about by the time you moved over here to this market? Were you still getting most of your produce from Florida Avenue?

CALOMIRIS: Yes, yes.

WOLF: But, not now.

CALOMIRIS: Not now, because they're all gone. The ones that used to be here...

WOLF: Where do you go now?

CALOMIRIS: Like, the ones that I'm getting now used to be here. They all moved out. That's why I say the city did a bum job in not keeping these people in...

WOLF: Right. That's really too bad.

CALOMIRIS: We had Florida Avenue, to develop it like they should for Washington. They never did. They let this other stuff come in. They're not using their heads a lot. They let, like, Fifth and K—they should pay people to stay in here because most businesses, nine out of ten, fail. Can't they get that through their heads?

[Tape is blank to end of TAPE #1, SIDE 2.]

[TAPE #2, SIDE 1.]

CALOMIRIS: Right now I've got to get it from wholesalers in Jessup, Maryland.

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: Where else? Wherever else I can get it, even at Florida Avenue Market. And farmers bring it in, too. We have people who have been serving us for years, you know, for home grown stuff, and they've been coming to us right good. A lot of them are really either dying or they are no longer in it.

WOLF: How have you seen the Market itself change in the thirty years that you've been there?

CALOMIRIS: Well, I'd say the—when I first started, it was more stationary. It was all the people my age and the mood of life was different then, more family. And they always would buy a lot. Well, of course, the families were more kept together and they would buy more.

WOLF: The people who came to the Market.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. They would always come with [?] a nice bag full of stuff. Now, with this new generation, you see them walking around with a half a pound of beans and this and that. And we know, they're just, they're on their own.

WOLF: And they don't have such big families either.

CALOMIRIS: That's what I'm saying, they're on their own. And so you can see the difference there. Because in the old days they would spend a lot of money just for a week, and they would buy enough. But, now, you see the younger ones coming in day by day or for a little. But, you can't blame them. They can't buy a lot of food, what, for one person. So, I think that's what the—life has changed so much. It's not closeness anymore. I don't think I'd like to live in my sons' era. I like my era better.

WOLF: You have three children?

CALOMIRIS: Three.

WOLF: Two boys and a girl.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, two boys and a girl.

WOLF: And the boys both work with you.

[segment removed at request of interviewee]

WOLF: [unintelligible] the Market is going to survive?

CALOMIRIS: The Market will be there forever, as far as I'm concerned. It'll be there forever. And it's a good market and it's always useful for the community. So, if it wasn't for, actually for the people around us...

[Talking in the background.]

WOLF: Sorry.

CALOMIRIS: ...it wouldn't be here. If it wasn't for the...

WOLF: You've seen the market have good and bad times.

CALOMIRIS: I've seen bad and good and I know how to cope [?] with it. I know how to cope with life a little better. Not because I'm smarter, but it's because I have the experience in that, I stress that. An expert [?] by no means, I'm probably stupid in a lot of ways. But I've been through a lot more that they never have been through.

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: Now, if you have something nice and all of a sudden you're in middle age, almost old age, and something happens, and you're out in the street, you're too old to recuperate and do—and go on forward. So, you're a burden or you suffer or somebody else suffers.

WOLF: Where is your daughter?

CALOMIRIS: She lives close to us. She's a school teacher.

WOLF: Is she?

CALOMIRIS: Yes.

WOLF: So, she didn't go into the—because it wasn't "Sons & Daughters", it was just "Thomas Calomiris & Sons".

CALOMIRIS: Well, we—you know [unintelligible] would never [unintelligible] any parent.

WOLF: Of course not.

CALOMIRIS: I don't care who it is. But, anyway, she chose that. We never got in the way of what they wanted. We just wanted to make sure it's safe like every parent, were doing nothing obviously wrong. You want to keep them from doing that. But, she went into that. She married, she's got three children.

WOLF: Oh, that was nice. The boys aren't married.

[Tape is unintelligible for a bit.]

WOLF: Well, Leon just got back from his trip, so he is...

CALOMIRIS: Leon is a little bit more rougher [?]. But, he's a good boy, good boy.

WOLF: Oh, I see.

CALOMIRIS: He's got a good heart. What do you call it? He's a little more of a worrier like I am, Tommy is. But, I'm trying to get him unloaded. [?]

WOLF: What's your daughter's name?

CALOMIRIS: Zoey, after my mother's name.

WOLF: That's a beautiful name.

CALOMIRIS: But, this—what it is they'll agree to the tradition to marry the first boy after the father's side [?].

WOLF: So, none of your children ever lived on Capitol Hill.

CALOMIRIS: No, none of them.

WOLF: And they don't want to.

CALOMIRIS: I don't know what that [unintelligible] question there. I mean where they want to go is their business, because they're not going to be too conservative. I don't want that.

WOLF: Did you ever miss living in this neighborhood?

CALOMIRIS: Of course. Many times I drove by there, I'm there all the time, I remember my old days. The Capitol's trees, as kids we used to think we're the apes, Tarzan and the apes. We used to swing from one branch to the other. There wasn't a room in the Capitol where as kids we didn't say "Let's investigate, see what's in this." Against the law, we used to go there when the Capitol was closed. We used to go across the street to the Senate Office Building. In this basement they used to have trolleys going from that Senate Office Building to the Capitol those days.

WOLF: Right. Underground.

CALOMIRIS: Underground.

WOLF: Yes, the subway.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. So, we used to walk all the way across that distance and get up on the Capitol side.

WOLF: Underground?

CALOMIRIS: Yes, underground. We used to walk it. We used to go... [Background noise.] Oh, boy.

WOLF: The mail.

CALOMIRIS: The mail? Okay. So we used to across underground to the Capitol side, especially on rainy days. And, we used to go to Greek school, we used to go to Greek school [unintelligible] the American school for a while.

WOLF: Where did you go to Greek school?

CALOMIRIS: Where the church was, 6th & C. That was during the elementary time, we used to go a couple hours—two or three hours a day or a few [?] hours a week.

WOLF: To learn Greek language?

CALOMIRIS: Yes, Greek and all that stuff. So, we used to go underground, walking to the other side where the Capitol is and come up to the Capitol rotunda. Okay? There was a window we knew that we used to open up in the rear of the Capitol and go out and go to Greek school.

WOLF: When the Capitol was closed?

CALOMIRIS: Was closed. And, man, I tell you it's spooky in that place where they've got the statues, statuette place, with dim lights. It's spooky as hell at night.

WOLF: That's—can you imagine now when everything's so closed up like this?

CALOMIRIS: That [unintelligible] me. That makes me mad.

WOLF: You used to go in...

CALOMIRIS: And do those crazy things. We used to do crazy things. I used to go up and down the dome, where the Indian is, the statue. That used to be our playground. We used to go—they used to have a special echo effect on the last one up there. I'd say "Hey, you! You with the baldy, put a hat on!" We were the kids. And they'd look around and see where the sounds were coming from, you know.

WOLF: So the Capitol—I mean that was just, it was a big park.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. Oh, that was our park. We had—all the community used to go. They used to have the bands, the Marine, the Navy and the Army bands. And all the neighborhood could get together, especially all the ethnic groups. Get together and lay on a blanket and just sit there and listen and jabber.

WOLF: Really.

CALOMIRIS: We used to do the same thing across the street and the lawn from the Senate. I mean that was a different life altogether, really I mean. But, it was real good. And everybody was so close. Relatives were close. Now you can't even get your whole families close.

WOLF: Boy, that must—it must have been a wonderful time.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, I loved it.

WOLF: And it's such—for a child it must have been almost...

CALOMIRIS: For a child, it was good.

WOLF: All those big buildings that were kind of yours.

