



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK  
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

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**Interview with Brian R. Furness**

**Interview Date:** May 13, 2005  
**Interviewer:** Mary Weirich  
**Transcriber:** Phyllis Verma

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

**WEIRICH:** This is May 13, 2005 and we are interviewing here at Mary Weirich's home and the interviewer is Mary Weirich. We are interviewing Brian Furness. Thank you for coming, Brian, we are pleased that you agreed to give us this interview. Now as you know we want to have an understanding of what Capitol Hill was like and I wanted to start by asking you what year did you come to Capitol Hill?

**FURNESS:** We arrived at Capitol Hill in November of 1969 after we returned from our first posting in Caracas Venezuela. We looked around for a place to live. We considered various choices. I was at the State Department and because in Caracas we'd acquired a taste for urban living, we thought—first we thought—that Georgetown would be nice, but Georgetown was too expensive. We looked at Foggy Bottom close to the State Department, but even then I could see, then we could see, that Foggy Bottom was going to be developed by George Washington University or by some of the other forces that were there. Living in the country, and I grew up in the country in rural Connecticut, was not an option because that even then it involved an unacceptable commute and we asked around, we looked around and we took a flyer and bought a house on Capitol Hill on Second Street SE, right across from the old Providence Hospital site.

**WEIRICH:** So, what hundred block was that then?

**FURNESS:** That's in the 400 block of Second Street SE between E Street and D Street at North Carolina Avenue.

**WEIRICH:** And what was that neighborhood like?

**FURNESS:** The neighborhood was, first of all, it was mixed. It was much more diverse, in many respects, than our neighborhoods are now. Just for instance, our next door [neighbor] to the north, was Marguerite Kemp and her brother. And, Marguerite subsisted on a Spanish-American War Widow's pension. Her brother had a little retirement income from a railroad retirement program. But, they were essentially poor as church mice, but just wonderful—not brother—we didn't know brother very well, but Marguerite, for instance, would sit with our three year old daughter. You know, it seemed like for hours that the two of them would sit and talk on Marguerite's front door step.

**WEIRICH:** How many children did you have then?

**FURNESS:** Just the one, although our son, Paul, was born while we were in Washington on that tour. On the other side, for instance, was Bobbie and Harry Gray. Bobbie was an administrative assistant to a congressman from Long Island. Harry was tunnel foreman with the Office of the Architect of the Capitol and a part-time cab driver, and he was wonderful. We, you know, would sit and drink beer on his front

porch or on my front porch and swap stories, not all of which I'm sure were true, but I remember once, that when we had one of Capitol Hill's really big snows—24-26 inches, something like that—Harry and I, we went up and shoveled our roofs off because we were afraid there was going to be damage. Other people, Hattie Green, who lived down the street from us, was, was black African-American and we were really quite good friends. Henry Drennan, who lived around the corner—you know there were lots and lots and lots of [wonderful] people. One of the people I remember most strongly was Phoebe Bannister who was our ally in the—well she was actually the leader of—the fight to make, to do something with the old Providence Hospital site—to make it into something that would be community friendly, and that would be a real benefit to the neighborhood.

**WEIRICH:** And, where was the Providence Hospital site?

**FURNESS:** That was on the block, surrounded by Second Street between Second and Third Street—

**WEIRICH:** Southeast?

**FURNESS:** Southeast. And, between D and E Street Southeast. It had been a hospital, but by the time when we moved there in 1969, the building, the old building, had been condemned—mostly torn down—but had ... but the space had not been cut down, so the surface was about 15 feet above the current street level—above the current park level. It had been used as a spoil dump during the construction of the freeway at the front at the face of the Capitol. It was sort of full of holes, brush,—some of it I think was actually dangerous, particularly, because kids could get into the holes. When it rained, mud poured off and covered the streets.

**WEIRICH:** Not a neighborhood friendly site.

**FURNESS:** Not a neighborhood—interesting, but not a neighborhood friendly site. But, it was the issue that first got me involved, and it was the issue that led me to the Capitol Hill Restoration Society through, I've got to say, through Austin Beall, who I met, like so many others, got me involved. You know, he said 'C'mon Brian get involved'.

**WEIRICH:** And who was Austin Beall?

**FURNESS:** Austin Beall was a longtime, what a wonderful man, Austin was a longtime resident and activist. He'd been President of the Restoration Society. He'd been involved in a variety of neighborhood issues. He and Arline Roback, a real estate—one of the sort of the pioneer real estate people on the hill—Austin was in real estate too, but he didn't wear it as much as Arline did—were some of the people that had had a vision for Capitol Hill, a vision that spoke to its use as a residential community and spoke to the need to preserve the historic housing stock that comprises Capitol Hill and gives it so much of its visual

character, character that the Restoration Society has done a great deal to protect, preserve, and to nourish. In any case, the challenges included [that] the space had been blocked by a couple of real estate, some real estate investors—the Antionelli and Gould parking people plus a dentist from Silver Spring.

**WEIRICH:** The space, meaning the Providence site?

**FURNESS:** The Providence site, yeah.

**WEIRICH:** Interesting.

**FURNESS:** Yeah, and they, first they wanted to put a parking lot on there. We beat them back on that. Then they wanted to construct an office building sidewalk to sidewalk, that would have been three or four stories high. It would've been an enormous building, one of the largest in the District of Columbia, not government owned. And, they were beaten back on that. But, finally, and they had congressman, representative Joel Broyhill from northern Virginia, one of the overseers of the District at that time, who had introduced legislation that would allow them to construct this building without regard for District law or regulations at the time. And, he had scheduled—Broyhill had scheduled hearings on this building and, so the neighborhood mobilized.

In those days not so many wives worked and what happened was that when we got the word—and we always sort of had contacts with congressional staffers, sort of a fifth column, within the building that has proven again and again so important to our ability to respond effectively to what happened in Congress. And, so the first thing that happened was that the wives rushed up to the hearing with baby strollers and kids in arms and this kind of stuff. Representative Broyhill looked around, perceived that the hearing was not going to go well, and cancelled it, while the rest of us, the husbands, you know, scurried around biking testimony and getting on the list to testify if there should be another hearing. Shortly, well sometime, after that, Congress was induced to buy the property and with the provision that it be a green park, that it would become the site of the page school with interim use as a green park. Well, for a variety of reasons, the page school idea never really got off the ground. They changed the structure of the page program, there were some real abuses of pages and perquisites and a variety of other things that had come in—and what happened was—so the green park essentially is the idea that prevailed.

**WEIRICH:** A green park is what's here now.

**FURNESS:** Is what's here now.

**WEIRICH:** And, so, how did you then become more active in the Restoration Society? This led you into it?

**FURNESS:** This led me into it in I think in 1971-1972. I became second Vice President, I guess, for reasons that may have occurred to somebody at the time. [laugh] Probably because I was willing to do it. Then in 1972, I got involved in State Department stuff, a very intensive economics course, and then Italian language training, and then we went to Italy for five years. So, that pretty much put an end to [it]. I missed all of the stuff that happened in that [time], some of which was very important, which was the creation of the Capitol Hill Historic District, which was, which turned out to be—the Restoration Society played a large part, not the only part—role, but that was, I think that’s perhaps the Restoration Society’s key contribution to the growth and survival of Capitol Hill. There were certainly earlier battles, earlier battles that I, that I think really threatened the Hill, in which I play no particular part, for instance the defeat of the proposal to put the Center Leg Freeway up 11th Street. [Laugh]

**WEIRICH:** 11th Street where the beautiful homes are now.

**FURNESS:** That’s right. Yeah, Philadelphia Row, Lincoln Park.

**WEIRICH:** [that] would have cut the neighborhood in half, yes?

**FURNESS:** Uh huh. Although, at the time I think 11th Street was pretty much on the fringe in—there was sort of the Capitol Hill nucleus, and we were certainly—but there was all that talking about do you go beyond Seventh Street except for a couple of blocks or you go beyond Eighth Street ...

**WEIRICH:** So the nucleus really stopped at Seventh or Eighth Street in terms of ...

**FURNESS:** Yeah, there was a natural boundary by the Southeast/Southwest Freeway, the “Great China Wall”. There have been some proposals to get rid of that and I think, that’s something that would reunite Capitol Hill with the area just to the south and to the Navy Yard in a way that we can’t do it now with the freeway.

**WEIRICH:** All the way to the water, it’d be beautiful.

**FURNESS:** All the way? Well, Capitol Hill never really went to the water because it was industrial, or you know it grew up as industrial, or it was an adjunct to the Navy Yard.

