



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK  
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

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**Interview with C. Dudley Brown**

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

**ROSENFELD:** Dudley Brown at 120 4<sup>th</sup> Street SE, Mr. Brown's residence. Mr. Brown, how long have you lived in this house?

**BROWN:** 44 years.

**ROSENFELD:** And how did you come to live here?

**BROWN:** Because my late Aunt Ruth C. [Croyle] Spangler and I lived in a small coop apartment over on the Senate Apartments at 115 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SE. Before which, she lived there alone, until I came to Washington. I decided to settle down in Washington in 1957. I had a small apartment in the back of that building. As I would walk around—these were the early days of preservation/restoration—I would walk all around and I watched these houses being done. One day I came home and I said, “You know, Aunt Ruth, we ought to buy one of these houses that people are doing, because you know with your money and my ability—I was 29 years old—your money and my ability I said we could really do something wonderful.” And in a moment of weakness she, who was perfectly comfortable where she was, said “OK, let's.”

So, we started looking for houses. Seventeen houses later, we found this one. She looked at it with me and she said “Well, I don't know about you, but I'm through looking.” And that's when we bought it.

**ROSENFELD:** What brought you to Washington?

**BROWN:** I, well...My family lived in Washington. My mother was married here. And I'll tell you more about all that, but I was a cooperative student from the University of Cincinnati, which was where we lived. My mother was the eldest of five children. She was the only one who ever moved away from Washington. So, when it came time, I was in the cooperative program in the design school at the University of Cincinnati. My mother conceived the idea that I should do my coop work-experience in Washington where I could room and board with one of her sisters and have the experience of being away from home. So, I came here my sophomore year to work as a coop student at Lansburgh's Department store on 7<sup>th</sup> Street, where the historic building is now. That's right.

**ROSENFELD:** Where the Shakespeare Theater is now.

**BROWN:** That's right. In 1948. That's correct.

**ROSENFELD:** What did you do at Lansburgh's?

**BROWN:** I worked in their drapery department and learned all about drapery. It was very, very important experience, better than a lot of kids get today, I'll tell you that, by a long shot.

**ROSENFELD:** Several months, you did that?

**BROWN:** Oh, I did it back and forth, we commuted between.... In the cooperative system of education, you went to school all year round. By that I mean, you had there were 7 weeks in school, 8 weeks on the job, 7 weeks in school. So, you only ever had two weeks off out of the whole year. From the time I started college in the five-year program for the degree, we only had two weeks off a year. It was very serious business in those days.

**ROSENFELD:** So you lived on the Hill and you went to Lansburgh's. How did you get there?

**BROWN:** Oh no, in those days, this is 1948. In 1948, for a brief period of time none of our family was here on Capitol Hill. But the family originally came, and that's another story, that's part of the story, originally came in 1921. And I'll tell you about that.

During that period when I was going to school, my aunts were part of the whole contingency who, as young women, had built new houses out in Takoma Park and that's where they lived. Takoma, DC.

**ROSENFELD:** What sort of work were they doing?

**BROWN:** Oh, everybody worked for the government. That's the story of how everybody got here to Washington. I supposed I ought to back up and begin with how it is, because it is important part of all of this.

And that is that my mother's family were pretty plain people. My grandfather had a dairy and a garage in Atlantic City. There was a terrible scarlet fever epidemic in 1918, which was the year my mother was 15. She was the oldest of five children and she was a senior in college [later, he says high school]. When the epidemic... they lived in a big house on Pacific Avenue, where the residential quarters were over the offices of the dairy. My mother was the bookkeeper for the dairy. When scarlet fever hit that family and the house was quarantined, it destroyed the dairy. That was the end of it.

My grandfather, in his disconsolation, threw himself into the Atlantic Ocean and left his five children behind. It wasn't very pleasant. My grandmother had nothing to do, but all she could do was part and parcel out her kids, is what it amounts to. My mother was a senior in high school. She was left with a neighbor across the street to finish high school. Now, we get to how we got to Washington.

Her next youngest sister, whose name was Nell. Nelly had gone to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and that was all the farther that she could go because she was sent to Washington to work as a mother's helper, they call them

au pairs now. But Aunt Nell was sent to Washington and she worked for one of my grandmother's cousins. That cousin lived in a 23 room house on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street NW which I can vaguely remember. It had been Daniel Webster's house.

**ROSENFELD:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Street?

**BROWN:** NW. The historians would remember when the Exxon station was at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, high rise building—it was quite a building. That house was up the street from that. It was a wonderful Federal style house, great big thing, which I remember. It was still there in '48, '49, '50. But anyway, Aunt Nell was shipped down here when the family was divided. Mother lived with a neighbor across the street, finished high school, went to work. Aunt Nell was sent down here to work as a mother's helper with my grandmother's cousin. Aunt Maggie Ache was her name. She lived next door to Mrs. Payne, if you can believe it. Anyway, the point of all of this is that Aunt Nell got tired of being Cinderella in not so very long. She was a sharp piece of work, I'll tell you. So, she struck out on her own and by 1922, she and three other girls were living in an apartment house that stood where the Supreme Court is right now, called the Garland Apartments. It shows up on a map that we have over at the office.

In the meantime, my grandfather arose from the Atlantic Ocean, where he hadn't thrown himself at all, reappeared on the scene. When I think of what people get divorces for over these days, but in any rate, they reassembled. My grandmother took him back and they reassembled what there was of the family, which was just the three younger children on a farm in Houston, Delaware. My grandfather had been a farmer among other things. So, when my Aunt Ruth was 16, she got a job canning tomatoes and when she saved \$20, she announced to her family, which was not a very happy environment anyway, and she said, "I'm going to Washington to live with my sister Nelly." And at 16, she headed down the road by herself and walked to the station with her \$20. Her father said to her, "You will be back with your feet under my table." She said she was so mad at Dad she wouldn't turn around. So she came to Washington.

By this time, Aunt Nell was working for Woodward and Lothrop. She was a good looking gal and so were the other girls. These young women came to Washington to get jobs. It's precisely why they came, particularly without high school educations. They didn't have...A girl didn't even have...My grandfather didn't believe in it to begin with. So, they didn't have to have a high school diploma.

So, Aunt Ruth arrives on her sister Nelly's doorstep. You can imagine how happy her sister was to see her sister come. Not very, is what it amounts to. But she had to go to work. This is the important part to all this. So, the best jobs that were available for girls in those days were working for the telephone company.

**ROSENFELD:** Was that C&P?

**BROWN:** It was 1923, and Aunt Ruth, no, it was 1922. She was 16 years old. You had to be 17, so she cut off her hair and lied about her age. She got a job working for the Telephone Company.

**ROSENFELD:** What was the company called?

**BROWN:** C&P Telephone Company. Then, within a year, she took the civil service examination to work for the government, which were always the best jobs. That's why the women, particularly women who didn't have any education somehow they could work. The opportunities were here. As evidence will get a little more of this a little bit farther on about the others.

Well anyway, within a year, Aunt Ruth learned, because she is now 17 years old, and she's learns what it's all about and learns about the Federal government. She took the Civil Service Examination, but she couldn't pass the examination because she wasn't tall enough to reach for the switchboard. So the others girls in the Garland Apartment where they were all living together, stretched her for 2 weeks until she could reach far enough. She passed the exam and she went to work for the Treasury Department as a switchboard operator. She was just a teenage girl and a switchboard operator. But she was a sharp piece of work. Eventually she grew and I have the letter right this minute when she was eventually she was appointed the chief telephone operator of the US Treasury. She was personal appointments secretary to Henry Morgenthau. She was loaned to the Bretton Woods Conference out of which the International Monetary Fund grew. Oh yes, she was quite something. But she always said that she couldn't do it today, but she did it with a tenth grade education.

Those girls, and now we get to Capitol Hill. I mean they lived in the Garland Apartments, but the family, my grandmother remember is still back on the farm with the remaining two children, the youngest ones. My grandfather took off again and my grandmother said "this is the absolute end." So, the sisters in Washington, rented a house on 6<sup>th</sup> Street, which I can show you, 6<sup>th</sup> Street NE. They rented the house and they got furniture and they sent for their mother and the two younger kids. Those teenage girls got that family back together again. They put their mother in the rooming house business. They were all working. In 1926, they teamed up and they bought 231 Massachusetts Avenue, which is part, everybody knows now is part of the American Café. I just found a good picture of it the other day. They bought it in 1926 for \$10,000.

By which time, the youngest sister, my Aunt Grace, who was graduated from Eastern High School, my Aunt Grace was working for the FBI. The FBI was the big thing. I had numbers of cousins who came also from very plain backgrounds in Pennsylvania and they came here to live at Aunt Salome's (my grandmother's name was Salome) in that big house on Massachusetts Avenue.

**ROSENFELD:** What was her last name?

**BROWN:** Croyle. She ran her rooming house with FBI men on one floor and FBI women on the other. She was always that way.