CALOMIRIS: Oh, yes, we owned it. I tell you, even in the Senate Office Building, there's a room in there we didn't know what it was. They always kept it locked. We looked in there, all we could hear was a lot of noise. So, we asked the guard one day. I said, "What's in that room?" He said, "You can't go in that room." "I know," I said, "We know, it's locked." He says, "You don't want to go in there. That's a river, that's Tiber River underneath, going underneath."

WOLF: It really was?

CALOMIRIS: Tiber River.

WOLF: There was a river?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. In fact, old Capitol Hill was almost on the Tiber River. I read it mentioned a couple of times in here, in one of the books or something. It was Tiber River. There's a place where they monitored it there or but they say that's what the [unintelligible] is. Of course, I didn't go in because it's locked, every door.

WOLF: So, you used these grounds as a way to get to and from school, as a place to go with your families...

CALOMIRIS: Oh, yes. We used the station, the Union Station, you know where the fountain is?

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: Where the water—we used to swim in there.

WOLF: Did you really?

CALOMIRIS: We used to swim in there. We'd dive off where the lions were. It was only this deep, but we were small, you know. We would call it dive, because if you dive you'd get too...

WOLF: And the police didn't bother you?

CALOMIRIS: No, they bothered us, they'd bother you.

WOLF: But, they didn't at the time.

CALOMIRIS: They did later on. They be trying to keep people away. In fact, even later on, as time went on, they'd try to stop a lot of that, you know.

WOLF: Did people have gardens and grow vegetables and...

CALOMIRIS: Oh, yes, yes, yes. Especially the immigrants. You can tell a Greek or Italian house by what they had in the yard. They used to have little pots.

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: Okay. They grew their vegetables in front. Most of the Greeks and Italians had a little, for sure, basil.

WOLF: Oh, yes, got to have that.

CALOMIRIS: And a lot had [unintelligible] pots. And they had fig trees in their yards.

WOLF: Really.

CALOMIRIS: Washington was full of fig trees. I'm trying to—I've got two of them I'm trying to grow. I tried to grow five. The others died completely and I've got two, but no figs.

WOLF: So, you'd better come back to this neighborhood and grow figs.

CALOMIRIS: [unintelligible] had good fig trees here...

WOLF: There's a great one on Independence.

CALOMIRIS: Is it a good one that you can figs out?

WOLF: Yes, great big figs.

CALOMIRIS: Well, I know there were two or three of them where the bank was on the corner. There used to be a bank there, but now it's a—what bank was over there? American Security?

WOLF: Which corner?

CALOMIRIS: At Independence Avenue and Eighth Street. Which Eight Street corner? And then going down towards the...

WOLF: Marine Barracks.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, Marine Barracks. There right on the corner, well, that street there, the little short street—I forget what street it is—it had two or three in it. And a customer who used to come and buy, used to invite me over. And I used to get—man, she had so many on there, I used to fill up the bag.

WOLF: Is that right?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. I know there's other places that have it.

WOLF: The Marine Barracks was there when you were growing up.

CALOMIRIS: As far as I know, yes.

WOLF: And the—what was Union Station like?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, Union Station was as beautiful then as it is now. They wanted to tear that down, I couldn't sleep nights for thinking how crazy people are. You can't duplicate that building, I don't care where you go. And they were thinking of tearing it down or making...

WOLF: Oh, it's a fabulous—did you ever take trains when you were little?

CALOMIRIS: Yes, yes, yes.

WOLF: Where did you go on the train?

CALOMIRIS: The farthest I went on the train was just to New York where my mother's brother was.

WOLF: That must have been an exciting trip.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. You know what exciting trips were for us were when we were living on First Street? To go to the Zoo park. We thought we were going places.

WOLF: How did you get there?

CALOMIRIS: Trolley cars.

WOLF: Were there—where were—there were trolleys all over the...

CALOMIRIS: On First Street, there were trolley cars. Right in front of our yard, there were trolley cars.

WOLF: Really.

CALOMIRIS: Yes.

WOLF: Were there—and there were little neighborhood stores.

CALOMIRIS: On the corner we had a grocery store, Safeway. Then it wasn't Safeway, it was Sanitary. Then we changed it—Safeway bought Sanitary.

WOLF: But, that's a big supermarket. And there were little neighborhood corner stores.

CALOMIRIS: Well, there were more of them than anything.

WOLF: Yes. You did a lot of shopping at those?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. A lot of people had that. But, after the riots, they all disappeared.

WOLF: Oh, really.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. Right after the riots. On H Street, Northeast, and all over the place.

WOLF: Is that where a lot of them were, on H Street?

CALOMIRIS: They were all over the city, really. The little mom and dad stuff, they...

WOLF: They're coming back a little bit.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. I hope they do because it's a convenience. I hope they do. Because to us, it was good. We used to go around the corner and it was a little Jewish store there. We used to buy something there, bread and stuff that, you know, we couldn't get at the Market. It came in handy for us.

WOLF: But, when you lived on First Street, you shopped at the—you didn't shop at the Eastern Market for produce and stuff.

CALOMIRIS: I never knew it really existed.

WOLF: Really.

CALOMIRIS: That's the truth. Because we had so focused on the Northwest area for markets, of course [?], the occupations of our friends and family. There are places that you focus in your church and all your activity, was all in Northwest.

WOLF: Now, tell me about the—in the thirty years you've been at the Market, what—tell me about the good times and the bad times and what you've seen changing in the people who shop there and the merchants who sell there.

CALOMIRIS: Well, my pet peeve is not with the merchants. I've gotten along fine with them, they were fine. If it wasn't for the people—they were tops because the ones who wanted to save the market was the people around. Because at that time, when we came in, even the Health Department was trying to scuttle [?] the deal of coming in.

WOLF: That's right. Weren't there—there was a movement to close down the Market.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, to close down the Market.

WOLF: And the community and the merchants got together.

CALOMIRIS: If it wasn't for the community and the merchants and a few politicians, that Market wouldn't be there now, believe me when I tell you that. Because I sensed it when we were trying to get permits, the license. I went and got my license, expedited by going in personally and getting it and other people hadn't. And the Health Department said "Where's your license?" I said, "Why do you need a license? You know, everybody here must have, has to have a license or we wouldn't be in here."

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: You know, she sort of got me up to here a little bit. And, "No," said, "you've got to have a license." I said, "Well, what if I don't have a license, what are you going to do?" I got cocky for some reason or another. She said, "Well, you're going to get yourself in a lot of trouble." So, I said what the heck? I said, "What am I trying to do? I might as well show her my license." So, I showed it to her. But,

she ought to have known, the first one in the world to know that this is from the higher-up, that it's okay. We went this far, they let us go this far. We were legitimate. We wouldn't be crazy enough to come and try to set up a stand without a license. She should have that, she should know that from common sense. That's what peeved me you know. But, as far as the other people—what part I didn't like was the Market needed help. We got it from the community, we got as much as they can do. But, I shouldn't say that, I say politically we failed. For all these years, for us not to go and have even a lease, even now we don't have a lease, the merchants inside.

WOLF: I think there's a mosquito. Excuse me.

CALOMIRIS: Even now we don't even have a lease. Even with the new law. No one has given us a choice of—the old, same old runaround we've been getting. I said "We could have had this place..." I said to myself, "We should have this place looking good." I mean, they spent thousands of dollars and fees and stuff that they shouldn't be spending. It should be spent on the Market itself.

WOLF: What do you think the Market needs, just a clean up?

CALOMIRIS: I think, myself, it needs a clean up first of all. Things have got to be done like doors and so forth. But, secondly, I think they've got to get management under, what do you call it? But, if they can't get together, by all means, do the code work that they would—see this is under District building on the [unintelligible].

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: They're getting away with murder...

WOLF: Aren't they getting a new market manager or something? Or do they just talk about it?

CALOMIRIS: You know, I hate to be pessimistic, but I think I've told a lot of people. It seems to me I've heard that song before. I say that to myself.

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: We end up at "for the good of the market" and all that stuff that goes with it. And that has been over twenty-five years or so.