**WEIRICH:** I see. So, where was the Historical District defined to be?

**FURNESS:** Well, there was the passage of the act, and the Capitol Hill Restoration Society, the proponents of creating an historic district took advantage of the legislation. We were almost among the first to really take advantage of the legislation, and the original proposal [for the historic district] was essentially south of H Street all the way to the Anacostia. The powers that be looked at that and said, “Gee, no, that’s overreaching”.

**WEIRICH:** So the original [proposal] was to the river, then.

**FURNESS:** ... to the river. It turned out there's sort of a natural division, I mean there are jogs and things like that but H Street was coherent, relatively coherent, although much debilitated by the 1968 riots. And, it's interesting ... we bought a house in 1969, after the riots in 1968 [when] it was not clear that ... you know, that Capitol Hill looked like a—

**WEIRICH:** —great place to live?

**FURNESS:** It was not clear at all that it looked like a great place to live. The building on the corner three doors from our house had been burned out some during the riots. Dick Wolf tells me he remembers National Guard troops setting machine gun posts on 11<sup>th</sup> Street. And, certainly the damage on H Street NE was very significant. The place that burned out next to us actually had been a grocery store and that apparently extended a lot of credit and people sort of took advantage [of] the situation to make sure the ledger books got burned. That at least is what people said, so, (laugh).

**WEIRICH:** Well, you seem to be pleased that ultimately you made the decision [to live here]. When you came back from Italy, you came back to live in Capitol Hill again?

**FURNESS:** We certainly did and once again, we got involved in a variety of issues.

**WEIRICH:** You said “we”?

**FURNESS:** Well, “we”, the Restoration Society. I got involved in a couple of issues. But, I've got to say that at that time, my job at the State Department was intensive. It required a great deal of travel. And, 1978 was sort of a year of sort of personal tragedies for me particularly. Both my parents died within a couple of months of each other, and, our son Paul died just short of his seventh birthday, within a couple of weeks of my mother's death, and, but even after that we did a lot of traveling, at least I did a lot of traveling as part of the job ...

**WEIRICH:** I'm so sorry. That must have been so very difficult.

**FURNESS:** Well, that's one of the things I wouldn't want—nobody should have to go through something like that. But, in any case, in 1984 we were assigned to Brasilia, and we spent, five years there until 1989 when I retired from the Department of State and went to work as a consultant partly for the United Nations in Rome. It gave me a lot of opportunity to get involved in a variety of neighborhood projects.

**WEIRICH:** Is this when you began to focus more on the Restoration Society as part of what you did?

**FURNESS:** Well, I've always seen The Restoration Society as providing an umbrella for neighborhood oriented projects. In that respect, you know, it was just a wonderful place to be. The Providence Park issues were, you know, the Restoration Society sort of facilitated that, made it a lot easier [because of their] strength and organization and a certain degree of validation to the effort. And they did [help with] at various times, in some of the other fights that took place at Providence Park, [such as] the efforts by the Capitol Hill Group Ministry to construct a gated walled senior citizens residential facility, [and] there was an effort by Safeway, I believe, to think about using that as a supermarket site.

**WEIRICH:** Now, where was this?

**FURNESS:** This was on the Providence Park site.

**WEIRICH:** On the Providence Park site.

**FURNESS:** About every five years it turned out there was some kind of challenge to use the property for one sort of benighted purpose or another. One of the major issue—and one of the most serious, was an effort by the Congress, the then majority whip, whose name I confess I don't remember just now, to have it acquired or used by the University of California as its Washington Graduate School, semester in Washington program. And, I was instrumental in forming a group called The Friends of Providence Park and we organized demonstrations, we raised money, we talked to the press a lot, we lobbied Congress, we lobbied staffers, in fact, most of our membership was staffers.

**WEIRICH:** They played baseball there, right?

**FURNESS:** (laugh) Well, some baseball. Yes, they played baseball, but it was used by—it was right across from St Peter's [school] and it's used as a playground by the St. Peter's people [who] don't really have a grassy playground. My kids and thousands of other kids played Soccer on the Hill there. It's where you met your neighbors; it's where you walked your dogs; it's where you strolled your kids. It turned out to be a really wonderful place.

**WEIRICH:** I agree. It turned out to be a wonderful open green space for the neighborhood.

**FURNESS:** Yeah, and ... Eventually, we got to a Congressman Pete McCluskey from the San Francisco Bay Area, who wrote a letter to the Los Angeles Times, if memory serves, and said, "What in the world is this project to get California taxpayers to spend millions of dollars to put a University of California centered in Washington DC when there is not enough dormitory space for residents of California who want to attend the California university system?". And that was the end of it. We made sure that got a lot of publicity—that it wasn't necessary ...

**WEIRICH:** Wonderful.

**FURNESS:** that. That was the end of the debate. At least, that was the last serious challenge.

Congressmen Representative Jerry Lewis lived or lives on Third Street [SE]. By my recollection, I think he'd just become Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. And, I think that, you know, I've no proof, but my belief is that he made sure that nobody was going to spoil his view.

**WEIRICH:** Well, we're grateful for that!

**FURNESS:** [laugh]

**WEIRICH:** What other kinds of projects did you launch into while you held this office in the Capitol Restoration Society?

**FURNESS:** A variety of positions in, you know, sort of representatives. In the early 90's, Brad Braden and I worked on traffic and transportation issues. Pat Schauer had begun work on traffic issues in the mid-1980's and we sort of picked up from the work she did when she became President in the early 90's. One of the issues—and it was a very divisive issue within the Capitol community—was the Restoration Society support for the Barney Circle connector freeway. Our support stemmed from perhaps you know, a basic calculation that if we were ever going to have an opportunity to get commuter traffic off Capitol Hill, one of the elements had to be some way to get them around the Hill. And to that end, we agreed to support the Barney Circle connector freeway and in return, the District Department of Transportation agreed that they would undertake a thorough going review and alteration of Capitol Hill traffic patterns to make it much, much, much more difficult for commuters to use Capitol Hill residential streets.

For instance, the agreement would have been to make Independence Avenue and Constitution Avenue two-way 24/7, parking both sides of the street. They would have eliminated the turn that you can make now in the 200 block of Pennsylvania Avenue, right here where we're doing this interview, that turned from Pennsylvania eastbound onto Independence Avenue would have been eliminated. And there would be no left turn at Third Street. So, if you were going to go to Independence Avenue to get to the Whitney Young Bridge, you would have to go down over North Carolina Avenue to Independence or to East Capitol Street or something, and it would make it much easier to keep on Pennsylvania Avenue, even though the turn onto 295—Kenilworth Avenue—is very difficult on the other side of the bridge. The Restoration Society lost that one. I'm going to say almost a virtually unanimous otherwise unanimous community determined that freeways, particularly a freeway extension, was a pretty bad idea, and that prevailed, particularly after Mrs. Ambrose was elected to represent Ward 6. But, I have to say that the, in retrospect, that's probably one that we probably should have lost. The current proposal, and I'm a great fan of it, is now to rebuild the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridges to provide that access for commuters from Virginia, to

and from Virginia, particularly into downtown by rebuilding the 11th Street bridges and by rebuilding the intersections with 295/Kenilworth Avenue. So, you get people around the Hill. You get rid of the Southeast/Southwest Freeway from 11<sup>th</sup> Street to Barney Circle. It solves a lot of problems. We didn't see how it would work at the time, or it was beyond the scope of the problem we had. In a meeting last year with Dan Tangherlini said you know that we need to think about returning Independence Avenue to the community.

**WEIRICH:** Tangherlini saw merit in some of your original thinking. Nice.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

**WEIRICH:** This is the [first] tape second side, next question. Besides the Barney Circle issues, were there other transportation issues that you focused upon?

**FURNESS:** Actually, there were two early issues, or two issues in that period of the early 90's, that I was involved in. The first was the initial effort to put a major office building at Station Place in Northeast alongside the Union Station tracks. And I did some of the initial traffic analysis for that that would have helped if anybody had been listening; it would have helped make the traffic impact of that particular development much less onerous. The project itself became a cropper on the downturn in real estate values and the general decline and interest in commercial real estate in the early 90's. And, of course, it was revived just after the turn of the century and it has resulted in the enormous and inappropriate building that we have that is almost ready to be occupied by the Securities and Exchange Commission on that particular site.