**ROSENFELD:** How long did she do that?

**BROWN:** She left that house, she sold that house, the year I was graduated from high school, which was 1947. They paid \$10,000 for it in 1926 and they sold it in 1947 for \$18,500. One of the most important things about that house and the heap of living those young people had was that they helped one another. This was the whole point. And as Aunt Ruth used to say, did we have good times doing it. They were young people, they were vital, they were bright, they were all working for the government. My Aunt Grace ultimately married her boss in the FBI who was second man after J. Edgar Hoover. They all came along making very substantial things out of themselves. My Aunt Nell was administrative assistant to the General Counsel of GSA at the time she retired. Aunt Grace married Assistant Director of the FBI.

**ROSENFELD:** What was his name?

**BROWN:** His name was Rolf T. Harbo. He was a Norwegian.

**ROSENFELD:** What was Nell's husband's name?

**BROWN:** Her first husband was my Uncle Frank J. Knoble, Captain of the Guards at the White House. Wow! And guess what happened in the 1930s? My grandfather appeared again. My grandmother took him back three times. When I think of what people get divorced over now. I never knew the man, but I sure heard enough about him. And then they...

**ROSENFELD:** In Washington, he appeared?

**BROWN:** Oh yeah. He appeared at 231 Massachusetts Avenue. And then he finally took off once more for the last time, and that was it.

**ROSENFELD:** What his excuse?

**BROWN:** Oh, I have no idea, no idea whatsoever. He had remarkable children, I'll tell you, and they were half his. I never knew him. But the four women...the tragedy...what really broke it all up and this is really our one claim to fame on Capitol Hill. And that's the Lee Funeral Home. The Lee Funeral Home, until the development of the Federal Triangle, was in the Federal Triangle complex down in the 600 block of Pennsylvania Avenue. When the Federal Triangle took the historic Lee home, they built the one that we are familiar with on Stanton Park, at the foot of Stanton Park.

Regrettably, on Christmas Eve of 1932, on the way back from... my aunts built their houses, Nell and Ruth built matching houses side by side at 525 and 529 Van Buren Street NW, when that was Takoma

DC and it was new in 1932. Christmas of '32 was the first Christmas out there, so my grandmother and my grandfather, and Uncle Tommy -- the fifth child was a boy -- and the delight of my grandfather's life. He was 18. On Christmas Eve, it was a foggy Christmas Eve, and on the way back, coming through the Soldiers' Home grounds, they had a flat tire. They were changing the tire. My grandfather was holding the flashlight and Tommy was doing the change. They were both struck by a hit and run driver. Tom died Christmas morning, which just destroyed my grandfather. Anyway, that all went down the tubes. That was the end of Tommy. My grandfather survived, oh yes, oh yes, sure you'd know he'd survive, for all I know about him.

But anyway, grandma kept 231 Massachusetts Avenue. And the most important thing that she did, because it was a big house, she housed during her war effort—she always said “my war effort being two blocks from the Capitol is always having a place for a boy to eat and sleep.” And the word spread between my various cousins in the Second World War, everybody knew somebody, and the word spread that Mrs. Croyle...how many men. She used to talk about it; she hardly... They would knock at her door. It would be some sailor or some soldier who knew the cousin or knew the nephew or what have you. She always had a place for them to sleep and fed 'em.

**ROSENFELD:** Just so that I don't lose track here, Tommy was buried at the funeral home?

**BROWN:** I got side-tracked. Because the Lee Funeral Home was brand spanking new. And there was a close affiliation with what was then the Eastern Presbyterian Church, that's now the church that is at the head of Stanton Park.

**ROSENFELD:** The Imani Temple?

**BROWN:** That's correct. So, therefore, Tommy was the first funeral, when the funeral home was new, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of December of 1932. Now when Uncle Rolf died in March of 1992, they lived next door to us here...When Uncle Rolf died in 1992, they had already closed down the funeral home. But I went to Charlie Ballenger, who has done so many of our funerals, and we've done a lot of them, and I said, couldn't we use the chapel just one more time? Just one more time. It's going to be a little funeral. He said o.k. So they agreed and so our distinction is that we had the first and last funerals from the Lee Funeral Home.

**ROSENFELD:** Yeah, that's pretty unusual.

**BROWN:** Um, hmm.

**ROSENFELD:** And now it's a multi-million dollar page dorm.

**BROWN:** That's what I understand. So anyway, we bought the house in 1957, after I decided I wanted to come. I had finished college and I was in army and I went to Europe, and all that kind of stuff. But eventually you have to settle down and go to work. And I decided that I really wanted to come here. I really had always loved Washington and I loved it. When I was a little boy, they brought me here. The first year that I came was in 1937. And I was brought... In those days, we were living in Cleveland. My father and mother were married here. They met in college. Mother was the only one who ever went to college.

**ROSENFELD:** Where did she go?

**BROWN:** She went to Maryville College. They were all Presbyterians and that's where she met my father, who came from New Mexico. He followed her to Washington and they were married in the summer of 1927.

**ROSENFELD:** Just tell me again what their names were.

**BROWN:** Oh, my mother her name was Lillian and my father's name was Salmon, as in Salmon P. Chase. [Salmon and Lillian Croyle Brown] He was named for his grandfather, who was named for Salman P. Chase. But he was known in banking circles as "Red" Brown.

Anyway in those days, we lived in Cleveland. In the depths of the Depression, there wasn't much travel. But the sisters took turns each year. Mother had three of us, the twin sisters came first and I then came. But the sisters took turns every summer driving my grandmother out to Cleveland to visit us. I never have known why, but in the summer of 1937, when I was 8 years old, it was decided that I would come back to Washington. I had my first trip coming back to Washington with Aunt Ruth and my grandmother and my cousin Bob.

**ROSENFELD:** How did you get here?

**BROWN:** We drove.

**ROSENFELD:** Do you remember what kind of car it was?

**BROWN:** Chevrolet.

**ROSENFELD:** Do you remember how long it took to get here?

**BROWN:** Oh, it wasn't that. We always stopped. There was a whole flock of family and still is in Johnstown Pennsylvania. So, it was always done in two days. My grandmother had sisters there and it

was always big family. Of course, those people are long since dead. But be that as it may, that was very en famille. So I came to Washington.

I was here with my grandmother in that big house. I'd never seen a row house, for heaven sake. We lived in a house on a street with trees around it, like other people. I remember, of course, at age 8 you can imagine what these high ceilings looked like and the long flights of stairs and the dark halls. My grandmother would take me over... There were concerts on the steps of the Capitol on Wednesday nights. We would go to the concerts and then she made me write letters home. And we would walk over to Union Station and we'd mail them from Union Station. The fountain that's there now, can't remember the name of it but I should know it, the new fountain not the Columbus Fountain, the one that used to be multi-colors, was built in about 1930 or 1932, and we would go look at that. I just thought the whole thing was the most gorgeous thing I'd ever seen in my life. And I said I'm going to grow up and come live here—is what I said. I announced it. That was what I was going to do. And did. But I wasn't really conscious at that time. Except I also announced that summer what I was going to be.

**ROSENFELD:** Which was?

**BROWN:** An interior decorator. And I tell people in my lecture work now and the students—look back on 1937 and think how many historic houses. When we think we have now. There was no National Trust, there was none of that—no interest at all. You think what the antique houses were that you could see in 1937.

**ROSENFELD:** Did you always have an interest in the historic aspect of things?

**BROWN:** I always liked things—I was very always very conscious, very visually conscious of my environment. I could show you things all over this house that I can't remember life without. Those pictures right there, always hung in our house. Some of the ones that are over there, always hung in our house.

**ROSENFELD:** So everything in your house is...

**BROWN:** Has a story.

**ROSENFELD:** Is some way connected with your family.

**BROWN:** Oh, yeah, sure, connected with our lives. That wasn't connected that marquetry chest was bought from Libby Sangster, when Libby Sangster had Antiques on the Hill, where the Hawk and Dove is now. That was carried out of the Hawk and Dove, early on. It was one of the first, early early early on.

**ROSENFELD:** Now when you came here in 1957, what, who lived here?

**BROWN:** Who lived in this house?

**ROSENFELD:** No, who lived...

**BROWN:** Of our family?

**ROSENFELD:** In the neighborhood. What sort of neighborhood was it? Who lived

**BROWN:** It was very satisfactory. It was a mixed neighborhood. All of Independence Avenue was black. Because until 1923, people lose track of this, this city was zoned. The streets were zoned for blacks and whites.

**ROSENFELD:** Really?

**BROWN:** Oh, yeah, sure.

**ROSENFELD:** And did they alternate?

**BROWN:** No, the blocks were black. Independence Avenue when we came here was black all the way out. Among the things that were said in those days when this was red-lined, was that... when I look at the buildings that I could show you farther up Independence Avenue, some of which were brothels. They said, you know, restoration will never get anywhere in this community because you are never going to be able to get past the enormous number of black people. Most of 5<sup>th</sup> Street was black.

**ROSENFELD:** Was it sort of unofficial which streets were what?

**BROWN:** I only learned about the zoning. We had those days, primarily the residue. And if you looked around the corner now and you looked at this house and the scale of this house, and go right around the corner and look at the 400 block of Independence and look at the size of the buildings, you'll see the difference. It's fascinating, really to walk around.