WOLF: Well, when you came to the Market in the early sixties, what was—how many people were there? What kind of shape was it in? And was it a busy, active market then?

CALOMIRIS: Yes, we had a pretty—I have to say we did pretty good. In fact, it was pretty good. I have no squawks.

WOLF: Were there more merchants than there are now?

CALOMIRIS: About the same. Only, there's less butchers.

WOLF: There are now?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. There used to be about four or five butchers.

WOLF: Oh, really. And now there's just two.

CALOMIRIS: But, see, as the time went on, like I'm saying the new generation doesn't go in for that. They get different recipes. Fast food came in. And that sort of erased the demand. You open a butcher shop, your chance of going broke was more because of less demand. So, they found other ways—they put a grocery store there, I guess, [?] and did some of this Latin food like they have now. And things like that. And...

WOLF: New immigrant groups.

CALOMIRIS: Immigrant groups came in and took the place of those butchers' places.

WOLF: Well, who were the—tell me about Frenchie. I've heard about him.

CALOMIRIS: Frenchie. I tell you, that man is a character.

WOLF: That's what—is he still alive?

CALOMIRIS: I have no idea. He might be, he might not.

WOLF: He wore a beret.

CALOMIRIS: He wore all kinds of berets.

WOLF: And that's where Melvin is now?

CALOMIRIS: That's where Melvin is.

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: He was where Melvin was. And, when he left, he gave it to one other fellow. Then, this other fellow got in kind of trouble, I think.

WOLF: Yes, I think I talked to Melvin about...

CALOMIRIS: Yes. Then, Glasgow gave it to him to take over and Melvin's doing good, I have to say that.

WOLF: Oh, he's terrific.

CALOMIRIS: I have to say that.

WOLF: And he works with his son, too.

CALOMIRIS: I have to say he's a plus.

WOLF: Oh, yes, he's a lovely guy.

CALOMIRIS: So, the only one I think I...

WOLF: So, what was Frenchie like?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, Frenchie? He always wore that black beret.

WOLF: And he sold poultry?

CALOMIRIS: He sold poultry.

WOLF: Was he French?

CALOMIRIS: I presume he was French French. I don't know. He was something. He was a character. I once had a—in fact, all of us would like to see him blow up.

WOLF: He had a temper?

CALOMIRIS: Yes, he had a real quick temper. Especially during turkey time when he gets his orders. So, I said to myself, "I'm going to see if I can play a joke on him." So, it was Thanksgiving time, I forget which year it was, so I said I'm going to call him up when he's at his real busiest time, trying to fill orders and talking with people. That's when he—you can't even approach him during that time. So, I called him up. He answers the phone. So, I said "Hello." I said "Frenchie?" He says, "Yes? Hey-a, hey-a, hey-a, hey-a." [?] I said, "Frenchie, do you sell turkeys?" He got up and he threw [unintelligible] he threw the phone down.

WOLF: What was his real name?

CALOMIRIS: I forget what it was. I probably have it on there. Let me look. I always knew him as Frenchie.

WOLF: Was he there a long time? Was he there when you got to the Market? Or did he come over with you from Fifth and K?

CALOMIRIS: He was there before me. Because he was there until he got into some kind of trouble with the Glasgows, I guess. They ended up over our Market.

WOLF: I see.

CALOMIRIS: But, when we had to move, he came over back again with us. He was one of the twelve that came in. So—well, no—he was a character, a show character. He was a likable person, there's no question about it. I sort of liked him because I always joked with him and I always [unintelligible] a little bit.

WOLF: So, who were some of the other characters who were at the Market?

CALOMIRIS: I could say that Bowers' father...

WOLF: Oh, his father.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. He was a character.

WOLF: So, they've been there a long time, too. Not as long, but...

CALOMIRIS: No, they bought from Sweeney.

WOLF: He also had a cheese...

CALOMIRIS: Yes. Sweeney came over with the original bunch, with us. Then Sweeney sold to Bowers' father.

WOLF: I see. And, so, the Glasgows have always been there. And, what about the bakery at the other end?

CALOMIRIS: The bakery? The lady came over, but she sold to...

WOLF: The Sweet Shoppe.

CALOMIRIS: The Sweet Shoppe, yes.

WOLF: And, who else is over there? Angie is new, the flowers.

CALOMIRIS: She's new.

WOLF: Because that's from when—she came from outside.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, she's from outside. She wasn't there.

WOLF: I'm trying to think who—and, I bet, I'm so sorry about the—I keep the door open because it's so—did you get bitten?

CALOMIRIS: I think I've gotten bitten a couple of times. That's why I [unintelligible]. Don't worry about it, don't worry about it. It's not the first time I've gotten bitten.

WOLF: And, who else is—well, Mr.—Jose is there now, with—Jose Canales.

CALOMIRIS: Jose, he bought it from Glasgow.

WOLF: Oh, really?

CALOMIRIS: Glasgow had—and Glasgow bought it from one of the meat people. What's his name? It was Charlie. Charlie was a meat man, not Charlie Glasgow, but Charlie—I knew him like that but I also forget what his name was. I've got all that written on a...

WOLF: Now, do you have—are there—do you have customers who have come for thirty years?

CALOMIRIS: Man, this year it's unbelievable. I don't know what it is, because maybe I'm getting all ready to go.

WOLF: Don't go anywhere.

CALOMIRIS: But, they're coming in now quite often. Mothers that had their tummy, I mean, kids in their tummy...

WOLF: And they're now coming in?

CALOMIRIS: And they're coming over big or either married. And they say, "Do you remember me?" This past week there's two of them came, twenty-five years ago.

WOLF: Isn't that something?

CALOMIRIS: And they come and reminisce. I mean, that's the best feeling. And a lot of the neighborhood people have their children come in and say "Look. Do you know who this is?" And, oh, you have to look hard, because they know us. They say they know us but they grow different people, you know. And I don't remember. But if I look hard, once in a while I size up their eyes.

WOLF: But that's what makes this different from a supermarket.

CALOMIRIS: Oh, yes. Oh, God. That's the key that kept the Market going all these years. You know, we had a Safeway across the street.

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: That was a terrific test. That was right directly across from the front entrance of the Market.

WOLF: The Market is really the heart of the neighborhood, don't you think?

CALOMIRIS: If you take the Market away, you won't have Southeast anymore.

WOLF: Yes. And, it's what makes it a special neighborhood.

CALOMIRIS: It's the special attention you get. That's—I tell you, it's rewarding when you see people—and, actually, when you first start, you don't realize what the ending's going to be. But, the reward comes in the end when you see all this.

WOLF: Well, I'm going to let you stop for now before you get eaten by mosquitoes.

[Tape is blank to end of TAPE #2, SIDE 1.]

[TAPE #2, SIDE 2.]

December 10, 2001 Interview (apparently)

[segment of testing of tape and volume]

WOLF: We are talking to Chris Calomiris again about his years growing up in this neighborhood. I mostly wanted to ask you today about the Eastern Market, but I had a couple of other questions that I wanted to ask you first. When you were growing up on First Street, did—what was this neighborhood called?

CALOMIRIS: The neighborhood? As far as I know, it was just First Street.

WOLF: Was it called Capitol Hill? Was it called Southeast?

CALOMIRIS: Actually, I don't think it was in the jurisdiction of Capitol Hill at that point because I think they were on the other side toward the Supreme Court on up to Pennsylvania Avenue. It was such a small area considered Capitol Hill then. Now, each year they seem to be adding more and more, to H Street. But, the true Capitol Hill, I think, it started from B Street on down, southeast Pennsylvania Avenue included, but I didn't think—it might not have included my one block.

WOLF: Yes. Because I've talked to people who say that this—that Capitol Hill was just the area right around the Capitol.

CALOMIRIS: That's what I thought then when we were living, but as time went on people were just confusing me because they would bring in areas that I never thought really belonged to Capitol Hill. So, I don't know if ours was included in that area or not, that being Capitol Hill.