One of the other issues I was involved in, a traffic issue, was the reconstruction of the Southeast/Southwest Freeway. It was clear we were never going to get rid of it. But, at a meeting in oh I guess the early 1990's, we prevailed on the District Department of Transportation to redesign the entrance from Third Street, in a way that would make it much less dangerous, which they eventually did. Now it comes up on the inside. The people who are making that right turn to go up the extension that goes in front of the Capitol, come by on the right so you don't have a very dangerous merge/mix or you have a much less dangerous merge/mix coming up on the highway. I'm sure that's had a significant effect on safety. Certainly, there's almost sort of an adrenaline thing, but I think it's a lot less adrenaline getting onto the freeway now than it used to be. But, that also represented an era. It gave me experience with putting together community—Capitol Hill-wide coalitions—to address specific issues. And, a couple of years later, then President Brad Braden asked me to get involved in Eastern Market and try to put together

some kind of an effort that would address the management and use issues. The Restoration Society and so many others, had a long history ...

[break]

**WEIRICH:** where were we?

**FURNESS:** you had asked about Eastern Market and the Capitol Hill community ... in many respects I've always thought of Eastern Market as the central reference point of the Capitol Hill residential community. Certainly we relate to the Capitol of the United States; we relate to the Navy Yard; we relate to a variety of different places. But the central dimension, at least to my way of thinking, is Eastern Market. A structure that has been under an amazing amount of stress, mostly by indifferent and sometimes evil City Administration. It was built in 1875 and now it is certainly the last of the municipally owned markets in the District of Columbia. The history actually goes back to Jefferson's terms as President but the current building was built in 1875. It was at one time about to be demolished by the District of Columbia government. There were few merchants. The north hall, now the Market 5 Gallery, was a repair shop for DDOT equipment. There was an old Victorian fire station—this all predates my time on Capitol Hill—I should say—but there was a Victorian fire station that was torn down to build the Natatorium, something that I was not around for. There was a lot of challenge about the desirability of that particular project.

The Market had clearly fallen on hard times. A renovation in the mid '70s had left a lot of the underlying structural and design problems pretty much on the table. The challenges were some of the management problems—the management was fragmented. There were essentially three major dimensions: the farmers, the South Hall merchants, and the burgeoning flea market and the arts and crafts fair. None of these groups talked to one another except through clenched teeth. Nobody could make decisions about what to do about the place or how to manage it some way that brought a focus to how do you improve the market as a whole. The community organizations were essentially at war with one another over what was to happen. The Restoration Society had mistakenly backed a proposal to make it more like Baltimore's Inner Harbor development, where it would be an upscale place. That had been blocked by a group of activists. They were very difficult to deal with but they were determined and they managed to prevent all of this sort of bad stuff from happening until saner heads prevailed.

The Restoration Society convened neighborhood organizations to address the problems of Eastern Market, and I was the chair of this Eastern Market Community task force. That was in 1995. We spent three years of meetings, cajoling, the proverbial herding cats, but finally we wrote legislation that would address the management problems and the uses of Eastern Market, but above all would give the

community a solid role—that would permit the community to be consulted on things that would happen at the Market. Council Member [Sharon] Ambrose introduced our legislation with very minor changes; it was passed by the Council in 1998 and although it has not been perfect, it provides a basis for community participation, for getting all of the various economic stakeholders at the Market to work together, to think about the Market as a whole, with professional management with which I'm not always happy. My Management and Operations Subcommittee played a major role in evaluating the various candidates for the position, and for helping and advising the City on what the community thought about the selections that were there and they followed our advice. I don't think the current management is as strong or as dynamic as it ought to have been, but it was the best of the choices that we had. What it did was to end the infighting among community organizations; there were all sorts of headlines: "Will Eastern Market Survive?" That's sort of come to an end. We agree now on where the Market should go. We set this in the legislation. We agree on the role of the community, the role of the stakeholders and the professional management and the City and that's taken care of in the legislation. The community's adrenalin level has diminished very significantly about Eastern Market.

There are issues; there are things that need to be done, but how we did it—at least it taught me—that putting together coalitions of people and organizations was a viable way to address community problems. That was one of the great aspects of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society. It provided a nucleus and a base and support for these kinds of projects—for empowering local groups of neighbors, for helping them to pull together the resources. We brought some money to bear. We brought expertise. We brought a set of contacts. If you needed to talk to somebody, well somebody at the Restoration Society probably knew the right people to talk to. If you were dealing with a pile of jackstraws and you don't know which one to pull first, we always seemed to know that if you tug on it this way and address it. You know, you get a lot of advice on that.

**WEIRICH:** What were some of the other neighborhood projects that you tackled in the '90s?

**FURNESS:** Well, the other major issue that I was involved in was the Bryan School Neighborhood Association—again that was a challenge. The Bryan School is at 1325 Independence Avenue SE. It had been abandoned as a school in 1989, I believe. The school system had maintained a teacher training center, and it had used it as a warehouse for old bits and pieces of office furniture and a variety of things. In those years there were too many schools and not enough students. That was particularly exacerbated on Capitol Hill because at one time Washington, DC, had maintained a segregated school system. But because Capitol Hill was always an integrated neighborhood, you had to build black schools and white schools. There was great debate. You had Bryan which was built as a white school and it was a couple of blocks from the Payne school, which was a black school. This was a pattern that repeated throughout

Capitol Hill. As a result, we had abandoned schools aching to be used in some fashion. Bob Herrema had led the way with the Carbery School renovation that is now condos. It gave other people the idea. But at Bryan, the City proposed that it be used for citywide offices, where the playground would become a parking lot and the old building and a really hideous 1950's addition would be used for offices. They moved a welfare service center into the new building essentially without telling anybody or without getting the zoning or the proper use permits for the building. We pulled together the neighborhood and with the support of the Restoration Society and others, we challenged the City before the Board of Zoning Adjustment and we essentially won. They got an emergency use permit for the welfare center for about two years, but their ability to use the big old building was denied. So they couldn't use it at all.

**WEIRICH:** So what's this area look like now?

**FURNESS:** I took over and was the President of the Bryan School Neighborhood Association and I figured that we had two jobs: first, it was to make sure that nothing bad happened and when we beat the city that took care of that. Then the much harder thing to do was to make something good happen and the real estate market was in the tank. Who wanted an old school building in a fringe area of Capitol Hill? So we shopped around; we talked to a variety of companies; we talked to a whole bunch of people about what we could do; we got Bob Herrema's group to rough out some plans about what we could do; we shopped those around.

Our initial candidate for that was treated so badly by the City that they withdrew. Then it was put out on a *Request for Proposals* basis, because charter schools and others get a 25% break on those kinds of offers. The initial winning candidate was the church school that is across from the CVS on 12<sup>th</sup> Street, which won the bidding but decided not to pursue the project. As it turned out, it would have eaten them alive. It would have been enormously expensive. Eakin/Youngentob came to us, a builder of infill housing in Washington, and [asked] would we support them. We went over and met with the principals; we looked at what they had in mind; we felt good about the people we talked to. We said, "Yes, we will get back you". To some extent the rest is history. What they built on the Bryan School site, the townhouses that are now Bryan Square Independence Place Southeast and the townhouses along South Carolina Avenue is probably the largest private housing development almost since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on Capitol Hill. The Bryan School condos are fabulous! They were on the House Tour in 2005 and I got to believe that everybody was very impressed with the level of finish, the ingenuity with which the building was rehabbed, and the outstanding views from those upper floor condos. What it showed us was that if you can pull your neighbors together, keep the pressure on, and build coalitions that get support—the Restoration Society backed us. In fact the Bryan School Neighborhood Association was never incorporated, but the Restoration Society provided a financial cover for us so that contributions to the

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Bryan School Neighborhood Association were tax deductible. The Restoration Society has done that again and again and again with neighborhood organizations, helping make neighborhood organizations or single cause organizations viable. They backed Friends of Providence Park, for instance, when they provided that kind of cover. Later, they provided the financial cover for the Kentucky Courts Neighborhood Task Force that I was also involved in.

**WEIRICH:** Tell me about Kentucky Courts.

**FURNESS:** Kentucky Courts was one of the most troubled housing developments, public housing developments, in the District of Columbia.