**ROSENFELD:** Was it originally a sort of the servants lived there.

**BROWN:** Servants is not a very good word. It really isn't. The word is "help." The word is really "help." And people are constantly those who are uniformed, and they'll look at the houses and they'll look at the hall rooms for instance, which they mistakenly call "trunk rooms" -- they weren't trunk rooms at all— they were hall rooms. They were called "hall rooms" because they were at the ends of the hall and they were over the hall. That's why they were called hall rooms.

**ROSENFELD:** What were they used for?

**BROWN:** People lived in them, slept in them. Big families.

**ROSENFELD:** They were just another bedroom?

**BROWN:** Exactly. Where the help lived, the help lived in the alley dwellings. We had lots of them on Capitol Hill. There are some of them right across the street in Library Court, in Brown's Court right up in the 600... They were all over the place. But generally speaking, the time these houses were built, help did not live in, they just didn't. And I think that's a throw back to... I think this is to a large extent a throw back to Washington was a southern, as far north as it is, Washington has always been a so-called southern city. The mentality was primarily southern for design and management. That has affected also by the climate. But if you think about it, the help in the south always lived in, we don't like to say slave cabins, but to a large extent they did.

**ROSENFELD:** How did people interact when you first came here?

**BROWN:** Just fine. We had a family behind us, and this was in effect a slum, there was a family behind us, they had 12 children, the Diggs. The woman who lived directly behind us who came along directly behind us, 5<sup>th</sup> Street was mixed. The house directly behind us was bought early on by a fabulous woman whose name was Maria Stoessor. Maria Stoessor was a concert pianist, a superb concert pianist. She took an interest, a real interest in the children of the Diggs family, particularly the girls. She brought them, Maria was a glorious human being, she had those kids work for... she taught them how to iron, she saw to it, she was Catholic, she saw to it that they all got into good schools. Once in a great while, one of them will come by and introduce me to children and remember playing in the alley. And in those days, when I think about it, in those days we didn't have bars on the windows. We didn't live in these sophisticated jails. We didn't have triple locks on things. And we also didn't have drugs. That, of course, is the fundamental problem. It was a softer life by a long shot than we have now.

**ROSENFELD:** Where did people do their shopping? food shopping?

**BROWN:** We've had a succession of Safeways go and come from our community. Seventh Street Safeway was there in the early days. The 7<sup>th</sup> Street Safeway, not the one, the one that came later is now the Mormon Church between my offices on E street, between E and G, there being no F.

And then you went across... I'll tell you where it was really nice before Southwest was built, before the Southwest we now know. You could go right out across the Anacostia River. And that shopping center that now is a dump was a pretty nice shopping center. There was a big Safeway there. Then you could go also out to Branch Avenue, where Branch Avenue comes into Pennsylvania Avenue and that shopping center was new. There was an escalator where there are now stairs. There was a really nice Hot Shoppe where the laundramat is now. And that Hillcrest Heights area was really very nice. Of course, Hillcrest Heights was where everybody, when everybody began to flee, southeast people didn't go northwest.

Southeast people went out southeast. And that's where Hillcrest Heights and everything and all that came from.

**ROSENFELD:** Why didn't they go Northwest?

**BROWN:** Because they gravitated... the kind of people who lived here... Southeast was primarily blue collar and the blue collar mentality... to tell it the way it really was... perfectly nice, perfectly good people. The magnificence of East Capitol Street is an example, which now looks so pretentious, and all the million dollar houses and what have you, there were great big houses and when I look back on how that street looked when we came here. It's as though every other house had a "rooming house/tourist" sign on it. That's what they did with all those big houses. I worked on some of them.

**ROSENFELD:** You worked on putting them back?

**BROWN:** Um, hum. Several of them. I worked on Margaret Love's house. Nowak's house at 10<sup>th</sup> and... That was getting way out there too. That's another whole story of all that.

**ROSENFELD:** The people who used these rooming houses were temporary people? or were they... before they found places of their own?

**BROWN:** I was always amazed they were sort of like my grandmother's rooming house, but my grandmother never had a sign out in front of her house. It was all done by word of mouth.

**ROSENFELD:** And they were like the cops and the...

**BROWN:** Oh sure. And people who worked for the government. Government was big and all kinds of jobs and everything. Clerks and whatever. I can't begin to... In our case, with our family, it was the FBI, it sure was.

**ROSENFELD:** Interesting. And was it a church-going neighborhood? I mean there are still so many churches.

**BROWN:** Well, by the time we got here, things were really... My family belonged to the Eastern Presbyterian Church here at the head of Stanton Park, as you said it's the Imani Temple. In 1955, the Eastern Presbyterian Church merged with the Metropolitan Presbyterian Church here at 4<sup>th</sup> and Independence to create what is now the Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church. That was their new name. They didn't know they originally met in that. But anyway, they merged with the ridiculous concept that two sick would make one well. Well of course that isn't what happened at all. How that church survived and what we've had to do with this is another story in itself.

**ROSENFELD:** Are you still a member?

**BROWN:** Oh, my heavens, yes. I'll say. Oh my yes. Everybody was married in the Eastern Church, so that's all part of the derivation. Everybody was buried from there. We just had the last funeral there. We're going to have the next one ...the last one we're going to have this next week.

**ROSENFELD:** Who is that?

**BROWN:** My Aunt Grace. The one who lived in the house next door. She developed Alzheimer's disease, I'm sorry to say. She just died on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January after 11 torturous years. Her husband was still alive...

**ROSENFELD:** Oh dear. Did she stay in her house?

**BROWN:** Oh no, no, no. We had to put them away. My Uncle, I mean she was still taking care of my uncle who was paralyzed. My uncle was paralyzed from the FBI. He had a massive cerebral hemorrhage when he was 58 years old; that knocked him right off his feet. Their lives were controlled by J. Edgar Hoover. And I always hated the fact that after Uncle Rolf was...he had to retire...and after he retired, they lived in the beautiful house in Alexandria which they couldn't manage. They couldn't manage it because he was 6'3" and his whole right side was paralyzed. The house next door to us, which is another very interesting story about the Websters, became available. It was an English basement design, exactly like this one, with the dining room and the kitchen downstairs and the big parlor upstairs. Not as big as this. But anyway, the same principle. Built by Abraham Lincoln's secretary, as a matter of fact.

**ROSENFELD:** This one or that one?

**BROWN:** No, the ones next door, two of them. But for some reason or other, unknown to any of us, the hole in the ground was never dug and those two houses were set right on the ground, which was perfect for somebody who was in a wheel-chair. So, we took that house all apart and designed it and put in an elevator and put the garage in the back, and ramped it all and they lived there for 29 years. And in the last couple of them, she developed the Alzheimer's disease and she finally was so bad we had to put her away.

**ROSENFELD:** When did... is that when they sold the house?

**BROWN:** No, it hasn't been sold. She just died.

**ROSENFELD:** Are you going to sell it?

**BROWN:** It's in the estate now. Oh yes.

**ROSENFELD:** Are you going to sell it as you know, outfitted for...?

**BROWN:** It's a private residence. The only thing that makes it distinguished is the fact that it has an elevator in it. It was the second house on Capitol Hill to ever have an elevator in it.

**ROSENFELD:** What was the first?

**BROWN:** It's up on A Street. The Blackwells have it now. The 600 block of A Street.

**ROSENFELD:** Now tell me. You mentioned the English basement style. Where did that come from as a design?

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

**BROWN:** Very impractical kind of a house to live in, it really is. So many of the houses in London are like this. We're half out of the ground here in this one, but there are blocks when you go right down here to that Italianate group with the mansard roofs beyond the filing station down here on C Street, you look and it's hard to believe those houses—a full developed story and the window level is completely below ground.

**ROSENFELD:** Did it have something to do with weather, with it being cooler on that floor?

**BROWN:** Maybe so.

**ROSENFELD:** Are most of those so-called English basements now apartments?

**BROWN:** An awful lot of them are. Not very many people, not very many of them live like we do. They made apartments out of those units and we didn't. We have our kitchen and dining room downstairs.

**ROSENFELD:** You do?

**BROWN:** Oh, yeah, which you are more than welcome to look at.

**ROSENFELD:** Tell me, if you would, about your career and how that became...

**BROWN:** Well, it's kind of interesting for all of the lecture work that I do and the talks to the students in the schools. First of all, I have to say that I was very fortunate to have a supportive father. And I always emphasize this. Because if you imagine when your only son says at the age of 8, "Daddy, I'm going to grow up to be an interior decorator," your father smacks you along the side and says "no kid of mine is going to be an interior decorator. You're going to be a doctor, a lawyer, an Indian chief" or someone like that. And they didn't do that to me.

I came home from Washington in 1937, so -- because the houses I mentioned earlier and what you could see, the houses were Mt. Vernon and Arlington House—and I came home so hyped on spinning wheels

and brass candle sticks. I'm dead serious and that's what I was going to be. And so, in those days, in the school system in Cleveland, Lakewood where we lived, the local library, the Lakewood public library was open on Wednesday evenings. So Wednesday evening after supper was always "go to the library night." Daddy took us to the library to get our books for the week. And I started reading everything that there was on furniture for... there was no guidance, everything that there was on what we would now call furniture, furnishings and the decorative arts. And there wasn't really much, but what there was what there was.