WOLF: And, why did your father and his brother settle in this neighborhood in Washington?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, gosh, as far as I know of, they were thinking of going into New York and starting there—that's where my uncle was at—and then they thought Washington would be better.

WOLF: But, why this neighborhood, the Southeast?

CALOMIRIS: Because they found this house and it was a three-story house, and my father and his family and my father's family, they needed the space. So, that. And the one they found was a three-story one and they liked the idea of being in that area where the Capitol is. So—in those days there wasn't much really to choose from. Everything was so consolidated. All the area around. Everything, say, beyond Twelfth Street or so forth was open for spaces. You could always build and add and add all the way out to Southeast across the Anacostia. You had all that space available when we bought ours. In other words, Washington was really a small city then. Hardly—not much of a population. They had trolley cars only, no buses. And, you know, that's where they thought, it's closer to their work, too, because they had markets to fool with. And there was Central. It wasn't too far from Florida Avenue Market or the other—anything in the area was...

WOLF: What did the other families who lived in the neighborhood, what kind of work did they do?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, they had—as far as I know, one of them was buying things from auctioneer. You know, go out and buy stuff and resell it, from an auction. And, others were government people working in offices as [unintelligible] office. There was a Greek family there, they were more or less employees working whatever they could get a job with.

WOLF: It's mostly working people?

CALOMIRIS: Working class people.

WOLF: And were they mostly immigrants?

CALOMIRIS: I don't think—the immigrants that—I mean that general area around the square block there was—because judging from the activity they went in after 6:00, I lived on the third floor, they always seemed to converge in my yard and the bench. And there used to be Italian and Greek families from around the block converging there. Even from Northwest people would come in. Ours was more of a focal point for the activities because the Greeks were very close knitted and because of the language barrier. And so they all stuck together.

WOLF: What kind of activities?

CALOMIRIS: Any kind of activity. We had name days every so many—instead of birthdays the Greeks celebrated the name day. Then when you were a Christian that was your, in reality your birthday, but, you know.

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: And there was a lot of that. And all immigration people were really in a little area, the Northwest, South—they were so close to the focal point of the Capitol that—they were so small they had to stick together, the language barrier. Not only the Greek people, but the Italian people and everything else. And once in a while they would mix in just for respect and being neighbors.

WOLF: So, it was mostly Greek and Italian?

CALOMIRIS: Greek, and Italians around C Street. There were a lot of English. They outweighed the—but, the big families, we had relatives in Northwest, on E Street and other places. But, they were in walking distance of where they wanted to go. Our churches were close. By today's standards, it was far,

but to them it was close. They don't mind walking for about a half hour or forty-five minutes or [unintelligible] walking. So, to them it was close. That's the only thing that kept them together, because they had to be kept together. They didn't have the education the regular people would have, and so forth, so they had to stick together.

WOLF: Do you ever—do you see people who you grew up with, today?

CALOMIRIS: Yes, I do, on account of the church activities, I mean, as far as the Greek circles. But, also, an American—judging for myself, I'm—when in service, everybody scatters. Some go out of state and, you know, it's just the normal life that even now, today, how life can—in those days all families stuck together. But, things have changed now. Even the sons and daughters are miles away, and, you know.

WOLF: Do you have any friends from growing up who still live in this neighborhood?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, gosh, that still live in this neighborhood? You mean, where I still have contact?

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: Only ones that are living, not many left.

WOLF: Who did—someone—you know my friend Stephanie, who I come to the Market with all the time and I think you knew her mother, too, Anne Crutcher.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, I remember her very well.

WOLF: Stephanie asked me to ask you if you knew George Chakourkis.

CALOMIRIS: Do I know? That was one of the neighbors down the street. He had a little cigar stand on First Street that used to be next to the Plaza Hotel, which was—now the parking lot for the government, the Senate Office Building and everything. His father was there. Nice old man, very quiet. And we used to go down there and order ice cream from him as small kids. And his place was right directly across the street from the Senate Office grounds, his was. Because First Street...

WOLF: The Market? The Center Market?

CALOMIRIS: No, on First Street—where we lived is First Street. George—George is his son—but, anyway, they lived—they had that little—his father had that cigar place.

WOLF: Where was it?

CALOMIRIS: Right—let's see—say this is First Street block, okay? Okay. We lived in the middle of this block. Then we had to go across the street and that was his block, but still on First Street, about two-thirds of the way down on that block his place was, his father's place was located. It was a little old small store. You had to walk down the steps.

WOLF: It was a cigar store?

CALOMIRIS: Sell cigars and he sold candy. What drew us though was the candy and ice cream.

WOLF: Sure.

CALOMIRIS: We used to go there for that. And, it was very small, you know.

WOLF: Were there more small shops in the neighborhood?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, yes, around C Street—in fact, in those days, it was just neighborhood stores.

WOLF: Where did you shop for clothes and...

CALOMIRIS: Well, in those days the Hecht Company was very popular. Lansburgh's.

WOLF: So, you'd go downtown.

CALOMIRIS: Downtown. It wasn't close to us. It was walking distance.

WOLF: Sure.

CALOMIRIS: But, it really is long to walk, but we walked it.

WOLF: Was there a trolley you could take?

CALOMIRIS: You could take a trolley, yes. Trolley cars were very active in those days. And there used to be a lot of them. Even at Peabody School, there used to be a little grocery store on the corner where there was this real estate office. What's her name was there. Just recently.

WOLF: Right. Yes.

CALOMIRIS: That used to be a little grocery store and candy, because we used to skip [?] at Peabody, go down there and buy candy. It was also another one on the other side. I don't know the—another grocery...

WOLF: Right around Stanton Park?

CALOMIRIS: Yes, right around. There used to be another one there. It used to be full of grocery stores in those days.

WOLF: Were they Jewish-owned grocery stores?

CALOMIRIS: Most of them were Jewish. Most of them were Jewish, yes. The one around C Street, around the corner from us, we used to go there quite often. That was a grocery store. And right above that there used to be a Sanitary, which later Safeway bought.

WOLF: Did the little stores sell meat and...

CALOMIRIS: Did what?

WOLF: The small stores—could you buy meat there?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, yes.

WOLF: Or did you go to the market?

CALOMIRIS: No. C Street had a meat place. It was Jewish. In fact, later on he came in and—years later, he came in and had a stand in Eastern Market, the same family.

WOLF: What was their name, do you remember?

CALOMIRIS: I forget their name. It's where—let's see, what did I do with these stands? I'm trying to think. The name is right on the tip of my tongue. It's where Jose's stand is now. It was...

WOLF: What did they sell? Meat?

CALOMIRIS: They used to be—not Jose's, but the one his brother has. They had the same line as now he has that—what's his brother's name right next to Jose?

WOLF: Jorge?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, is that his name? Okay. Well, that was where the Jewish stand, people came in later and tried to operate. And Jose bought them.

WOLF: Oh, I see, from them.

CALOMIRIS: Yes.

WOLF: Well, tell me now about coming—you and twelve other merchants came in 1963 from the new Center Market. And, so, you've been here—I noticed when I was listening to the other tapes, I kept saying thirty years. You've been here forty years.

CALOMIRIS: In Washington?

WOLF: At the Eastern Market.

CALOMIRIS: I don't know. Whatever the date—since '63...

WOLF: Since 1963, it's almost forty years.

CALOMIRIS: Whatever is the math. I didn't bother the math part.

WOLF: Can you tell me about the eleven other merchants? Who else came over with you?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. In fact, I was looking at some of that about two or three week ago in one of the magazines. And somebody was writing about each stand in the Market as it is. And they were mentioning names. And, I found one and it wasn't accurate exactly.

WOLF: Oh, really.