**WEIRICH:** And that's on Capitol Hill?

**FURNESS:** It's on Capitol Hill, on 14<sup>th</sup> Street at about C Street SE. It's divided into two developments: one, a senior citizens development that has never been particularly troublesome or negatively impacted the neighborhood and the other was family units between Kentucky Avenue and 14<sup>th</sup> Street and C Street which had been nothing but trouble. A neighbor, Jim Meyers, the journalist and author, wrote an article that was published in the *Atlantic Monthly* (not exactly a downscale publication). If memory serves, the title was "Observations on the Death of Thirty-three of My Neighbors". It detailed some of the impact of the environment on the neighborhood but more than anything else, on the people who lived there themselves. Jim is one of the wonderful people to work with; he is very active now in the Hill East organization. He had worked with the residents; he had a really great rapport with the people there and he had worked with the kids. He had gone to something called *The Watermelon Company* which sold watermelon in the summer to finance kids' projects and through that try and influence their lives. When the impact on the neighborhood was too great—the conditions [of Kentucky Courts] were unsafe not only for the neighborhood but for the residents—we began a campaign to get the place torn down and to build decent housing that would accommodate the residents there but would be more consistent [with the neighborhood] and would enable us to address the problems.

The problems were a terrible indictment of the District of Columbia Housing Authority of the times. To give you an example, they permitted pigeons to enter in the crawl spaces and the pigeon dung had caused the ceilings to collapse in the third floor units. Because there are pipe ways and other things, it had gone all the way through the buildings. When we walked through with some people, there was six to eight inches of pigeon dung and it had corroded the wiring. You had metal clad BX cable and that had corroded; the cladding had corroded from the impact of this stuff. We called on some of the television stations, and Sam Ford was very very helpful; he brought his cameras around and focused on the problems. Eventually, we got the Department of Health to make an inspection and they showed up one

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afternoon sort of relaxed and joking about the process and then they went up and saw the conditions. Apparently, they went into one of the apartments, looked at the pigeon dung everywhere. The inspector pulled his jacket over his nose and rushed out.

**WEIRICH:** Were there people living in this ...

**FURNESS:** Yes, there were people living in this. A week later, everybody [in the housing development] got a Section 8 Voucher and the place was closed.

**WEIRICH:** ... and that must feel good!

**FURNESS:** That does feel good. The real tragedy was what it did to the people who lived inside. Yes, I felt really good about participating with others in that. Now of course what we have are the new townhouses being built there. The design is pretty much consistent with the neighborhood. There will be more space; it will serve just as many low income people as it did before. But they will be mixed—there will be moderate and high income people there. And that has proven to be a much more successful model.

**WEIRICH:** ... not “warehousing” poor people ...

**FURNESS:** ... not ghettoizing poor people. That’s one of the things that Capitol Hill has always been about. As I look back on the 35 years or so that I’ve been around, we haven’t been as successful in preserving the diversity as we might have. When Charlotte and I first moved to Capitol Hill, one of the things that we really liked about it and one of the things that we found very attractive was the diversity. I grew up in the country where we lived with rich people and poor people (not so many rich people I’ve got to say). We lived with black people and white people. Although I’ve got to say that in rural Connecticut there weren’t many black people, but there were on Capitol Hill—young and old. Capitol Hill in 1969 was much more mixed. Now it’s much less mixed racially than it used to be. It’s a lot wealthier. It doesn’t have the mix of people. People are more like us—professionals, salaried. Although Capitol Hill was always good for government workers of one kind or another—people who worked in the Capitol, people who worked at the Navy Yard—but they are all gone; the blue collar work force of the Navy Yard vanished after World War II. There were only a few remnants of that.

One of the things we did do was that we preserved a certain look, a certain feel and I think that was very important, but it raised the prices a great deal. I’m not sure what we could have done about that. There are some tools. Nobody should be forced out by the increase in real estate values because there are programs that will ease the impact of property taxes on owner occupied housing. There is a means test. Those are programs that we really need to back.

**WEIRICH:** I see another project looming ...

**FURNESS:** Oh yes. One of the hard things is that there are so many things left to do.

**WEIRICH:** We talked a little bit about the '90s, what about as we move into 2000 and beyond. Were there projects there that stand out as fun or challenging?

**FURNESS:** I became President of the Restoration Society in 1998. That was the year that the Eastern Market legislation was passed. I also served on the Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee. But it also marked some really difficult issues that began to loom. We went through a very difficult period with the shotgun house and the Saint Coletta proposal.

**WEIRICH:** Tell me about that. First of all, what is the shotgun house?

**FURNESS:** The shotgun house is an example of early Hill architecture, of which there are very few examples here on the Hill. It was very modest housing, called shotgun, because there are no halls. It was called that because if you fired a shotgun blast through the front it would go through all the doors and out the back without touching anything. These are modest dwellings; there are only two or three on Capitol Hill. It's a building that we thought should be preserved. The major challenge to the shotgun house was the fellow who bought it in 1993 and who signed a contract to sell it to the Saint Coletta School, a school that does wonderful work working with severely handicapped children. By all accounts, they have a great program, a dedicated staff, and certainly the director, Sharon Raimo, who lives on Capitol Hill, has worked very hard and very devotedly at promoting an adequate education for these children. The problem arose in that she wanted to put the main building on Pennsylvania Avenue in a very constrained site.

**WEIRICH:** Which block would that have been?

**FURNESS:** The 1200 block of Pennsylvania Avenue SE. She wanted to use the shotgun house as the driveway for the buses that would bring the children to and from Saint Coletta. The shotgun house had been allowed to deteriorate. The owner refused to fix it up; wasn't boarded it up properly; the condition was pretty decrepit. The immediate neighbors wanted to tear it down, but hadn't thought much beyond that point. For instance, the aspects for using it for buses: that's an issue at the site they eventually got. Because there are lots of buses, lots of diesel buses and there is an air pollution problem attached to that. One of our objections was almost theological: it would have required rezoning residential property to commercial and that is one of the things that the Restoration Society has always opposed very sharply. It's not only a restoration issue, [it's a] preservation of existing housing stock. After all it's so important that to know who we are as people; we have to remember where we came from. And that's what preservation and restoration is really about—reminding us as a neighborhood where we came from and how we got where we are today. If you don't have that around, you become rootless, you lose your moorings. That's what the Restoration Society has been about all these years—we don't oppose

everything—but we have always kept in mind that we needed to recall and have about us the tangible expressions of where we came from.

**WEIRICH:** The Saint Coletta plan as you have described it would have asked you to violate [a] covenant that was important to this ...

**FURNESS:** Absolutely, that was certainly our feeling about it. We looked at Saint Coletta's plans for how they were going to use the property and we were prepared and we asked Saint Coletta's leadership to sit down with us and talk about how they could use with minor modifications—a curb cut on Pennsylvania Avenue to bring the buses in. They were always going to bring the buses in but then they were going to run them out onto E Street SE, I should say right ...

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

TAPE 2/SIDE 1

... by Watkins [School] playground.

**WEIRICH:** Tell me about the diesels and Watkins school.

**FURNESS:** That was one of the issues that had not been explored. But we wanted to work with, we offered to work with Saint Coletta about how relatively minor changes in the traffic flow through the building could meet their needs and could preserve the shotgun house, but also preserve the neighborhood from the impact of the diesel buses. Saint Coletta essentially refused to meet with us and took out some really, I have to say, some really hateful ads in the *Voice of the Hill* and walked away from the project. Subsequently, they expressed an interest in property at H and Second NE, but walked away from that when the neighbors raised questions about traffic flow and impact on the neighborhood. Again, with many complaints and loud protestations from the Saint Coletta people until they finally worked a deal of some kind, the details are perhaps mercifully hidden, to get the corner of 19<sup>th</sup> and Independence over in the Reservation 13 area where they are apparently going to build. I think they are breaking ground for a new facility.

There certainly is some controversy attached to that, but it's not one that we played a major role in, one way or the other. Although, the Restoration Society is certainly very interested in Reservation 13 and wants to play a major part in the planning and implementation of that particular project and how the development of that particular area of land is going to come about. Reservation 13 essentially is that area south of—it's where DC General was at one time—it's the area east of 19<sup>th</sup>, between 19<sup>th</sup> SE and the Anacostia River below, and from Independence Avenue to the City Jail on, what is it, on D Street SE.

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There's not enough time to get into that. I played some role in that, but we'll leave that to your next interview with somebody from the Restoration Society, because there's a lot of history to be made there.

The other major project that I was involved in as President of the Restoration Society, and again, as representative, was our work with the Southeast Citizens for Smart Development, SCSD, a group that was formed to resist the efforts of Boys Town, now Girls and Boys Town of Nebraska, to establish a facility for, let me use their words, 'troubled children', at the site on Pennsylvania Avenue at 14<sup>th</sup> Street at the intersection of Potomac Avenue across from the Potomac Avenue Metro site.