And Wallace Nutting came along in there with, as it turned out, all his inaccuracies, but anyway, so as life moved along. My Dad said, "you're not going to get anywhere without a college education." I didn't care, I just wanted to go to work. And he said, "you're not going to get anywhere without a college education; you have to go to college."

And the University of Cincinnati in the town where we lived had the cooperative system of education. In 1946, when we started talking about all this, I tell people now, there were three degrees in the USA in interior design, three programs: Rhode Island School of Design, Cornell University, and the University of Cincinnati in the college of applied arts, as it was called in those days. And that really... between the fact that it was in Cincinnati and that they had the cooperative system, and the fact that there three of us, the twins were a year older than I, that we did everything in threes. Financially it was very appealing. I'll add also at that point, for the twins, liberal arts education was what my father and mother, because nobody had expressed any sort of interest, they would have a liberal arts education. And of course, living in Ohio where there were so many, many, many good schools, my mother shopped around and she found that Ohio University at Athens, Ohio (1823) had a single tuition for twins. So the girls went on a single tuition. And I cooped.

And while we were doing all that, our mother wrote the history of the city of Cleveland. We had a very interesting and lively household that we lived in, believe me. There was no television and there were no computers and there was no study, everything was done around the dining room table. I wouldn't change it for what I felt was the quality of our education.

But anyway, so the point is that academically, and this is interesting in relation to design and all we're talking about now, is that academically, right after the Second World War, in the 30s, they were just really getting into what we would now call the school of modern design as such -- Mies Van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, and all those people, Harvard University. And everybody bowed and scraped and everybody threw away everything, I mean forget Victorian, forget any of that, you didn't even know anything about it.

So the program at the University of Cincinnati was so Harvardenesque that so stripped down, when I look at it, that they didn't even teach a course in historic interiors or architecture. It was all stripped down, contemporary look. And I hated it. What I really liked best was my coop job. I loved to come here and go to work. I remember when I was in my third year, I said to my father, "I just hate this. I'm going to drop it." He said you've got to have that degree. He said "Look, learn what they have to teach you. And when you can get out," he said, "then you can do your own thing."

My most triumphant moment was my 25<sup>th</sup> class reunion and I had made a good enough name in historic preservation nationally with the GSA days and what have you, that I was invited to be a distinguished speaker from this college. That was my big moment. It really was. We made our way. I'm one of the people who came along and made our way.

**ROSENFELD:** In historic preservation, restoration?

**BROWN:** Yeah, well exactly. The quality level of scholarship today, and when I think I'm going to the National Building Museum tonight, and when I think what we have today, when I think of the programs and I think of the people, like ourselves, and a generation even older than we are who scraped along and carved the way with nothing other than interest. Nothing.

**ROSENFELD:** When was that that the interest in historic restoration began?

**BROWN:** Well, you can't count Mt. Vernon, because Mt. Vernon is 1858, that's the oldest major... And, we had historic societies, remember, that go back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But generally speaking, and I make this as a general statement, the first attention to a significant part of town, let's put it this way, was in Charleston. In the late '20s, in the battery of Charleston which now of course is the beginning of the world, remember there is no Williamsburg yet, any of that. The houses were so marvelous that people with taste—and it began with people with taste who cared—who just said this house may be in the world's worst part of town, just like here we never had the worst, we've got some worst parts around here, but we didn't have anything that bad. Like Old Town Alexandria was bad. Lots of Georgetown was rough as a cob. But it began with taste. It began with people who cared. And when the shelter magazines began, like Better Homes and Gardens, began to draw some attention to what was happening in these pretty old houses.

**ROSENFELD:** Was that in the 50s?

**BROWN:** In the 30s. Charleston was just coming along. There has always been a very close relationship between Charleston and Washington. Charleston and Georgetown, remember there were wonderful houses in Georgetown too, good ones. What clinched that deal was when the Second World War came

along and there wasn't any gasoline. State Department was the closest agency to the closest houses, the pretty houses. Everything fits together as pieces, but nobody talks much about it. So there was a definite ... People came to Washington to work. People came from good families. You could live in Georgetown in a pretty old house, like the house in Charleston. All classic, all traditional, all Federal -- before we invented all the plastic stuff you could hang on the houses, which came later. But that's how it all started. That's what gave Georgetown the big punch was the fact that you could walk to the State Department.

**ROSENFELD:** And what was the corresponding draw for Capitol Hill? You could walk to the Capitol?

**BROWN:** Didn't have any then. Oh no, we only came... Capitol Hill wasn't even heard of then. Capitol Hill didn't come along at all until the 50s.

**ROSENFELD:** And that was spurred by what?

**BROWN:** By several real estate people—one of whom was Barbara Held, who is still alive.

**ROSENFELD:** Whom I am going to talk to later this week.

**BROWN:** You tell Barbara that you talked to me. I wish we were doing this together, 'cause yeah, we bought this house through Barbara Held, her associate Arline Roback was the agent. That's someone we all knew. And I can remember Arline, I mean I remember not Arline, I can remember Barbara Held sitting on this sofa in this room saying "Don't be tempted by people who come along," because I worked hard on this house. "You will see the day when this house will be worth \$90,000." We paid \$28,000 for it.

**ROSENFELD:** You paid \$28,000 in 1957?

**BROWN:** Um hum.

**ROSENFELD:** And it's how many bedrooms?

**BROWN:** There are 8 bedrooms, there were 8 bedrooms, of which 6 were major rooms and 2 were hall rooms. But that's a lot for a house like this. There are bigger ones, but for generally speaking...

**ROSENFELD:** What sort of shape was it in?

**BROWN:** Rough. It was a marginal, white house. This room had been chopped up in half. Half that medallion was in one room, the other half was in the other.

**ROSENFELD:** What was the functions of the two halves?

**BROWN:** There was a bed. There was linoleum on the floor and a bed in that... The mantle pieces had long since been painted over.

**ROSENFELD:** Had it been a rooming house?

**BROWN:** Oh yes, yeah. Very marginal.

**ROSENFELD:** So none of the...was any of the detailing left?

**BROWN:** Oh yes. Oh sure. All those plaster...

**ROSENFELD:** So they did have

**BROWN:** The whole strap work ceiling, which is the best on Capitol Hill. There are pieces like this in other houses. You have to know who built the house and everything and why it got to be the way it is. This house was built in 1874. It was built by one of the... You know who Boss Shepherd is?

**ROSENFELD:** Uh, huh.

**BROWN:** O.k. Well Boss Shepherd had a whole coterie of people. His sanitary engineer was a man whose name was Henry Larman. And Henry Larman built this house. When you look at it and you look at its contemporaries from that period, you don't see a big double parlor like this, which ancient Mrs. Webster next door—that's another story—always referred to as "that big saloon parlor." And on the old drawings, that's what they are called. Saloon, as in salon.

**ROSENFELD:** What did people use these for originally?

**BROWN:** To entertain. But these rooms all, this was closed off. When the house was built in 1874, there was a big bay window right there between the two chimneys. And there were windows on that side in other parts of the house. And we know from the... You'd have to see the garden and the steps and the carriage house and all that to understand. He built the carriage house the next year for \$450. But by 1887, Shepherd was gone by that time too. You know he was run out of town and went to Mexico. I guess it wasn't very long before Larman must have lost it too because they sold the lot off next door and filled in all the windows and built the house next door.

**ROSENFELD:** Now, did you do all the work on the house yourself or did you hire people to do it?

**BROWN:** Um hum. Well we had someone, but I did an awful lot of it. We have complete photographic documentation. Come on I'll show it to you; it's over there. But I was a young man and had a head of hair and it wasn't white. Yeah.

**ROSENFELD:** So you really threw yourself into putting this house back together.

**BROWN:** This is a red brick house. When we bought it, it was painted white. The owner who had it was the first person to paint it. She painted the red brick with white. That's another story that goes back to Charleston. Talk about all this. We were the first people to take the paint off the red bricks.

**ROSENFELD:** How did you do it?

**BROWN:** I scraped it off, one brick at a time.

**ROSENFELD:** With a wire brush?

**BROWN:** With putty knives, anything that would scrape. Then they were all hand sanded and I raked the original mortar. I have pictures of me in there doing it. In addition to that, I mean this house is very well known because it's so distinguished. We were the first people in due course to paint it in historic colors, the Indian red on the window sash and the iron... Except for the hoods over the windows, the big brackets or corpules (sp?), as they are called, that are on the front now, they are historically accurate but they were gone. They had been knocked off this house.

**ROSENFELD:** So you had go find some.

**BROWN:** We bought the façade of a house that was identical at 11<sup>th</sup> and M Streets NW, where now one of the big high rise office buildings is. We brought all those parts home. Each one of those corpules on the front of this house has nine different components. I had them cast and bolted them back together. I hauled them up the front of the house, one at a time and bolted them back on the front of this house, when I was a young man.

**ROSENFELD:** Now, at that time, you were sort of pioneering historic restoration.

**BROWN:** Yeah. In those days, there wasn't the scholarship by a long shot that there is now. I mean when we painted the woodwork for the first time, when we painted the trim on the exterior of the building, we painted it—it was red brick, but we painted it what we thought was pretty. Before we became... cause there was a house across the street, long since painted over, we really thought, Frances Andrews house, we always thought that was pretty. But then as we got into it...