CALOMIRIS: At one point, where Mr. Bowers is, he claimed—or somebody claimed—that he was the original one. He wasn't the original one. The original one is the one who came over with us twelve, Mr. Sweeney. And Mr. Sweeney sold to him.

WOLF: Did Mr. Sweeney sell cheese?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. That was his. He came from K Street Market.

WOLF: So that was also a dairy stand.

CALOMIRIS: That was a dairy stand, which he later sold to Mr. Bowers.

WOLF: I see.

CALOMIRIS: And, ironically, these two had the same trait. Mr. Bowers used to wear a straw hat all the time. Mr. Sweeney was much more vicious [?] in showing that hat than anybody.

WOLF: He was what?

CALOMIRIS: He would do—he would always wear a straw hat, too, and that was so ironic I had to laugh.

WOLF: Isn't that funny.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. I said both of them are the same character as far as appearance is concerned.

WOLF: How about in personality?

CALOMIRIS: Personalities? Pretty different, pretty different.

WOLF: What was Mr. Sweeney like?

CALOMIRIS: Well, Mr. Sweeney, he was a little more aggressive and a little more active in movement.

WOLF: What—and did he—he sold cheese and milk?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. Everything that Mr. Bowers sells right now.

WOLF: And did he retire, Mr.—is he still around?

CALOMIRIS: I lost track of him. I imagine—he was older than me, so he's—I don't know whether he's living or not because I'm seventy-seven.

WOLF: He retired and...

CALOMIRIS: Well, he sold out. Now what he did after that point I don't know. And that was years ago. Mr. Bowers had played [?] along, too, but it isn't as they, as he claims or somebody claims that he was, that he came over...

WOLF: He's not one of the original twelve.

CALOMIRIS: What I was reading, he says that they were telling about K Street, who came from K Street. And he said he was one of them. He wasn't one. It was Mr. Sweeney.

WOLF: Okay, you and Mr. Sweeney. So, who are the other ten?

CALOMIRIS: Oh, gosh. The other ten were—I probably have them on record because I was active when the—we formed a corporation when we came in. Mr. Glasgow gave us a lease, to us twelve that came in. It was old... That Market that you see from my stand on down to the bakery was totally empty.

WOLF: When you got here?

CALOMIRIS: When the twelve went.

WOLF: Really. So, it was—there were only stands from that door over to the North Hall.

CALOMIRIS: No, no. Oh, yes, from my door to the North Hall was occupied just by only the Glasgows.

WOLF: Oh, so, when you came only the Glasgows were there.

CALOMIRIS: As far as I remember.

WOLF: How many stands did they have?

CALOMIRIS: They had half of that Market to do what they want.

WOLF: I see.

CALOMIRIS: That's how they got all that. In fact, that half that Mr. Glasgow later on, I rented—of course, it was empty. I rented that from him, too. But as time went on, they had wanted more different people. Well, I relinquished those two that I had. There used to be a flower stand where Melvin is. They used to be my stands, too.

WOLF: Oh, really. So, you had more than—you had two or three stands.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. I mean—remember the times, too. Economically, all markets were on a downgrade. In fact, like I said, when we first came in, from my spot where I am now down to the bakery, not up to where the...

WOLF: It was all empty.

CALOMIRIS: All empty. And it was—so, we formed a corporation, our own. And Mr. Glasgow set a price, how much his share is.

WOLF: Which Mr. Glasgow?

CALOMIRIS: The Glasgows there now.

WOLF: Which? Was it Charlie?

CALOMIRIS: Charlie and I don't know who he had in his corporation. That's all secret, I guess. But, anyway, that's immaterial.

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: But, anyway, we rented all that. We had our own president, treasury, and so forth, set up. We had a lawyer setting us up. And we had certain restrictions. We could only sell what we have now. Like, if I start off as a vegetable, I can't switch over and sell cheese or anything else. In other words, in order to keep the mix, you know, fair for everybody else, so everybody won't get into each other's business...

WOLF: And they wanted to have a variety.

CALOMIRIS: To have a variety as long—you pick what you want at that point. We all agree, and we all vote it in. You stick with that. You sell this and you stay with that. I can't sell cheese, I can't sell meat, but I can sell vegetables or related items. So, that was the setup for that corporation which worked for good for a long while until...

WOLF: But, when you came in the Market must not have been doing very well.

CALOMIRIS: No. Ironically, what I'm trying to tell you, when we left that market, from K Street, K Street was going down, too. And that's the reason—and it kept emptying and emptying. And that was a terrific market that had over 200 dealers, I think, in it.

WOLF: Wow.

CALOMIRIS: And that's so [unintelligible]. But, the same atmosphere as Eastern Market, with high ceilings and everything else. It was beautiful. Its own parking lot. It had everything. It had its own post office in the back. It had this—selling dried food, I mean canned goods. It had all that. But, the times were rough in those days and all markets were diminishing. Not only that, but all over the city. There was...

WOLF: Right. People wanted fast food—supermarkets.

CALOMIRIS: Fast food. And then the same way supermarkets came into being. The Safeway would gobble up Sanitary. All the [unintelligible]—after the riots all those little mom and dad stores, all the Jewish stores, they were diminished. They would—couldn't find any of them because they were burnt or whatever, or they got afraid or something.

WOLF: Really.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. They went out of the business. So, then the chain stores came in heavy handedly and—not only Safeway, all of them, Giant and a lot of them came in, you know, after that. And all markets were going down terrifically, at a fast pace. Eastern Market, I don't know if you realize it but they had rumors going on that they were ready to sell it.

WOLF: Oh, I—and I know the community and the merchants really...

CALOMIRIS: So, if it wasn't for the merchants from K Street coming in and giving...

WOLF: That really saved the day.

CALOMIRIS: Saved the Market plus, I can see, the people around, they helped a lot and two or three Senators helped a lot.

WOLF: How long had the Market been half empty?

CALOMIRIS: Well, it's—you can—it's hard to tag [?] that market. I wasn't too familiar until I went, about that market. I knew it existed. I knew markets weren't doing good, because we used to say "At least we're doing better than" this market or that market, you know, different areas. And, all markets were in trouble at that point. But, the Eastern Market was in terrific trouble. In fact, even [unintelligible], there were rumors, you know. The feeling I got when we went in, we not only had problems stopping the selling or whatever they wanted to do, we also seemed to have trouble with the government.

WOLF: It's owned by the government.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. That's the reason. Everything had to be okayed by them. We tried to expedite our license and the only problem we had was with the Health Department. They wouldn't give us in timely order. Everybody else was falling in line. See, then in business you had to go to each department, like the Health Department and you had to worry about the, what do you call it, the other parts of government that—in order to get a license, you had to pass certain criteria like the Health Department, the zoning. You had to pass that. About five different things before you get to it. And the Health Department was the

only one that was slow in okaying the procedure that we had set—the government had set up that we had to pass.

WOLF: Do you think they were doing it because they wanted the Market to close?

CALOMIRIS: When I got—maybe I'm off, maybe. I said "Everybody else is helping except them. Wonder why."

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: You know. And, so...

WOLF: So, when the twelve of you came over you really infused new life.

CALOMIRIS: Well, yes, it did. It really did.

WOLF: And, then, the community rallied behind you.

CALOMIRIS: They were—they wanted it, too, believe me. I have to give credit to them, too. Okay. They wanted it, and a couple—it's who you know counts, you know how that is. We had maybe one or two Senators that were batting for it.

WOLF: Who—were there Senators and Congressmen who came, who used the Market, who lived in the neighborhood?

CALOMIRIS: Then?

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: Oh, sure, it was. But I know, after I went in, we had a lot of dealings with Senators. I wish I would have brought some of that stuff over, I'd show you what I'm talking about.

WOLF: What kind of stuff?

CALOMIRIS: Letters from them in appreciation...

WOLF: Oh, really.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. I've got a whole slew of them.

WOLF: If you have things like that, it would be wonderful if I could take them and just make Xerox copies of them.