**WEIRICH:** Can you describe that area for us?

**FURNESS:** First the site itself has a rather checkered history. The Restoration Society, in the mid '70s, challenged the efforts of a local real estate developer who assembled the tract, to put an enormous office building on the site. It would have been the largest privately owned office building in the District of Columbia at the time it was built. The Restoration Society and the National Capitol Planning Commission, NCPC, brought suit challenging the District of Columbia's decision to rezone the property.

**WEIRICH:** This was in what year, then?

**FURNESS:** I don't remember the exact year—in the mid '70s. Actually we had to sue twice, and essentially we prevailed. I mean, the Restoration Society was one of the leaders with the National Capitol Planning Commission. We had agreed that if they wanted to build something consistent with the commercial zoning on the property, that was fine, that was their right, they could do that. But they wanted to create a much larger structure and we drew the line on that. We prevailed. In fact, not only did we prevail, but we brought zoning, re-zoning, in the District of Columbia to a halt for a period of a year, because they had to rewrite the regulations, particularly to reform procedures so that decisions would be made on the basis of the public record—no more deals in the back rooms, in the corridors, or hearsay evidence—that there would have to be a process set out, that there would have to be a government sunshine sort of measure, and it took a while to get that done.

**WEIRICH:** to figure out how to do that?

**FURNESS:** Yeah, there was no history to that respect.

**WEIRICH:** So this is the same tract of land that they wanted at one point to build this huge apartment?

**FURNESS:** That's correct. When we won, the developer, I think—we think—in revenge, built a carwash on the site, leaving it essentially undeveloped. And, in I guess 2001, something like that, 1999–2001, it was bought secretly by Girls and Boys Town, Boys Town. The SCSD thought that was bad for the

neighborhood, that it would be bad for the children, the people that Boys Town was purporting to help. The Boys Town model is essentially to take kids out of—Father Flanagan’s Boys Town, which, I should say, is the richest non-profit organization in the United States with assets of close to a billion dollars. That’s big, by anybody’s standards. The model was originally based on taking kids out of bad environment and essentially putting them to work, where they worked on farms, where they worked, but they got out of the environment that had caused the damage.

What Boys Town was proposed to do [in this case], essentially, was to take kids from the inner city and put them back in the inner city, loosely supervised. They have a facility up on Sargent Road in Northeast, and we compiled the police record. We’ve looked at the police records for that facility, we looked for what they were doing. It turned out that there were thousands of police calls for their facility for kids who, you know, had not come back during the curfew. There were a whole bunch of problems and the police were spending a lot of time at the Sargent Road facility to do that. We did some investigation and what it really looked like, what they were mostly about was the money. They get 150 bucks a night for each kid, for each ward, spending only a pittance, a fraction of that. But the main problem, a major problem, was their impact on the neighborhood that would just make it much more difficult to promote sort of a community renaissance, similar to that that took place in Barracks Row on Eighth Street SE, in that tract from say 11<sup>th</sup> Street SE to Barney Circle. And so SCSD, with the Restoration Society backing, challenged Boys Town and we were pretty dogged about it. We were in court, there were a couple of hearings before the Board of Zoning Adjustment. But I have to say that what turned the tide was when Boys Town brought suit against everybody in sight. They sued the mayor, they sued council member Ambrose, they sued the city officials in the Board of Zoning Adjustment, they sued the Zoning officials, *but* they also sued two neighborhood activist leaders at SCSD.

**WEIRICH:** Can you say what SCSD is again?

**FURNESS:** SCSD is the Southeast Citizens for Smart Development. They sued Ellen Opper-Weiner and Will Hill, not only in their capacity as leaders of various organizations, but in their personal, in their persons as well.

**WEIRICH:** What did they sue them for?

**FURNESS:** Essentially for opposing Boys Town, for voicing their opinions to elected and administrative officials in the DC government.

**WEIRICH:** And, how did Capitol Hill respond to that?

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**FURNESS:** Capitol Hill, well they responded like champs. People could disagree about whether Boys Town program was any good, but what they could absolutely agree on was that this kind of behavior could not and would not be tolerated. The community responded with a lot of support, you know, a lot of unity in support, but they also responded with money and that made all the difference in the world. SCSD got pro bono backing from the American Civil Liberties Union, widely accused of being on the left, and with the Center for Individual Rights which is a similar organization but it's supposed to be a very conservative organization that were going to defend us in Federal Court, and they did. They did a wonderful job. But, we also raised about seventy or eighty thousand dollars for the Restoration Society and I don't think we have hardly ever done this, is that we issued a challenge grant to our membership, that we said that we would match, dollar for dollar, contributions from our members, up to, I think we initially said five thousand dollars. Well, the response from our membership was enormous, was over seven thousand bucks, so we voted to raise our contribution to match them dollar for dollar. And, that went a long way towards helping defeat Boys Town in the courts.

But, of course, what did it as much as anything else was the fact that the interest in the property values on Capitol Hill went way up while all of this was going on. The developers, perhaps spurred what happened at Bryan, and certainly there are other examples, took a new look at Capitol Hill. There weren't a lot of properties around that would help them and enable them to take advantage of the market of urban properties. Eventually, the property was bought by a firm out of Dallas/Fort Worth, JPI, which has done a number of other projects in the Washington area and including a couple in downtown Washington, residential projects. They paid Boys Town it seems like a fantastic sum, which they've not disclosed, but it's probably in the neighborhood of fourteen or fifteen million. Boys Town paid 8.2 million for the property originally, much of it, almost sort of a wash because Boys Town had gotten Congress to give them eight million bucks out of the District's budget, to essentially renovate their Sargent Road facility. And, Boys Town never made any of the reports required on the usage. But they then they paid 8.2 million for the Potomac Avenue site.

**WEIRICH:** What happened to the lawsuit, did they just drop it?

**FURNESS:** No, it was dismissed. It was essentially, you know, just thrown out of court. The one against Mrs. Ambrose was thrown because, you know, she was an elected official voicing her opinions as part of her constitutional duties and is immune from suit. It was just thrown out of court.

**WEIRICH:** How about the neighbors' lawsuits?

**FURNESS:** Thrown out as well. As soon as it got to a serious judicial level, it was thrown out of court. I don't think Boys Town ever meant to put anybody in jail or get damages. What this was is that there is a

category of lawsuits called SLAPP suits, Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation. It's used essentially by the rich to discourage or harass essentially the poor and defenseless. It was something that began in California when power companies used it as a technique to harass environmentalists, particularly. What it is, is there is an enormous psychic and monetary cost to defending yourself.

**WEIRICH:** Even if you're right.

**FURNESS:** Even if you're right, or even if you're blameless.

**WEIRICH:** I think Father Flanagan would probably be very ashamed of all of this.

**FURNESS:** Well, I would certainly hope. And there are certainly lots of stories about that. The director of Girls and Boys Town, Father Val Peter, came to Washington, DC, and had a press conference on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial with cameras around him. We were there as well. He denounced the neighbors, the neighborhood, and the city officials for putting obstacles in the way of their proposed project for that particular site.

**WEIRICH:** Is that site not also next to some sections of the Hill that wouldn't be conducive to wholesome child rearing?

**FURNESS:** That was certainly a major factor in our questioning ... whether this made sense, even from Boys Town's perspective. There had been a couple of shootings and a couple of deaths of young people stemming from drug traffic in that particular area, within just a couple of years of this.

**WEIRICH:** So, it wasn't exactly a protective neighborhood.

**FURNESS:** it was not a protective neighborhood—not for these young people. (I think there would have been women/girls and boys.) I guess there a couple of things, in retrospect, I have to say: I always felt that Boys Town probably could have gotten the permits it needed if it had been willing to submit itself and its program to public scrutiny. There's a special exception process; they could have probably prevailed—at least before they brought the lawsuit. They probably could have prevailed, but they were never willing to submit themselves to a public hearing that would have brought up their history of interaction, of non-interaction with the neighborhood that would have talked about what their program meant, that would have talked about how it would relate, if at all, to the neighborhood, how would they address the problems of security, what were the financial dimensions of it—and I mentioned that, at the end of the day, it was all about the money.

But it was also, I think, Boys Town was an arrogant and an organization like some of the other religious or religious oriented organizations that I worked with, that we dealt with, because you couldn't really

work with them, any of these organizations, but you had to deal with them. And, in my years on Capitol Hill, we had to deal with the Capitol [Hill] Group Ministry, a local organization, that wanted to put the old age facility on the Providence Park site, we had to deal with Marquette University, a Catholic school in Milwaukee, that created the Les Aspin Center on East Capitol Street and lied on the registration form calling it a private club instead of a campus—and the first thing that they did when we challenged them, was they sent lawyers to our office, to the Restoration Society office to look at our tax returns, to make sure they were all in order, that was the first they did.