Then the Victorian Society of America came to pass. I joined the Victorian Society of America in New York, oh gosh, how many years ago is that? 30, maybe? Is it only 30, 32 years old maybe. I don't know. Anyway we began to be associated with others, especially people who were working in Brooklyn, Park Slope. Organized an outfit called the Brownstone Revival Committee. And people were beginning to talk to each other and people were in the Society of Architectural Historians were really sort of paving the way. We began to be interested in the history.

You have to remember the mentality. This is 30+ years ago when Victorian was still the pits, which is the reason why...and we're now outgrowing at last. Georgetown has more than anybody else of all the fake stuff that got stuff on the houses to what we call "early them up." Examples. Putting on the shutters. Screwing shutters right and left to buildings that never had them. Putting bad, incorrect door pieces over entrance doors. Changing the front doors to these impossible designs that never had any basis whatsoever.

But scholarship, scholarship manifesting itself in writing and presentations, what have you, had a great deal to do...I mean I am very proud of the fact that we see people taking the paint... there's a big one down on the corner. And finally they are going to take the paint off, because these were wonderful buildings. And I could show you ones around... But we were the first. And I did a lot of lectures in those days on the history of the Washington row house.

**ROSENFELD:** To whom?

**BROWN:** Anybody who would listen. I was a free luncheon speaker for everybody. I gave a lot of them. We talk about the history of the Washington row house, beginning with Wheat Row down in Southwest, where we have the only and the original, the first row of connected houses in the District of Columbia still stands there.

**ROSENFELD:** Where is that?

**BROWN:** It's on 4<sup>th</sup> street Southwest, between M Street and Ft. McNair. Wheat Row. Now incorporated in the Harbor Square complex, very skillfully, which is where I'm moving.

**ROSENFELD:** Are you? I saw the sign out there.

**BROWN:** Because my aunt has died and she had one son. My cousin and I, we are the heirs. I couldn't stay. We just decided at our ages and with all the collections, we just decided that this was the time to do this. It's not easy, but it's the time.

**ROSENFELD:** Where does your cousin live?

**BROWN:** He lives in Charlotte, NC.

**ROSENFELD:** So...

**BROWN:** The house is going to be sold. Both houses are going to be sold.

**ROSENFELD:** Are they already on the market?

**BROWN:** This one is. That one isn't yet because Aunt Grace didn't sign her will unfortunately, so we have to go through the probate. My cousin's going to do both of them. Two sisters died six months apart. It's a handful. Believe me.

**ROSENFELD:** How old was your aunt?

**BROWN:** The one who just died?

**ROSENFELD:** Who lived here?

**BROWN:** Aunt Ruth was 95 years old on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February of last year. She's the one who came as a girl. Oh, they all did, as girls. And Aunt Grace was 90 last July, but she'd been dead for years.

**ROSENFELD:** Now, did Ruth ever marry?

**BROWN:** Oh, yes. That's why I...oh, sure she did. Yeah, she married a fellow who followed her to Washington, a young man. Yup. And he was out of work when the crash came and he started selling Fuller brushes. And, did very, very well, because he died of a heart attack when he was 39 years old, where he had just been tapped to become a Vice-President of the Fuller Brush Company. So, all self-made people, 100% self-made.

**ROSENFELD:** So he never lived here in this house?

**BROWN:** Not in this house. Oh no, no, no, no. Uncle Bob died in the house they built the one out on Van Buren Street.

**ROSENFELD:** Now, tell me a little bit more about your career.

**BROWN:** Well, I finished the University of Cincinnati and fortunately the coop...What really saved me was the coop job. I finally got kind of tired of the commuting and doing Lansburgh's drapery department. The premier job for the coops in those days in interiors was with a big company in Cincinnati, now extinct, called the Backus Brothers Company. They did contract commercial work. So I worked for them the last two years. In those days, these were Korean War days, and in those days you graduated from college and went into the army. That's the way it was. Or, you enlisted in something or other. And that's what happened to me. Then eventually... it's kind of complicated what I did then. My dad had become president of a bank. Well, anyway, I spent a 1½ year remodeling a house for them; did all the physical work on it; then that all ran out. It was just time...finally to go to work.

I thought I wanted to come to Washington. So I packaged up and Aunt Ruth gave me...I told Aunt Ruth I wanted to come and we always got along as a family. My cousin Bob, her son, he's a year older than I am, he'd been married in 1952. Aunt Ruth was living very comfortably in the Senate Apartments at 115

2<sup>nd</sup> Street. She came up with the idea. She said “there’s a little apt that needs a lot of work on it in the back of the building. The board will let you have it for next to nothing if you will fix it up.” And I came in 1957 and that’s when I was doing this and walking around. That’s when I came up with the idea Aunt Ruth, we ought to buy a house. Your money and my muscle.

**ROSENFELD:** And that is how it worked out?

**BROWN:** That’s the way it was; that’s how we are.

**ROSENFELD:** What was your first job in Washington?

**BROWN:** Oh, getting a job was...I went to work at a company is now mer...is called Ginn Stock Fisk [ed: was called Ginn Stock Fisk, now called Ginn]. It was a stationer. They had a business furniture department selling office furniture. I had that contract experience, so I was a...it was easy, pretty easy to get a job. But I had made other friends who were left over from the Lansburgh days, believe it or not, and one was a personnel officer at the Bureau of Aeronautics in the Navy. It’s a complicated story about how there suddenly was a position...I was so hyper on going back to Europe, that’s all I wanted to do was go. It was hard getting readjusted. Between the army and being...but Jeannie Arnold...they had set up this new job and she thought maybe I’d be a candidate. So, I went to work for the Bureau, that’s why I went to work for the Government. I became the first professional trained interior designer they had dealing with Capehart/Wherry Housing; it’s complicated. And other things too.

**ROSENFELD:** For which department?

**BROWN:** The Bureau of Aeronautics in the Navy Department. We were in the Munitions Building, the temporary building down on, which is now all park, on Constitution Avenue at 17<sup>th</sup> Street. The Munitions Building and main Navy were two huge temporary buildings that went all the way down the Mall, from 17<sup>th</sup>, were there from the First World War. I worked there, and I did such a good job and it was so successful that they abolished the job within two years.

We were customers in the work that we did. We were customers for the General Services Administration, the Federal Supply Service. I got a call one day from the head of the Furniture/Furnishings Branch of Federal Supply Service, who I knew by name, but I didn’t know...he’s, I’ll never forget him. He’d been a vice president. He was appointed by President Eisenhower to his Presidential appointment in the government. Anyway, I remember Mr. O’Connor, he’d been Vice President of Montgomery Ward. He called me up and said “I understand you’ve lost your job.” He’d heard that through the salesman. I said “yes sir.” He said, “how soon can you come over and talk to me about another one?” I said “well, I don’t know Mr. O’Connor. I came from the private industry and I don’t know.” He said “do you or don’t you

want a job?" He was wonderful, marvelous. So I went over and I hadn't been with him more than 20 minutes before I knew that I wanted to work for him. He was a marvelous man. We had four fabulous years together.

By now I'm 35 years old and we're into the Kennedy Administration. It's a complicated story about why I left, at the age of 35. But you have to look at Lafayette Square Court, the Lafayette Square and look at the court house building and see what was going to happen on that site when Jackie Kennedy took an interest and it got redesigned into what it is now. That whole program was coordinated from the GSA's regional office, Region 9 in San Francisco. But that's a complicated story too about how, when I knew that there was Presidential interest and knew what we were doing, I said there's no way in God's green earth that we can ever this done in-house. We just can't do it. There are not enough of us. It's going to require a lot of attention and they dragged me in those days it sounds very glamorous, but I mean to tell you, I was one place or another and the next day I had to be someplace else.

Like one day --- I'll tell you this little story --- one day I was sitting in the office of the Superintendent of the Military Academy at West Point, when it was Gen. William C. Westmoreland. I was briefing him, they had had a real bad problem on historic Cullen Hall, they were working with a decorator in New York who had missed the boat and they had a lot of money(?) and they wanted to see if they could educate the decorator and save the contract --- is what it amounts to. So, they took me up there to read all this and to see if I could moderate for them, mediate really, but anyway that's why I was there. It was intense and the General had a certain amount of time. And his phone rang. He answered the telephone—I'll never forget this—he answered the telephone and you could see that he was irritated because he had said, in effect, no calls. But he said, "it's for you." So he handed it over to me and it was the commissioner of the Federal Supply Service, there are 5 arms of GSA, there were in those days. There were 5 commissioners and Mr. Clarence D. Bean was one of the commissioners and my big, big, big-time boss. He sounded, I'll never forget, he said "where the hell are you?" I said I sitting in Gen. Westmoreland's office at the Military Academy at West Point. He said, "that's all right. You've got to be at the White House at 8:00 o'clock tomorrow morning." He said, "tell General who-ever-he-is, you'll come back some other time. GSA will send you. They'll pay the bill. You got to be at the White House at 8 o'clock tomorrow morning." So I said, Gen. Westmoreland, it's my boss and he tells me I have to be at so and so and so and so. He said, "He outranks me. You gotta go."