CALOMIRIS: I would appreciate if you'd return it.

WOLF: Oh, I'll definitely give it back to you.

CALOMIRIS: What I'm trying to do is have my children and my grandchildren to make something out of them, put it together. And that's it. My eyes will be closed, I know. But, you know I'd have that satisfaction...

WOLF: Well, I will be happy to take them all and take them to Kinko's and make copies.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, but, just don't lose them.

WOLF: I won't lose anything.

CALOMIRIS: ...won't lost any of them.

WOLF: Well, go back, to tell me—so, we're back to the twelve merchants. So, we have you, and Sweeney. And...

CALOMIRIS: Well, there was Frenchie.

WOLF: But, Frenchie was there already.

CALOMIRIS: He was Frenchie. Way before we were, he was there. But somehow he might have gotten in trouble with whoever was there. I don't know.

WOLF: Well, you said he had a real temper.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, he had a temper. I don't know the reason. But, they—I don't know whether they gently told him to get out or what. I wasn't there. [?]

WOLF: And he was—was he French?

CALOMIRIS: [unintelligible] the rule [?] was all over the place. But, I think he probably was French.

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: He had that little black...

WOLF: Beret?

CALOMIRIS: Beret.

WOLF: But, he was there already.

CALOMIRIS: No, he came over with us.

WOLF: Oh, he came over with you.

CALOMIRIS: That's what I'm trying to tell you.

WOLF: Oh, I see.

CALOMIRIS: He evidently was there and then came to K Street Market.

WOLF: Okay.

CALOMIRIS: Because there were empty stands in K Street Market. And he found a stand at K Street. Then, he stayed for what, a year or two, whatever, when he came into K Street. Then he left with us and took us to—he's the one that got the wind that—evidently, he contacted some contact.

WOLF: I see.

CALOMIRIS: He said "Well, there's places. We'll all go together to Eastern Market."

WOLF: It must have been kind of an exciting thing to do.

CALOMIRIS: Oh, yes, yes. And, he was right with us. He knew what it was. We didn't know. It was an unknown factor.

WOLF: So, he had the poultry stand.

CALOMIRIS: He had the poultry stand. In fact, he went exactly in the same spot he left, where Melvin was.

WOLF: Oh, yes.

CALOMIRIS: Melvin's stand was...

WOLF: So, Frenchie had been there. Then he went to...

CALOMIRIS: K Street.

WOLF: K Street. Then he came back to Eastern Market.

CALOMIRIS: Came back to Eastern Market.

WOLF: I see.

CALOMIRIS: Then he sold to Melvin. Not to Melvin.

WOLF: To someone else before Melvin.

CALOMIRIS: Then Melvin bought it from somebody else...

WOLF: Yes, yes.

CALOMIRIS: ...if I remember. Anyway.

WOLF: So, what did—Frenchie sold the same kind of things Melvin sells? Anything different? Anything French?

CALOMIRIS: Well, no, no French. But, he, Melvin, more or less, added this other—like roast turkey [?], a few extra things that I don't think he had. I think Frenchie added a little—I mean, not Frenchie, but Melvin added a little more.

WOLF: And—Okay. So, who were the—so, there were you, Sweeney, and Frenchie.

CALOMIRIS: Yes.

WOLF: Now we've got nine more.

CALOMIRIS: Okay. Oh, there was—let's see, the bakery was sold—the Frenchie [?] was sold to a Jewish lady.

WOLF: Had the bakery?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. I think the first, the Jewish, the first lady was with an "H"—Helheft [?], Heffman[?], I'm not sure. But, I've got records that will... [ed: Helen Bechtel; see last page]

WOLF: Do you? Because they date [?] the people who came over from K Street. [Ed: as of February, 2004, the names of the merchants who moved to Eastern Market from the K Street Market had not been supplied by Mr. Calomiris.]

CALOMIRIS: Well, I should have because the bakery came over with us and then sold to Fine. What's her name, Fine?

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: And then Fine sold to the Glasgows.

WOLF: Oh, the Glasgows own it now?

CALOMIRIS: They took over quite a bit. They...

WOLF: Oh, I didn't know that.

CALOMIRIS: They took, on our side, they took the bakery...

WOLF: Meat and fish.

CALOMIRIS: Meat and fish they had. That was their corporation. How that was set up I don't know.

WOLF: I see.

CALOMIRIS: Meat and fish and the...

WOLF: Market Lunch.

CALOMIRIS: No, Market Lunch was taken with one of the ladies that came with us.

WOLF: Oh, really.

CALOMIRIS: I mean she was really doing a lot of good business, too. She was doing terrific..

WOLF: So, tell me about her.

CALOMIRIS: She was doing terrific business at K Street Market, just as much as—and even when she came over with us she was having lines.

WOLF: Same kind of food?

CALOMIRIS: Same kind of food. She—they both were doing very good business.

WOLF: Was there only one place to eat or was there another?

CALOMIRIS: In the Market?

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: That's the only one.

WOLF: Was the bottom part ever open?

CALOMIRIS: The what?

WOLF: The basement.

CALOMIRIS: No, that was nothing, absolutely nothing. Just storage space.

WOLF: And what about upstairs where the market master's quarters are and all that?

CALOMIRIS: There was—the only one I know is the pottery. I don't know when she came in. She didn't come over with us. So—but, there were rumors that, you know, right above where our hall is, where the machine is, that ATM machine is?

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: Up above there's a room...

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: ...and there's a clock on the outside. You can look from my stand. They claim that used to be a restaurant.

WOLF: Because I heard, also, there was a restaurant downstairs.

CALOMIRIS: There could have been, but not in my time.

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: Because I'm sure there wasn't anything down there.

WOLF: I'm going to stop for one second because I want to make—[break in recording]

WOLF: Okay, so, we've got now—we've got seven more people.

CALOMIRIS: All right. Well, I've told you about the bakery. Right? That was turned over.

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: We told you about the cheese person. What's the other one, next to...

WOLF: What about a butcher? Were they...

CALOMIRIS: Oh, the butchers. I think there were three or four butchers. Okay, butchers. Right across from me were these German people. They had a terrific amount of business. They sold homemade sausages and everything.

WOLF: Really.

CALOMIRIS: I mean they were doing some business, too. They sold nothing but pork. Nothing else. What is their name, now? Her husband was Swedish, I think; she was German. Oh, it will come to me. It always comes to me. Anyway, skip that for a minute and then we go down to, next to him used to be—

I'm trying to figure what business was there. Oh, there was Ginsburg [?]. He had a meat stand. Next door was a meat stand, but who had it before Ginsburg? Well, there was Ginsburg. He didn't come over with us, but he took over a meat stand. And the next one was groceries. You know, the groceries, where the other, Jose's brother...

WOLF: Packaged groceries?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. Where the other brother has his. That was taken over by these Jewish people that I told you that used to be on C Street. I forget her name, but anyway I could look those up for you. And down from that there was Finchum[?], that's right. Finchum was a meat man.

WOLF: What was his name?

CALOMIRIS: Finchum.

WOLF: Finchum?

CALOMIRIS: Yes. He was a meat man. He came over with us.

WOLF: All different kinds of—were the meat stands all different? Did they—and you said one was all pork and sausages.

CALOMIRIS: Well, all the others had the right to sell any kind of meat they wanted. [Siren; telephone rings.] The meat people, according to our contract had the right to sell meat or any related. So they could sell meat or pork. But each had their specialty. Now, when the first one I talked about he had sold just pork, Finchum could sell anything but I think he stuck with [unintelligible], with veal and the other meats. So, that was another meat man. And there had to be another meat man.

WOLF: Were you the only produce?

CALOMIRIS: No. The other one—Zurraas, Mr. Zurraas. There was another Greek...

WOLF: Is it Z-A-R-O-S?

CALOMIRIS: Z-U-R-R-A-A-S.