**WEIRICH:** Not very friendly.

**FURNESS:** We didn't think it was real friendly, no. Saint Coletta, which is also a religious—which has religious roots anyway. And Boys Town, which is a religious organization, and the Hope Church in Ashburn, Virginia that wanted to create a social services supermarket in, I think it's Giddings, that we opposed and eventually became Results the Gym ...

**WEIRICH:** And that's where?

**FURNESS:** That's at the corner of Third and I [Streets] Southeast. But I remember, that I testified on some of this stuff ...

**WEIRICH:** ... that must have been hard to do, because these organizations, in many ways, embody a lot of the values that you hold: wanting to help people, wanting to do the right thing for people who are disadvantaged, but seems like you're looking at the broader picture on some of this, too.

**FURNESS:** Yes, that certainly was very often true. But what characterized these organizations was a certain arrogance, a conviction that their way ... that the particular plan that they wanted to pursue was not only right, but that it seemed to sort of heavenly inspired and that to question or to challenge or to suggest alternatives was somehow not only wrong, but that it was evil.

**WEIRICH:** So, you became the evil one?

**FURNESS:** Yes, we became the evil ones for this and, of course, that's perhaps the only way you can explain the reactions that they had—was that we became evil. And, of course, at least in philosophical terms, you can't really truck with evil, you can only defeat it. And, you have to be a religious organization that defeats evil—that's what you're all about.

**WEIRICH:** But you were focused on neighborhoods and the impact that these organizations would have on families and the fabric of the communities that they were wanting to be a part of, is that correct?

**FURNESS:** Absolutely. And, in many respects we questioned whether the impact on the people they purported to serve would be healthy, wholesome, and profound. But in some cases, we did our best to try to accommodate. We said, “Well, can we work with you to diminish the impact on the community?” Certainly (I tried with) St Coletta’s, the example I mentioned earlier. We did what we could, but they wouldn’t talk.

**WEIRICH:** it still bothers you ...

**FURNESS:** It does bother me. After it was pretty much all over, I called Sharon Raimo and said, “Let’s go have a cup of coffee and talk about this and how we could work together on this” And, I have to say, that was one of the most difficult hour and a half’s that I ever spent in my life. That’s a personal recollection and certainly in a diplomatic career.

**WEIRICH:** But you are a coalition builder: you’re very skilled at this.

**FURNESS:** You deal with difficult people, but that was unpleasant and difficult, in part, because we are both neighbors, we live a block and a half from one another. But those are the ... obviously there are a zillion other issues out there.

END OF TAPE 2/SIDE 1

TAPE 2/SIDE 2

**WEIRICH:** Restoration Society has worked to maintain the historical neighborhood that surrounds the Capitol but I also realize that a lot of individuals in the Restoration Society work very hard to uphold the quality of life for individuals those who live in these historical homes. I was hoping that perhaps you could talk about some those issues that the Restoration Society addressed that impacted the quality of life of those who live here.

**FURNESS:** Yes, One of the emphases of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society and one of the emphases that I certainly put on in the work that I did for the Restoration Society and for the community addressed the quality of life issues. We are not just about historic preservation although that is a major contributor to the quality of life particularly to the visual dimension and the relationship of people and houses to each other and to the city. But we also worked very much on noise, air pollution, environmental issues—just generally speaking and on what you would you would consider “anti-social” or neighborhood detracting kinds of activities.

Just a couple of examples on the transportation side. One of the areas that we dealt with were tour buses, heavy trucks and bus traffic all of which contributed very significantly to the diesel exhaust that would

effect the quality of life—particularly those who were afflicted with asthma or allergies. Our efforts were to limit tour bus traffic, for instance. On those kinds of issues, I testified a couple of times before a panel convened by the Architect of the Capitol who had considerable interest in getting better control of tour buses. I also participated in a city panel that wanted to study tour bus issues and wrote a number of articles on our efforts to limit tour buses ... or at least make them conform more to what the actual laws and rules are—always with the support of the Restoration Society.

**WEIRICH:** I know that I personally appreciate that because we used to have a lot of tour buses that were right in front of the Capitol Hill Suites on Second and C SE. When neighbors would have their morning cup of coffee and would open their windows, they would be greeted by all this diesel smell from the buses idling in front of the CHS hotel that was across the street from their homes. Short of closing their windows to the spring air, there was no way for them to get away from the exhaust.

**FURNESS:** One of the things we supported was a very big increase in the fines for allowing diesels to idle. Then there was our somewhat unsuccessful record trying to get anyone to pay attention. The Metropolitan Police Department was never particularly interested in enforcing that part of the law and the parking enforcement people were never particularly interested in keeping tour buses out of residential or Metro bus parking places. And I have to say that DC transit and then subsequently WAMATA, the bus agency was not always willing to make changes in routes to reflect new patterns of residential use. Some of this was inevitable because Capitol Hill is not often a destination for bus traffic, but it is something that lies between places that people start and want to go. Eighth Street, for instance, is a major through street for bus traffic coming out of far Southeast. Traffic goes up Eighth Street and then over into the Florida Avenue area and into farther Northwest. Pennsylvania Avenue, of course, has always been a major bus thoroughfare, and some of that's not going to change.

The other issues on which we have spent a lot of time include trees, particularly the care and feeding of street trees where we backed efforts to improve how trees are “done”. We helped fund, made grants to, and worked with organizations such as Trees for [Capitol] Hill that had as their primary purpose caring for the trees and beautifying the plantings around the Hill. And, of course, I've got to think that our annual House and Garden Tour of which in 2005 was the 48<sup>th</sup> annual edition, has done at least something to call attention to the “treescape” that characterize Capitol Hill and to reward or show off people's gardening efforts, just as much as houses.

**WEIRICH:** Tell me a little bit about the history of the House and Garden Tour.

**FURNESS:** I do not know from my own experience, an awful lot about how it got started, but there certainly are a lot of anecdotes. Evidently, it was actually begun by Friendship House which ultimately found it too difficult to organize and maintain.

**WEIRICH:** The old settlement house here on Capitol Hill? Is that what you are referring to?

**FURNESS:** That's correct. Eventually it was picked up by the Capitol Hill Restoration Society that used it as effort to raise money, first of all, because that is and remains our largest single source of income from which the Society funds not only its regular operation—our membership fees have always been fairly low, and barely cover the cost of the newsletter, much less the other kinds of things that we have to pay for. It also draws attention to the residential aspects of Capitol Hill with a relatively consistent set of facades and house types together with the enormous variety and inspiration of the people who live in these houses. While it does show off the houses, we all like that—it makes us all feel a little bit better about living here. But it's really a testimony to the inspiration and sometimes the money, I've got to say, and the commitment that the people who live here show to living on the Hill. We've had some truly spectacular houses over the years.

The House Tour has grown enormously from the days that early restorationists like Curley Boswell (who died 30 years ago) and Arline Roback, and others. There are stories about Curley, who was a real estate broker, and one of the people who really did a lot of work to get Capitol Hill started in the early days—coming in and salting houses that were going to be on the tour—replacing chandeliers, bringing in sort of exhibition furniture, and all of these other kinds of things [laugh] to make it a better show. Well we don't have to do that kind of thing anymore. But it's still a major activity and it's the activity that absorbs the largest number of volunteers. It's really an enormous production and it normally takes the work of nearly three and four hundred volunteers to put on every year. So that's a major effort, only a little bit of which could be substituted by having professionals help or getting more people to do it. Fortunately, we usually had the support of the Capitol Hill real estate community that has been very active, although we've certainly crossed swords with various dimensions of the real estate business/profession over time. They have been, in fact, one of our strongest supporters. Perhaps it is not surprising; we both have a shared interest in a dynamic and vibrant residential community. We're sort of natural allies, on that score, we think.

Two other quality of life issues are worthy of at least a little mention. The first is the work that the Restoration Society has done over the years on the problems of liquor and noise from the establishments and some of the anti-social behavior that's going on particularly around liquor establishments. We've often used our influence to empower groups of neighbors to oppose and bring some discipline to the sale of liquor to, in economic terms, diminish the cost to society of selling liquor.