I came back and I'll never forget when I ... we did the office of the administrative assistant to the President in the West Wing, I was dragged out, I mean to tell you. The Commissioner stayed, it was all politics. I can't even remember who that guy was—it'll come to me some day. Anyway, he said "I'll give

but... We brought our best boy.” And I said I hope he’s the best boy, because he’s the only one they’ve got.

So I went along like that and I just realized that they’d work me ‘til I’d drop dead. And I was a GS 13, I was a GS 13 at that age. When I talked to my dad, I said I’ll be a slave to this. Nobody else is making this kind of money in interiors. So it’s make the decision and get out of it now. And Mr. O’Connor said the same thing.

**ROSENFELD:** So, did you go into business for yourself?

**BROWN:** I came home. I came home. I quit. I came home. I gave them plenty of notice. I said at a particular time that I left when I said I would leave. I came home, just to get settled and was working on the front of the house, as a matter of fact. I got this telephone call from somebody who wanted something and Mr. O’Connor had said to me, “When you get out of here, what are you going to do?” I said I don’t know, but I’m going to be... He said “Well, I’ll tell you what you are going to do.” He said “You worked every side of the street already. You’re going to work for yourself. You’d be a goddamn fool if you don’t.” He said “You can always at this point go out and get a job. Work for yourself.”

So somebody called about something and one thing led to another and it went on. So here we are now 37 years later.

**ROSENFELD:** And your office is on...

**BROWN:** 7<sup>th</sup> Street—E Street. 710 E Street, a little old historic building.

**ROSENFELD:** And, have you always been there?

**BROWN:** Oh no, no, no, no. We worked out of the dining room of this house for the first... And then we worked out of the dining room until we did the carriage house. And then I did the complete restoration. The carriage house moved the office out there.

**ROSENFELD:** And the name of your business?

**BROWN:** C. Dudley Brown and Associates, Inc.

**ROSENFELD:** And how many associates are there?

**BROWN:** Well, we vary. About 5 of us now and doing various and sundry things.

**ROSENFELD:** And how would you describe your business?

**BROWN:** Well, people ask me, you know, what do I do? And I tell them I am a historic preservation restoration design consultant. I put that altogether carefully because I am involved in ... I do a lot of consultation with architectural firms. I have a dimension of my life in historic churches. One thing having led to another. It evolved.

**ROSENFELD:** So, would I be correct to describe it as saying, somebody has a house that they want to restore and they call you in to tell them what they should or should not do?

**BROWN:** Yeah. Consultation, that's right, broad consultation. I don't seek the architectural... I am not a registered architect. I don't present myself to be. I'm a licensed interior designer. I talk authoritatively about what I know. If I...now-a-days, things have sort of changed and I have ... there are so many wonderful young people, and I'll say I'll look and talk to you about your house and listen to what you have to say, this is what I think you ought to do.

**ROSENFELD:** What are those sorts of things that people do to their houses on the Hill? I guess we should talk about that. That you don't like.

**BROWN:** Well, there's a lot more interest now in the historic fabric of the buildings. So many of the restorations were guts. It was sad.

**ROSENFELD:** Yes. And how did that happen? Why was that thought to be a good idea?

**BROWN:** I need to get over to the National Building Museum and it's about that time.

**ROSENFELD:** Answer that one question and then we can...

**BROWN:** O.k. All right, bless your heart. You can obviously... I talk so much. Now ask me the question again.

**ROSENFELD:** The question was why did people decide that gutting an old house was the way to go?

**BROWN:** Oh, they didn't know any better. Didn't have any appreciation for the historicity. So many of the young architects never had any training at all. One was here just the other day and you haven't seen our kitchen and dining room down... The broker told me that he was saying it would be so nice to take the partition in the dining room—all finished traditional room—and combine it. They couldn't no more... they don't look any more like... It would be a sin to do that. But somebody will come along. We can't control what they do. We're doing covenants on the exteriors, but we can't doing anything about the interiors. I hate to think...I don't want to see it.

**ROSENFELD:** Well, maybe you'll get a

**BROWN:** Oh, I've given you enough. If anybody else ever does... The summer of 1937, among the things that I remember very well, was Panzer's bakery. Panzer's Bakery must have been—nobody remembers that now—on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street [NE]. Because I can remember in my grandmother's house, going out the back of my grandmother's house, down the alley, which would be by St. Joseph's Church. I've tried to pick out the building where it would have been. They had chocolate buns that were the best things I ever ate.

**ROSENFELD:** Chocolate what?

**BROWN:** Buns. Chocolate buns at Panzer's Bakery. To such an extent that when our aunts would come to visit us in Cleveland or Cincinnati, we'd say bring us some chocolate buns from Panzer's Bakery.

**ROSENFELD:** Do you remember the Greek restaurant that used to be on Stanton Park?

**BROWN:** No, but I sure do remember...

**ROSENFELD:** Maybe it wasn't called the Greek Restaurant, it just had a Greek owner.

**BROWN:** That's not surprising. But I sure do remember the theater.

**ROSENFELD:** Where was the theater?

**BROWN:** The building is still there. Oh, it's still there. The proscenium is still there. I looked at that once. It's in the block between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> on the south side.

**ROSENFELD:** Well, I feel like maybe we could...

TAPE 2/SIDE 1

**BROWN:** [Referring to integration of races] It was zoned. The blocks were zoned.

**ROSENFELD:** And that was... was that still in play when you moved here?

**BROWN:** That was in the 1920s. As I understood it, it ended in 1923. But when we came here, Independence Avenue was black. The whole way. One of the things that they said in those days, because there was some very attractive houses up where, potentially attractive houses, and an apartment house at the corner, across from Eastern Market at 7<sup>th</sup> and Independence which was a brothel, and along the way, in the 600 block, there's sort of a modern apartment. It has a bad, sort of a fake colonial door piece which was stuck on it. But that was always black occupied. One of the things they said was that in those days, restoration would never get past 6<sup>th</sup> street, because of all the buildings. I mean that historically and then this brothel at 7<sup>th</sup> which was rough, I mean it was really grim stuff.

**ROSENFELD:** How did you know it was a brothel?

**BROWN:** Oh, well, because that's another complicated story. There was the madam, a black madam who used to come round and sit on the steps of St. Mark's church, and solicit.

**ROSENFELD:** You're kidding.

**BROWN:** I'm not kidding. Yeah, I can see her yet. She wore a white turban. And she was a real character. Anyway, but that's the sort of thing that it said would never change, never change. You'd never be able to get past, but it did. It did. And those buildings changed.

**ROSENFELD:** How did...what was it like in '68 with the riots?

**BROWN:** I was in Cincinnati for the riots that took place there. We were dividing my father and mother's house at that particular time. Aunt Ruth was trapped here by herself and terrified because every window on Pennsylvania Avenue, as close as we are to Pennsylvania Avenue, all the windows were smashed. Anyhow, what was it like? I don't remember the social changes at all after all that took place. I just don't remember. Like this whole evolution of all the bars and security systems, that all grew a piece. We didn't have any bars on any windows in the early days at all. We walked up and down the alleys; we knew the people. Everybody sort of got along. I don't remember any hostility. We just all got along. But I think I've told you also about Maria Stusser (sp?) who was a fabulous concert pianist who lived behind us and took such an interest in the big family that lived back here with so many children. The kids got educated, some of them anyway, because of Maria's influence.

**ROSENFELD:** So when you came back from Cincinnati after the riots was there any damage to your house?

**BROWN:** No. No. None whatsoever. None whatsoever.

**ROSENFELD:** And no change in your sort of daily life?

**BROWN:** No. Nothing. No. I know that at that particular time we were working on still working on my aunt and uncle's house next door at 118. The shutters were being done at that time. My aunt insisted that the shutters all be operable so they could be closed to protect the windows. And they are to this day. Most of them are all fakes, but those work. But they were done specifically in the event of another riot.

**ROSENFELD:** Did she ever use them?

**BROWN:** Heavens no. Oh no. Well, they've been gone out of the house for years because she they were institutionalized back in 1991.

**ROSENFELD:** Were there any sort of community events that you remember?

**BROWN:** Oh, the greatest one and we would need to peg the year; and it was early. I think I did I tell you about that? When all this neighborhood was threatened with a rider on a bill before the Congress in the late days of the Eisenhower Administration when the Architect of the Capitol was seeking to get \$70 million that would acquire everything from the Capitol, everything from behind the Library of Congress all the way to the river, I think I told you that, before there was a stadium. All this would have gone. That's part of the reason why they couldn't get any money.

**ROSENFELD:** And he was going to build office buildings?

**BROWN:** No, no. It was to be the East Mall. It was going to duplicate the West Mall, as though the West Mall wasn't big enough. We were going to have an East one, all the way to the Anacostia River.

**ROSENFELD:** How far did that get?

**BROWN:** It was defeated. That action was defeated.

**ROSENFELD:** Why?

**BROWN:** There's a date on that, and people know that, when that was actually finally put to rest. I saw it not so long ago. You know who could probably tell you that? Nancy Metzger.

**ROSENFELD:** But that was...when I said community event, that made you think of that?

**BROWN:** Well when I say community event, people...everybody who could over that weekend got together to deal with you know all the balloons.