WOLF: Seems like I've seen that name.

CALOMIRIS: You probably did.

WOLF: Another Greek.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. He had produce. He came over with us from the other market. And I think he's dead now. And he sold to, let me see if it's turned over to, the stand's turned over [unintelligible—paper rattling.] Oh, let me see. Another Greek bought that. That was one of his. Another came before him. I think he was the second one, was another Greek bought it.

WOLF: And when you all came in, did business increase?

CALOMIRIS: We were holding our own. I can't speak for anybody else but I noticed activity in the Market had been getting better for all of us. I mean judging, you know, from the fact that in and out I think there was an improvement from the time that I started from zero or no. In fact, we were doing pretty good initially at the beginning than we do now, the last, say, year or so, as far as activities.

WOLF: You were doing better then?

CALOMIRIS: I think, initially, say, a year later or so, we were doing better. I'm talking for myself now; I can't talk for anybody else. But, I know that from the activity around the Market, they all—I made ten cents [?] more or less of [what] the others made—but, I'm not talking about the amount of money. It's just the liveliness of the business. There used to be a little more traffic.

WOLF: Than there is now?

CALOMIRIS: Than there is now. Now we...

WOLF: Now, on the weekends, there's a lot.

CALOMIRIS: Well, see, the whole thing that changes the pattern, because we were closed Sundays and Mondays.

WOLF: Right.

CALOMIRIS: Then, all of a sudden, when we thought Sundays started off slow at the beginning—then, as time went on, a year, a year, a year, then Sunday was improvement and we were losing Friday. So, you know it's a...

WOLF: A tradeoff.

CALOMIRIS: A tradeoff, so far.

WOLF: Were there—what difference do you see in the people who are shopping at the Market?

CALOMIRIS: Initially and now?

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: There's a big difference. Initially, the people who shopped at the Market from what I could see from sales versus what I have now, the—initially, the people at the beginning had families because they bought more. You know, one family would buy more than I can see one family now. The reason for that is because of the old timers. They used to get up at 6:00 in the morning and we had to hold the doors back. Now, we have to wait 'til 10:00 to get the new generation into the Market.

WOLF: You should probably stay open later. Open later and stay open later.

CALOMIRIS: It might work, I don't know.

WOLF: Yes. Because people come after work.

CALOMIRIS: Well, see I'm afraid that might be another tradeoff, because by doing that you lose maybe the next day's sales or following...

WOLF: Right, right.

CALOMIRIS: So, it's hard to tell, it's tricky. It could be. You should try, it won't hurt. I think we tried it once, it didn't work too good.

WOLF: And then there are people who don't—nobody—people don't have as big families anymore.

CALOMIRIS: That's another point. They don't have big families. Mom and Dad both working. See, they're working under different conditions than what we had initially people coming in. Initially, the mother would stay home. They would stay home, they took care of the children. And, also, the mother and father, they had room for them, the old timers. Now, the—young people do, I feel sorry for them. They can't—they have to work, they can't even hardly do what they have to do because—children need mother and father. I'm from the old school. If they are there we have less—a lot of these problems are occurring because mom or dad is not there.

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: I mean that's my—because I'm in a position to test both sides.

WOLF: Oh, sure.

CALOMIRIS: I preach that to my sons and my grandchildren. [Like] Talk[ing] [?] to the wall—they haven't lived through it; they don't know it, you know. So, that's when I calm down and look back, I say, they have to go through it a little bit to know what we [unintelligible] they'll find out what I'm trying to tell them.

WOLF: Did there used to be—are there more people coming from out...

[End of TAPE 2, SIDE 2]

[TAPE 3, SIDE 1]

WOLF: ...come from in or out of the neighborhood?

CALOMIRIS: Well, initially, we had a good following at K Street Market, and they were all family people there. They believed in early morning shopping and a lot of them followed us from Northwest, wherever they lived. Plus, and also, the neighborhood. So, we saw more of the old people. But, as the years went on, they are getting old and, one by one, I would look and see if they are there. They are either dead or moved or went somewhere else. As time went on, their children were in another generation so you've got to get another equation there. So, it's not the same equation. Then you have to stick with what you've got around the neighborhood. You don't want—you don't have the following because they've been diminished through death or whatever.

WOLF: So, there are people you see every week, and people you see every now and then, and people you see every few years.

CALOMIRIS: I'm telling you, if you'd been at this as long as I have, I imagine.

WOLF: You see me everyday.

CALOMIRIS: No, no, no. I'm saying that these people that I've seen twenty years ago, twenty-five, are popping up. This past month, there must have been two or three.

WOLF: Really.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. They hug and kiss me.

WOLF: Isn't that nice.

CALOMIRIS: I mean, people—I mean, every year you get a little of that—what I'm trying to tell you, there's very few left of that. This past Saturday there was one, it was a colored gentleman. He used to work for one of the suppliers, you know, Washington Heitmuller. And he's—I can relate to him, to guys who used to be our salesmen and everything. He's about as old as I am. And he said, "Don't you remember me?" He said, "I used to deliver things to your stand at K Street and here." Because he worked for Heitmuller. And he started rattling off names of the previous owners, Joe Collins and a lot of other people that I knew in that company. I said, "That man has been around." I said it to myself, you know. And there's two or three of them over a period of, say, five years, they pop up like that.

WOLF: Well, then, now there're a lot more young families who are staying in the neighborhood now.

CALOMIRIS: Well, I noticed, yes, yes.

WOLF: And, so, has that changed the...

CALOMIRIS: I've noticed there's a lot of them are moving in, young ones. The old ones—I'm sure if the old ones were still living or were able to, they'd be coming to the Market. But, if they're anything like my age, the chances are either they're sick or they can't come for some reason or they had to move or be somewhere else. But, this, right now, we're dealing totally with a new generation. You've got a new ball game.

WOLF: And they like fresh markets. They like to shop every day.

CALOMIRIS: They do. And I've noticed this past, say, six or seven months, there's more people coming in the Market, through the Market and everything else. I don't know why it is, because it's a little too early. Because the stage—the testing point is starting, say, about two years on further. Because I think, say, two years or three, that completes what you're saying, the old people coming in. It's a new ball

game. These are—I bet you that if you stop every person that's by the stand, they'll tell you that they've just been in the Market no more than—I mean, in this area, no more than two or three years.

WOLF: When you came in the '60s, did people—during the week, was it more crowded, were there more people shopping during the week?

CALOMIRIS: Well, Friday's almost getting to be almost a normal day because we opened up Sunday and it's taken its toll over a period of time. People are going on Sunday, you know, instead. And Saturday. But, for the week, during the week there's not really much. I'll be truthful with you. You can shut down three or four days and still make the same money if you just come Friday and Saturday.

WOLF: Right, right. Tell me about the outdoor, about the farmer's line. When you came was that, has that always been there? On the weekends?

CALOMIRIS: According to—you mean at the Eastern Market, has it always been there?

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: As far as I know of, it has. It's probably been there before me.

WOLF: So, did you...

CALOMIRIS: But, there were very few left. Now, when I came over, there was what they had, maybe a few new ones, but I always put a question mark on some of them.

WOLF: What was the relationship between the indoor vendors and the outdoor vendors?

CALOMIRIS: So far as I'm concerned, with all of them out there, they're my competitors. But, I can't be enemies with every competitor. So, I'm good to them and they're good to me. That's all that counts. But, when it comes to business, it's a little different story. And it seems like, in my estimation, there should be some regulation to remedy their fears and our fears which should be put in place. That's something for the new management to put into place.

WOLF: Tell me about the new management. What's, when is, what's the story?

CALOMIRIS: Well, as far as I know they're supposed to take over January the first.

WOLF: Really.

CALOMIRIS: That's the latest word I heard the last couple of days ago.

WOLF: How do you feel about how that's going to work out?