**WEIRICH:** Does one particular example come to mind?

**FURNESS:** Two. The Trants Liquor case where the establishment in Northeast would make agreements with neighbors on limiting its activities, hours, monitoring loitering, sales of single containers of liquor, and then consistently violate those. We worked with and helped fund the North Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association and the neighbors who were most directly involved in bringing suit against the owners of the liquor store and against the City liquor authorities. The end result was to give legal sanction to voluntary agreements to limit certain practices that had undue impact on the neighborhood. That's quite an important dimension.

In a similar vein, the Society was the lead organization on the case that eventually reached the Supreme Court (which is in the legal profession that is the "big time") that reaffirmed the rights of cities to impose permit parking.

**WEIRICH:** That reached the Supreme Court?

**FURNESS:** That's correct.

**WEIRICH:** Of course, the parking we are talking about is the parking [in the neighborhood] around the US Capitol. I suspect that was highly contended, right?

**FURNESS:** It wasn't contended on those grounds, I wasn't involved but the contention was on the basis: do city authorities, a jurisdiction, have the right to impose this kind of a limitation on the access by non-residents. And [some of this involves] interstate commerce and a whole bunch of other considerations. The case was Capitol Hill Restoration Society et al. vs. "somebody or other". I guess that puts us at least a little bit in the history books.

But that has contributed very significantly to the quality of life around here, so much of which, and I think it's a mistake personally, centers around having a place to park. And, many of my friends and certainly a lot of people in the community seem to think that the right to park very close to their front door is one of those things that ought to be sacred. Well, a couple of years ago I wrote a column that was published in our newsletter, CHRS News, but it was also edited slightly and published in the Washington Post that said that we live in urban areas by choice and for a whole bunch of reasons. But if our life centers about parking, then essentially you are in the wrong location and that the parking issues have to take a second position. Nobody really took exception, but nobody changed their minds very much on that and parking now assumes an inordinate place in how people perceive the quality of life. There are more cars, people are more insistent on bigger cars, and too many people, including those who complain the loudest, have garages, but they have filled their garages with 30 years of back issues of the National Geographic, all of

those old kitchen cabinets from the three re-do's in the past and other stuff. I don't have a great deal of sympathy for them on that.

But two quality of life issues that we have had, we have not had inordinate success in addressing: The first is the pressure on residential property to be converted into business uses. Nobody quarrels with a legitimate home occupation. I've done that myself as consultant with sort of an office out of my bedroom or out of my study, but there are too often lawyers, lobbyists and others who essentially convert residentially zoned property to business uses, including business uses that have people coming in and out; you have a whole bunch of employees. We have always taken the position that this is bad for a couple of reasons: first, it diminishes the quality of the residential areas because there is less life there is less vigor, there is less opportunity for neighborliness. The second thing is that it diminishes the quality of life for those residents that are still in the neighborhood, because there is additional parking, additional traffic and these are things that have an impact on the quality of life.

This has been particularly true for those class of properties used as sort of "party houses", where, for a variety of reasons, people use them for events typically aimed at taking advantage of the proximity of the Congress. And the other thing it does is diminish the vitality and value of legitimate commercial properties. We have a lot of commercial properties and one of the most important things about living in the city is that we live cheek by jowl with commercial properties and commercial establishments and that's part of the experience, that's part of why we do it. If you want completely homogeneous, then move to the suburbs, that's where you can get a real separation, that, presumably, some people want. We argue that this has been handled through the zoning process, which does separate commercial from residential uses, but that those are very much intertwined with the quality of life here. And in any case, that's an area where the city has been pretty inattentive or indifferent to enforcing the restrictions and adopting sensible rules for it. And it's one where, so often, exposing inappropriate or illegal commercial use depends on having somebody complain and then we can bring a challenge on that. I talked about Trants Liquor. Let me just say, that just one example. We've also contributed money to and worked with neighbors and helped them to challenge other inappropriate uses, for instance, the Green Dragon on 15<sup>th</sup> Street at about C Street SE. It's a place near the old Kentucky Courts. I think somebody got shot a couple of years ago on the patio in front of the place. It's been one of those place that has encouraged or failed to discipline loitering.

**WEIRICH:** Is [the Green Dragon] a restaurant? A club?

**FURNESS:** It's a little carryout. We kicked in some money for neighbors to get a lawyer to have their liquor license revoked or challenged. But, it continues to live on without seriously disciplining its behavior. The police have tried to support our efforts to bring it under better control without, I've got to

say, much success. The Restoration Society has also worked with the Metropolitan Police Department, or at least tried to bring pressure on them to diminish crime on Capitol Hill, although we have not been spectacularly active in that area in the last four or five years. That may reflect a diminution in the rate of crime at least against people in the Historic District and a widening gap between the kinds of crime committed against the people and properties in the Historic District and those outside. Our differences with some of the people who live in Hill East where crime plays a much larger role, I think, center in some respects, about that. That's a neighborhood difference; it's not really a Restoration Society issue.

**WEIRICH:** What influence did the Restoration Society have in tilting the safety issues to favor the safety of neighborhoods?

**FURNESS:** We have consistently supported more of a police presence in the neighborhood. The Restoration Society played a very important role, for instance, in keeping our substation, 1-D-1, which at one point was the only remaining substation in the District of Columbia. All of the others were closed when the MPD decided to centralize its services in six police districts within the District of Columbia and so you had mega-centers with little, if any, emphasis on community policing. The Restoration Society lobbied hard to keep 1-D-1 open, lobbied very hard to get it fixed up, because it was very decrepit. We played a key role in how it was restored, at least consistent with historic standards, kept it open and kept it alive, and now the pendulum is now beginning to swing the other way. The police have recognized the importance of getting out in the community. If we could just get these people out of the cars. [laugh] or at least some of them out of the cars. Although, in recent years, I have seen more and more police patrolling on bicycles and in fact they train out in the RFK parking lots. So from time to time, clouds of police bicyclists will come down Massachusetts Avenue in front of my house and proceed up Independence Avenue over to RFK where presumably they do whatever it is they do to train. I've even seen from time to time MPD officers patrolling on horseback. That has to be a throwback to the past, where you are sitting out on your patio or front step and you hear the clatter of hooves, actually more of the clop-clop. They don't do a lot of galloping and you really don't want a lot of galloping, I suppose. That sort of brings you back ...

**WEIRICH:** It's a nice feeling.

**FURNESS:** It *is* a nice feeling.

**WEIRICH:** Yes, one that brings us back to the slower pace of historical times.

**FURNESS:** Yeah. Other quality of life issues ...

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**WEIRICH:** So, with other quality of life issues, did the Restoration Society ever touch on some of the social issues that people here in a diverse community deal with?

**FURNESS:** Yeah. I and the Restoration Society have tried to address—it's not been our primary focus—I have to say that but it's one of the areas to which I think we have been sensitive and one of the areas where we have certainly tried to reach out. In some times, we can combine the two, for instance, a couple of years ago, the Restoration Society ran into a case where a poor elderly lady in near Northeast, within the Historic District, started to have some work done on her house; she didn't get permits and, in any case, what she wanted to do was inconsistent with the preservation standards of the Historic District. The Restoration Society took the lead, worked with the lady, and we enlisted pro bono designers and contractors to work out a plan for her and we helped raise the money to have it done according to the standards. There are not many cases like that, but that is one we felt sort of good about. I think it turned out quite successfully; it's the kind of thing we'd like to be in a position to do more of. Our thinking is that renovating property according to historic standards is desirable not only in protecting our common heritage but also makes sense for the people who do it. If there are things that need to be done, the only barrier to doing it right is a lack of money or expertise, well, maybe we can help with that.

We have certainly taken the lead in providing guidelines that explain in quite an accessible fashion what are the best practices—the Historic District guidelines that were put together for the first time 15 or 20 years ago cover a variety of topics—that, even today, are acknowledged by the Historic Preservation division of the District government, as the definitive guidance for renovating and restoring properties on Capitol Hill. For other areas, they write their own guidelines based on practices and their own studies, but for Capitol Hill, our stuff predates theirs and it assumes all of the work that they would have needed to have done, because we did it, because it was correct and was done with a lot of effort and a lot of feeling. That's one of the things we give anyone who joins, but we sell them to others.