**ROSENFELD:** To um...

**BROWN:** That we let out of the tower of St. Mark's Church that said "Help!" And that's how we got the TV coverage, public coverage, or we never would have gotten anywhere. That was a real subterfuge, because it was slipped through over a weekend. It was actually Agnes Ainilian. Agnes the famous artist. Agnes lived in the first floor apartment next door here at 122 when we came. She was one of the great icons of Capitol Hill for many, many years. Do you not recognize her name? Oh my, Agnes Ainilian was famous on Capitol Hill. She was probably Capitol Hill's most famous artist. She was working for Robert Dole in those days, in the Congress. In his office, when he was a Congressman. Somehow I think it was Agnes who picked it up; she just happened to pick it up and then it was over, as I said, a holiday weekend. When ...it was deliberately, we always thought it was part of a subterfuge to get it through for a vote and nobody knew anything about it. Lot of attention was drawn to that.

**ROSENFELD:** So how did you hear about it?

**BROWN:** Agnes. She called everybody she could. You call... She called you. Did you know it about this? No? Call, call, call, call. I mean it was an emergency operation. On a weekend and I think, Nancy would know, Labor Day weekend, either Labor Day or Memorial Day weekend. It was a three day weekend. I can't remember whether it was Memorial Day or Labor Day. One or the other. But that's when everybody just went to it. It was a ...the first major tour de force that I recall. Of course, in those days too, the Restoration Society, we joined the Restoration Society in its second year, and we worked, oh, my aunts in their day, and Aunt Ruth longer than Aunt Grace...besides the fact that we put these houses on the house and garden tour, both of them, several times.

**ROSENFELD:** You did it more than once?

**BROWN:** Oh yes. This house was the centennial house, the house was built in 1877. In 1976, we were the centennial house. We did ...because the house was 100 years old. That was the second time. The first time was in I think 1970 and we were also, there is another organization that is no longer in existence called the Historic House Association of America, and the Historic House Association of America was the brainchild of William Cecil, Bill Cecil, who was the grandson of George Washington Vanderbilt, who built Biltmore. He needed a lot...Bill was a very intelligent man, still alive, he needed a lobbying force in the Congress, a lobbying voice in the Congress and the National Trust wouldn't do that. So, he established the Historic Houses of America. Well, what's the name of it? Anyway, certificate's up here on the wall. I'm tethered, but the certificate's up here on the wall. So that gave a voice before the Congress for significant legislation. No longer exists. But that was Bill Cecil.

**ROSENFELD:** And you were involved with that?

**BROWN:** Oh yes, from the very beginning. I went to the ...the first meeting we ever had was at Grove Park at Asheville, North Carolina. The beautiful Grove Park Inn.

**ROSENFELD:** Did you, as you developed your business, were most of your clients on Capitol Hill?

**BROWN:** Oh, heavens no. No. Between friends and associates...and we weren't exclusively historic things at all. It just happened. And it happened really as a result of this house.

**ROSENFELD:** Really?

**BROWN:** Well, because the house was getting a lot of attention and we ...I was a young man...and when I went out on my own...I went on my own not for historic preservation, because we didn't even know what that was, it was I didn't want to work for General Services Administration anymore. My boss was a marvelous man, I think I may have told you that. And he said you know you work for yourself and

if it doesn't work, you can always get a job because you have already worked every side of the street.  
That was 37 years ago now.

**ROSENFELD:** So you, you went into business basically as an interior decorator, but not necessarily as historic

**BROWN:** Always. No that all fell...but we were busy working on the house. Then one thing sort of led to another. People ask questions and just literally, one thing led to another.

**ROSENFELD:** Well, it's very much a word-of-mouth business.

**BROWN:** Oh very much so. Well, of course there's a lot of publicity. We had and I much say I had lunch with Sarah Booth Conroy just recently. I don't know whether you recognize. Sarah Booth Conroy.

**ROSENFELD:** I know her.

**BROWN:** Well, I think I told you about the solid gold radiator, right here. She remembered the big feature they did of this. And then when Southern Accents... we could show you... when Southern Accents was a new magazine, just really new, I was at a luncheon with the editor of Southern Accents in Los Angeles and she was, they were just really turning over whatever they could turn over. They did a magnificent spread on this house and all the collections I could show you, it's back there, pages of it.

**ROSENFELD:** But you did have clients on the Hill?

**BROWN:** Oh yeah, sure.

**ROSENFELD:** Are there any...

**BROWN:** Left?

**ROSENFELD:** Yeah.

**BROWN:** You think of the people who have died. Maria who was wonderful and we were always doing a lot for her. And across the street from her were Muriel and Diz Hoitsma who were great Capitol Hill'ers. Ralph. They were great friends.

**ROSENFELD:** You did their house?

**BROWN:** I helped them a lot with that house. And then Ann Brunsdale who lived right around, next to the apartment house. In the house that's a frame house, what we call a San Francisco House, it looks like San Francisco with a little ornamental porch on the front. That's the one that's a tenement that had the family with 12 children in it.

**ROSENFELD:** So that's an example really of...

**BROWN:** Then Dick [Richard M.] and Ann Schmidt, who have a wonderful house. You can't tell really so much from the outside, but the inside is spectacular—115 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. And the George Turners at 408 8<sup>th</sup> Street. That's the house that all being done over now.

**ROSENFELD:** Oh, yeah.

**BROWN:** Uh, huh. And the Wyatt Stewarts at 318 A Street. And then the Capitol Hill Church in and of itself is my work. And the manse at 316 A Street.

**ROSENFELD:** How do you remember all these addresses?

**BROWN:** Well, I did...the McGuire's house is a beautiful flat front Italianate around the corner. It's red brick. We took all the paint off and did a good job on that. And 139 12<sup>th</sup> Street which was the manse for the...that's another whole story. 139 12<sup>th</sup> Street which the manse for the St. Mark's church.

**ROSENFELD:** This St. Mark's church?

**BROWN:** No St. Mark's here at the corner.

**ROSENFELD:** And the manse was on 12<sup>th</sup> Street?

**BROWN:** Uh, hum. Because the Baxters, Bill Baxter, this was during the Johnson Administration before President Johnson siphoned Bill away from the... from his pastorate and took him into the Peace Corps. So there's that one. Those are the ones that just pop into...oh, there are others of course.

**ROSENFELD:** Was there any ...is there one in particular that you remember as being a real challenge because of the architecture, the condition of the house, or the...anything in particular.

**BROWN:** Oh, the worst one by far the worst one by far was in Georgetown. Only because the house...it was an Italianate...the house had been so mercilessly modified and renovated and you couldn't say ref...you couldn't say anything except that what was done to it. The building was bought by what turned out to be a client who wanted to look for interiors to look at it from interiors. And I went and of course, I perceive like that, much more so than the need for draperies and wallpaper. Oh dear, look at this? I don't like that. Anyway, that house had structural problems beyond all possible belief. I've run into a lot of that in my profession. That's kind of again... the churches because I have done a lot of churches, 6 of them in Baltimore on the National Register.

**ROSENFELD:** Six churches in Baltimore?

**BROWN:** Um hum. All historic churches.

**ROSENFELD:** And what would you generally be doing with a ....

**BROWN:** Really designing and advising, consulting with architectural firms, always that the way that worked, as the consultant. But from the beginning.

**ROSENFELD:** Were there any particular architectural firms on the Hill that you worked with more than others?

**BROWN:** No, absolutely not? There weren't any architectural firms to amount to anything. But there have been individuals over the years, some of whom have gone. Young men, some women, Brenda Sanchez, is a very good example. I didn't work with her, but I've known her for her work. So it's ...some of the...people sort of know the things that the residences because our work is primarily respectful of the integrity of the old buildings. So much of the work is very inaccurately referred to as restoration, when of course it isn't restoration at all. It's absolute vandalism of the historic properties. People...oh it wasn't worth anything anyway. And part of the problem is the ignorance of the designers. And I don't want to just say architects, because that's not fair. But generally speaking, we've had enormous amount of destruction done to the historic buildings because people didn't know any better or didn't care.

**ROSENFELD:** Are you referring to things like taking out interior walls?

**BROWN:** And stripping all and throwing away all the mantle pieces and not understanding, well it's fascinating, when I think about...were I to take you around and show you the whole phenomenon of what we call "earlying up" the buildings when Victorian had no appeal whatsoever. We still have a lot of that around I can show you block after block where all the wrong door pieces were stuck on buildings and everything. And I don't think I got into the business of painting of the houses. And I was able to document that to the year, when I was in Charleston recently.

**ROSENFELD:** Colors of paints?

**BROWN:** Well, the fact ...how it started. The idea of painting the houses which it turns out, as we know now, I think I told you that also, that I was responsible for the first lectures on the actual palettes for the historic buildings. And our wonderful terraces of buildings, like one of the best we have is one Winecoop Road down on .....???? Avenue, fabulous, fabulous. And how those rows of buildings red as a group, before you started carving them up into different slots and painting them different colors and all the detail fell apart. Enormous amount of ignorance. Judith Capen has done a great deal of good in this area in terms of her lectures and her documentation. It's all part of the whole process.