CALOMIRIS: I've been through too much. You're asking the wrong one. I have to believe it to see it. But, my estimation is, if it isn't set up right initially—now the new law has accomplished the interest of maybe two-thirds of the problem. The new law in my opinion legalized non-food people, which is fine with me. But, I believe you should—my belief that, the more you have the people want, the more people you have to come and buy your things, although the people that have come in don't have the same. So, it works good in both ways. It draws people in.

WOLF: How long are you going to keep working?

CALOMIRIS: Listen, when you ask that question to me, you're asking a crazy man. I'm only doing it because I feel lost home. I see my children working hard, and I don't want them to go through what I did in longevity of hours and so forth. I try to, so does my wife, too, bless her heart. She's working hard every day just to help them.

WOLF: Yes, she does.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, yes.

WOLF: When you came back in 1963, had you been back to this neighborhood for...

CALOMIRIS: You mean—since when?

WOLF: Well, you grew up on First Street and then you moved to Northwest and then to Maryland. You worked downtown.

CALOMIRIS: You know, that's—would you believe I've breathed more air in my whole lifetime, including where I was born, I've spent more time in this area breathing this area's air, than I did...

WOLF: Oh, I know.

CALOMIRIS: The only time—shorter hours that I used to work, I mean live outside and come back, was just for sleeping time. And my sleeping time was only five or six average a day. The rest was spent...

WOLF: I hope you get more sleep than that now.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, I get a lot more now, yes. But, then I used to—me, first, initially and my father used to do everything we have help do now.

WOLF: You'd go at, like, three in the morning to...

CALOMIRIS: Yes. Well, Saturdays I get up at two. You know, I just don't feel right to see them working. Okay, how can I ache and pain? But, I say, well, if I ache and pain home, I can do it over there at the Market.

WOLF: Still, now, you're doing that?

CALOMIRIS: Well, the—on Saturdays I do get up at two o'clock to start off the day. Friday I go, get up about five, four-thirty, five.

WOLF: What—so, do Tommy and Leon, do they do the buying now?

CALOMIRIS: They do—well, yes, they do the buying. They pick up a lot of stuff and they—they do their work. I...

WOLF: They go real early to...

CALOMIRIS: They come in early, or wherever...

WOLF: They go to Jessup.

CALOMIRIS: Yes, they go to Jessup for stuff. And, the trouble is, they're lucky—we don't say it—that they've got me and Mom. And, what worries me is when we disappear, you know, whether we're doing the right thing in trying—in the back of my mind, I don't want them to do what I've been doing for years—getting up say an average of four o'clock or three every day. Okay?

WOLF: Yes. It's a hard thing to [unintelligible].

CALOMIRIS: And then going home and seeing...

WOLF: What time does the Market open now?

CALOMIRIS: It's supposed to open at six on Saturday. Let's see, seven from say Tuesday to Thursday. And then Friday and Saturday and Sunday, they open up at—not Sunday—Friday and Saturday seven o'clock and Sunday from eight to four.

WOLF: I see, so eight to four.

CALOMIRIS: Eight to four.

WOLF: What—how has this neighborhood—you were born here seventy-seven years ago. How does the neighborhood seem different to you now?

CALOMIRIS: There's not much difference in structure, in the area, the buildings and the houses, except down where the Senate Office buildings are. Southwest is—I get lost there now because I never went

back into the area, you know. Like, I used to walk as a youth. I don't do that. But, places I saw were slums now are big buildings and, you know, the Southwest is getting up pretty big. But, that was a notorious slum area in my day.

WOLF: Southwest.

CALOMIRIS: Southwest was completely notorious.

WOLF: Yes, I know that.

CALOMIRIS: But, that has changed, that's why you can see me staring at these houses and I can tell you where everything is because they are all physically about the same, the same thing. They've only got a certain limited space and—well, one thing I love about these houses, high ceilings.

WOLF: Oh, that's great.

CALOMIRIS: You don't get high ceilings in the newer houses, the expensive ones. Except in...

WOLF: But, you didn't want to stay living in this neighborhood.

CALOMIRIS: It wasn't up to me. When I was—grew up, my father went with his brother on First Street. Okay? Then, they decided to move. They moved on Buchanan Street, Northwest. And from Buchanan Street, Northwest, my father was getting old and he couldn't walk steps. So the rambles—there was no such thing as rambles around this area, you know, a single...

WOLF: Just one level.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. So, he went to Silver Spring. Meanwhile, of course, I was with my family up 'til I went into service and then came back from service.

WOLF: Well, you've got more room out there.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. And I went where the family was. I've lived with my father and mother 'til they died.

WOLF: Yes.

CALOMIRIS: You know, that's—so, but, my father died while we were in Silver Spring.

WOLF: Was Mary's mother here? I know her father died when she was young.

CALOMIRIS: Mary's mother came once here. Then she went back to Greece.

WOLF: Oh, she did? So, she never lived here.

CALOMIRIS: She stayed five months, six months to visit her children. She had four or five children here. So, at that age that she came, they thought maybe it's hard to uproot somebody with her friends and try to [unintelligible] new life. So, her family decided it was best to go to Greece.

WOLF: So, physically this neighborhood looks the same, but does it have a different feeling?

CALOMIRIS: From the—feeling? In what respect do you mean?

WOLF: Different kind of people living here. Different...

CALOMIRIS: With people, in my day—my thoughts, I never try to categorize a person's personality good or bad. It's just do what life is and work the best I can. I never get to that point.

WOLF: So, it still feels like the familiar—the old neighborhood.

CALOMIRIS: The old neighborhood is still here, okay? And it's—and the way you're brought up, you continue to do what you think is right. Okay. So, that's the only opinion I can give. But, I tell you one thing. This neighborhood is very friendly, the best. I hate to criticize my own people in Greece, but they're nothing like over here. But...

WOLF: Americans are friendly.

CALOMIRIS: Americans are so much—I don't know about other countries versus—only my opinion is a comparison. I think Americans are much more—have more heart. I don't know how to say it, but...

WOLF: Well, I don't have any more questions. Is there anything else that you want to say about growing up in this neighborhood, or working at the Market.

CALOMIRIS: Well, I have no regrets. Those I think are on the A++ side of my ledgers. By being here and going through even markets, which I don't care if my children to follow, I—still I'm glad I was able to do what I had to do and accomplish what I have.

WOLF: You've had a good life.

CALOMIRIS: I've had a good life, but I don't expect in reality for my children or any other person to follow what I did. Because if I look at the minus side—too much work on that—as a parent one doesn't want to wish that on anybody else, you know, family. That's with a period on the end.

WOLF: All right. Thank you...

[End of TAPE 3, SIDE 1.]
END OF INTERVIEW

ADDENDUM

Subsequent to the interview, Mr. Calomiris provided this additional information and the names of the merchants who moved from the K Street Market to Eastern Market at the same time he did:

In my early youth, I would go with my father to purchase produce from Heitmuller (Wholesale Produce Co., 1316 5th St. NW, Washington, DC) for his retail produce business. The purchasing usually was done early morning from 2 a.m. to 4 a.m. My father had produce stands at the Old Center Market, the New Center Market (at 5th and K streets NW), Florida Ave. Market, Morse St. Market, and also worked at the O Street Market and Georgetown Market.

The original group of merchants who moved to Eastern Market with Calomiris; parenthetical information provided by Bonny Wolf to indicate the probable location of each within the Market, identified by who is in each location in 2004:

Helen Bechtel (fish)
Nick Zuras (other produce stand)
Evelyn Moson (Capitol Hill Poultry)
Francis Sweeny (cheese stand)
Gerard Erickson (Canales meat stand)
Jerry Dixon (Canales pasta and deli)
Stearns, no first name (Jose Canales)
Charles Fincham (Jose Canales)
William B. Miller (bakery)
Leon Becker (Eastern Market poultry)
Virginia Boones (Market Lunch)