**ROSENFELD:** How would you describe the Hill right now, in terms of its...you know, if you were describing it to someone from Nebraska?

**BROWN:** I'd say that if you are an urbanophile, there is no question in my mind but what Capitol Hill is the most desirable neighborhood within the city, for a number of reasons. All of which really begin with transportation. Transportation first. The fact that you can get...and then along with it, if you just don't want to...if you just want to walk not so very far, when you walk to the...well, beyond the Library of Congress, but when you can reasonably walk to the National Gallery, you can walk to museums. You just don't do that from Dupont Circle. And now of course, we have the L'Enfant plan, so parking is not a terrible problem up here. Like Georgetown for instance, which is...Georgetown is charming. I do a lot of work over there, but it's impossible. I don't want to live in that kind of frustration which is one of the reasons why I made the decision to do what I am going to do now, at this point in my life, in terms...besides the fact that I want to live on the River and I don't want a big house any more. I don't want a house any more. I've had a lifetime of house and other peoples' houses. I will miss this room, believe me. I will really miss it.

**ROSENFELD:** Is it the care of a house that you're talking about?

**BROWN:** Yeah. To keep a building like this up and do it properly and one that is as big as this and you have tenants. There is nothing the matter with the tenants, I just don't want to do that anymore.

**ROSENFELD:** Is it ...are there sort of rules of thumb in terms of keeping up an old house, like you should paint every X number of years?

**BROWN:** Oh no, it's a matter of knowledge and depth of interest. If it needs to be fixed, I fix it. Fortunately, I can do a lot of that myself. One of my very, very best friends owns a beautiful Victorian, one of the really great ones in Alexandria and another one down in Urbana, Virginia. He isn't the least bit handy. Consequently, the houses get away from him. You have to take care of these buildings. We just closed the front door and I looked at that threshold. That threshold needs a new seal in it. I put that in years ago. It's all worn out; needs a new one. Everything needs something, always. Front window sashes need to be painted. We've taken good care of it.

**ROSENFELD:** Did you entertain much here?

**BROWN:** Oh, in our day, I'll say we did. I'll say we did.

**ROSENFELD:** What sort of events did you have?

**BROWN:** Parties.

**ROSENFELD:** Like big cocktail parties?

**BROWN:** Yeah, sure. Big Christmas parties.

**ROSENFELD:** Tea parties? or dinner parties?

**BROWN:** This is the whole history of the house from the time we bought it. From the first party, the way it looked when we bought it. When it was painted white with gray trim. [showing photo book] You have to open up all...it takes you through every step of the way. This is the way...See? It had all the big cast iron...this is taken...that's where the piano sits right this minute. Here we are. This partition had been built across the middle of this room. When we looked at this house, this half was a bedroom and that half was a living room with linoleum on the floors. This was our first party, taking the wall down and the neighbors called the police. And the police came. This was Aunt Ruth's best friend from the International Monetary Fund, a trilingual secretary. They travelled all over the world together. That's one of the mantle pieces, painted, the marble mantles were painted. Anyway, there called the police on us, while we were doing this. And here we are, that's all our kitchen. And here I am with a head of hair, doing all the stuff. Did I take you downstairs, before?

**ROSENFELD:** No, but you said you would.

**BROWN:** Yeah, you need to see the rest of it. Here I am scraping all the paint off the front of the house. One brick at a time.

**ROSENFELD:** How long would you say...?

**BROWN:** Three years. That part took, on the front.

**ROSENFELD:** Just the front?

**BROWN:** Just the front.

**ROSENFELD:** But how about the whole rest of the house...til you had it in shape?

**BROWN:** Well, you see the dining room downstairs. We ate dinner in the dining room the tenth year we were here.

**ROSENFELD:** Oh.

**BROWN:** Because I had to have a place to work. The carriage house. In principle, we should have done the carriage house, but the carriage house was in such worse than terrible condition, that all we did was put a roof...it had no windows. All we did was put a roof on it to stabilize it because that would have taken so much money at that time and we worked our way up. Finally, I was working on the carriage house, we were working on it in 1967 when my mother and dad were killed.

**ROSENFELD:** That was in '67?

**BROWN:** Uh, huh.

**ROSENFELD:** They died in a ...

**BROWN:** Plane crash. And a number of the things in this room came from their house and we just doubled up and piled the stuff in here. Now we're unpling it. You see some of the parties.

**ROSENFELD:** Yeah, Christmas.

**BROWN:** You see the chandeliers, made out of hula hoops with jelly molds and hula hoops. We didn't have any money for chandeliers, so we made them. See them, with the gold tinsel on the hula hoops and the candles in them? They were marvelous. We had...we took them down after Christmas and after we did that a couple of years, we said this is ridiculous. And we left them up all year round.

**ROSENFELD:** Sounds like you had fun.

**BROWN:** Oh, we had a lot of good times in this house. Lot of good times. The hardest part about it is really the neighbors' grandchildren who are now in their 40s, and my sisters' children, they don't ever remember life without this house. And consequently, they are finding it very difficult to see it taken apart. Like we did with my grandmother's house on Massachusetts Avenue, which was always that way until ...came apart.

**ROSENFELD:** Well, but you must have a sort of philosophical attitude about this at this point.

**BROWN:** Oh, very much so. Very much so. It's very...as far as the contents are concerned, because don't want to sound braggy, there's a lot of good stuff in this house. It comes from families and travels and I'm now calling it "divide and conquer." We've done this before. So, I'm ...the expression is "you can't take it with you." Well I know that so I want to know where it's going. And this is all carefully planned. I can tell you where everything in this room is going to go. It's not all going to Harbour Square. Of the relatives.

**ROSENFELD:** So, everything will go to different family members? You are not going to be selling...

**BROWN:** Members of the family. Very little will be sold. We just divide it all up. We've done this before. You can't belong to this family unless you move furniture.

**ROSENFELD:** Now you were mentioning a woman who works for you earlier. Has she worked for you a long time?

**BROWN:** Which one?

**ROSENFELD:** Oh, you...Rose...

**BROWN:** Rosaria [Ventura]? Our housekeeper? Well I got her from the Schmidts. She and her husband, Raymundo. They dust. They dust and rearrange. How do I know Rosaria has been here? Because nothing is where it was when she arrived? And how do I know she dusted the pictures? Because they are all crooked. Not as easily as most people, because all of our bigger collections are hung on two hooks and they stay rigid, but...anyway.

**ROSENFELD:** Well, there's a lot of things to dust here.

**BROWN:** Yes, there are. As a matter of fact, once when we had a house and garden tour and I had two houses on the tour that year, I decided just to join the group that was going through this house. Like a tourist and I stood there right by the fire place, listening to what the interpreters were saying. One woman said to another, "it's a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to dust it." That was the...and then there...the only thing we ever found from both the house tours, it was right here. There was a wad of chewing gum stomped into the rug. And I said to myself, well you know, but the room was so spectacular that she dropped her gum. Oh, we had a lot of good times. But, it's time to do something else.

**ROSENFELD:** Now who...did you, aside from the parties you had here, was your social life primarily also on the Hill? or were your friends in...

**BROWN:** We always had friends from all...and I've been very active and Aunt Ruth was always very generous in letting us use the house for...we've had annual meetings of the Victorian Society in Washington and when the National Trust was smaller, board meetings. Oh, we've just...a lot of people have been watered and fed in this house, a lot of people.

**ROSENFELD:** Were there days in which there was a staff?

**BROWN:** Sure, you're looking at him.

**ROSENFELD:** You. Ok.

**BROWN:** At different times, we always had...my aunt was with the International Monetary Fund. She from the staff, worked down there in Administration, and she always knew...you know we could always get bar tenders, we could always get kitchen help. But this really was interesting, living like this house, being the English basement house is not familiar to most people. When you handle a group of people, you have 150 people in this house and you don't do that in the wintertime, you do that in the summer, so we have the circulation. You learn how to manage it up and down the stairs and the bar is in the front hall and the double doors are open, so it's always very open. The tenants, of course, were always included, when we had a really big party.

**ROSENFELD:** So you learned how to...do you think that was how they did it in the olden days?

**BROWN:** Well, I've never quite understood about these houses is that you have to look at this big room, which was the parlor, and behind it, which is now this suite area, which was my aunt's bedroom and bathroom and dressing room, was all great big room. That was the back parlor. That's all there was on this floor. Then the dining room and the kitchen were downstairs. But the access—and this was typical of these buildings—the access between floors was never, its kind of like Philadelphia, never grand staircases at all. So, how you entertained in a place like this and got down the stairway and did this gracefully, and the stairway was enclosed, I opened it up the way it is as you see it now. But most—the Schmidt's house is still arranged...Maria's house is still arranged exactly the way it had always been, with the stairs enclosed and narrow doors. How they did it, I'm sure I don't know. My grandmother's house was like that on Massachusetts Avenue, the same arrangement. Two parlors like this, a great big dining room downstairs. I just remember the dining room is what I remember.

**ROSENFELD:** And the kitchen is?

**BROWN:** Where it always was. It's right under where you are sitting. The dining room and the kitchen are immediately under where we are seated.

**ROSENFELD:** Maybe we should pause and you give me a little tour.

**BROWN:** Sure.

END OF INTERVIEW