We also provide a lot of advice; we encourage homeowners who want to renovate their property in the Historic District to sit down and talk with our volunteers about what's appropriate, what's likely to pass muster downtown. You know we don't have enforcement authority on anything. We're a voluntary organization. But, we do have a certain degree of influence, but it's the kind of influence that comes from being prepared and consistent and having a great track record. And that's certainly been recognized not only at the local level when we received the Mayor's award for Historic Preservation a couple of years ago but also at the national level when we got the Historic Preservation Management award from The National Trust for Historic Preservation. It's also fair to say that we backed other kinds of local efforts like the Barracks Row Main Street people, for instance, who have been so successful over a relatively

long period of time—seven or eight years—in promoting the rejuvenation of Eighth Street, which even since I've been here, has been up and down, mostly down I would say ...

**WEIRICH:** And it's taken a great upswing of late ...

**FURNESS:** Well, it certainly has and it got a really nice award from The National Trust for Historic Preservation this year. But they began, like so many organizations, with a couple of people with a vision, some ideas, and maybe a little bit of expertise. I recall that one of the things that the Restoration Society did was that we provided the legal nonprofit cover that enabled them to get their first grant. They subsequently became incorporated as a nonprofit organization; it's required, but we provided that initial coverage. And, we have also been working with the new Penn East Group that is promoting a new deal for the area between 11<sup>th</sup> Street and Barney Circle. Just as we worked with the Southeast Citizens for Smart Development before on the Boys Town (that was called for convenience the Boys Town issue; it's much more complicated than that, but that was what it was about).

**WEIRICH:** Did you ever step into the educational forum at all in terms of any preservation issues or community issues regarding the schools here in the Historic area?

**FURNESS:** The Restoration Society has been relatively less involved in education. For years we sponsored a yearly forum on educational opportunities, inviting Capitol Hill schools to put up booths and we would make this one our fall meetings where parents would be invited to come in and talk to the school representatives about the programs and educational opportunities for the kids here. We haven't done that in recent years; it's an idea that comes back to us from time to time, but I think there are more opportunities for that. We've watched the tremendous success of the Cluster Schools; while we have done what we can to increase their success—we have contributed money—one of the things that happened during my presidency, was that we made a rule that 25% of the net proceeds of House Tour would be donated back to the community for projects that palpably benefited the community as a whole and awardees include the schools.

It also included the Capitol Hill Group Ministry for improvement of social services center that they have got on 12<sup>th</sup> Street. It includes a number of grants to Trees for the Hill—all aimed at quality of life issues—but that's one of the ways that we as one of the comparative 'have's' among community organizations can do this.

**WEIRICH:** Looking back, there is a lot to be proud of. What about looking forward? What are the sorts of things that those of us who continue to live on the Hill have to be mindful of?

**FURNESS:** Oh it's such an exciting time to be on the Hill, at least in that respect. For much of my presidency of the Restoration Society, and indeed, for some substantial part of my residence on the Hill, that is apart from assignments abroad, development was sort of in the tank. House prices had gone down and crime up and the government downtown was in chaos and confusion or what have you, and the District of Columbia and Capitol Hill had really uncertain prospects. I spent a lot of my presidency trying to get things going, trying to gin up activity, to gin up interest, to get people excited about living on Capitol Hill and the prospects for it. But now, we've been discovered. Can you believe the prices? They are so high they give you nosebleed. But now the challenge before us is shaping the development, shaping how things are going in a way that it's going to make Capitol Hill even a better place to live.

END TAPE 2/SIDE 2

TAPE 3/SIDE 1

**FURNESS:** ... to continue talking about the challenges that Capitol Hill continues to face: some of them are on the periphery, some of them are internal. The key ones on the periphery include the issue of what's going to happen with Reservation 13 and Capitol East.

**WEIRICH:** Could you define that?

**FURNESS:** Again, Reservation 13 is that area east of 19<sup>th</sup> Street Southeast to the river and from RFK down to the jail. Technically it's from Independence Avenue, but the future of RFK is going to become important to us at some point, as is that area north of RFK up to Benning Road, essentially. How that develops and how that is incorporated into the structure of Capitol Hill is—[noise]—it's the Presidential helicopters—one of the key things that we're going to face. Together with the pressures for inappropriate and “quality-of-life-destroying-development”, that is going to be very hard it's ...

**WEIRICH:** What do you imagine would be the *worst case* scenario there?

**FURNESS:** That it [Reservation 13] would be developed entirely for a sort of undesirable but necessary public purposes. Every time the city has proposed a use for that particular site, it has treated it as sort of a throwaway. The jail is a throwaway use. Remember, originally, that was where the Poor House was located. They were going to put drug and psychiatric facilities. Most recently, City Administrator Robert Bob proposed a level four bio-terrorist facility. Gracious, how inappropriate for a site like that. Some of the plans for a new DC General would essentially make it uninhabitable, or impossible to incorporate in a mixed set of uses that would bring life into the area.

**WEIRICH:** So your vision for the *best* scenario—how would that look?

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**FURNESS:** There was a community charrette a couple of years ago that I think had some defects, but it foresaw an area that would be incorporated, that the L'Enfant concept would extend through that area. It would become part of the fabric of the city. It would have some health care facilities. You know we need to have improvements to the health care outreach particularly for the under-served, poor, unplugged in, and uninsured people, although not a general hospital—that's just a mistake. There was some provision made for the continuation of and the expansion of some kind of city services, a zone set aside for that. But there were also lots of opportunity for neighborhood scale retail, for housing—even mixed income housing that would have brought life and vitality to that particular area. And, above all, access to the waterfront, with parks and new opportunities for people to reach out for the waterfront that Washington has largely like so many cities largely abandoned a long, long time ago.

In a similar vein, one of the challenges we face is what happens to the area south of the freeway, along the waterfront, and how that is integrated with Capitol Hill. The freeway has long divided Capitol Hill from that area. There is the Hope VI Project that will redo the Capper-Carrollsborg area; the Marine Corps has built a new residential facility there. Not very well in my opinion, but it's there and if nothing else it's an improvement over what was there before. The Restoration Society took the lead in extending the Historic District south of the freeway down Eighth Street to the Historic Latrobe Gate at the Navy Yard. And hopefully, one day, we will better reintegrate the Navy Yard with the Capitol Hill community. It's worth recalling that our neighborhood wasn't called Capitol Hill, it was called Marine Barracks, excuse me, it was called *Navy Yard*, because that's where people worked and that was the main center of economic activity that attracted people who lived on Capitol Hill. It was only afterwards that people went to work at the Congress and the government downtown.

The Navy has been very good about trying to work with the neighborhood and community and to reach out and try and promote this kind of integration. How we handle that waterfront area is so important. Tomorrow the Mayor is having a ceremony to announce that the city has found the money to rebuild the 11<sup>th</sup> Street bridges, a central feature of which will be new intersections on the east bank. There will be a whole new intersection built at 11<sup>th</sup> Street and the Southeast-Southwest freeway. And new intersections on the east bank that will finally provide a solution to a problem that has vexed Capitol Hill for the better part of 40 years—how to separate commuter traffic from our residential streets and that's an area that I personally spent years doing—without much success, I have to say.

**WEIRICH:** Success sometimes is long in coming.

**FURNESS:** Often, it is.

**WEIRICH:** I'm glad you could see this happening.

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**FURNESS:** This will certainly help do it—because it provides a way for people from Prince Georges County to get to work downtown and in Northern Virginia without having to filter through Capitol Hill streets. It is the goal that we had when we supported the Barney Circle connector. This is really a better way to do it because it is already there and it doesn't involve a new crossing or additional capacity, but done effectively it will separate that. And it will mean a big change in how we handle 11<sup>th</sup> Street and the Southeast Freeway, because the plan is to create a new local intersection at 11<sup>th</sup> Street that will provide a way for the neighbors to get into that area more effectively and promote a less intensive, more friendly use. And, it will also mean that the Southeast Southwest Freeway from 11<sup>th</sup> Street to Barney Circle will be abolished and will be torn up and replaced with a street level parkway or limited purpose local access road. It will also create additional land for development. If we get rid of that freeway, we no longer need all that space paved over and it also provide for new ways to access the waterfront—and that's very important.

Similarly north of Independence, north of East Capitol Street, one of the real fights that the Restoration engaged in, again working with community groups well outside our interest area, particularly the Kingman Park Neighborhood Association, is when we defeated the plan to put an amusement park on Children's Island. It took a long time for that one to go away and we beat some very expensive well paid legal and political talent to do it. That's one I personally remember testifying against. I remember being down at the Department of Interior talking to them about what needed to be done in that area, but it's sort of a classic in that we got a lot of people together; we participated with a lot of other people to help bring about some changes.

**WEIRICH:** Capitol Hill has a history, I think, of gathering together "Davids" to defeat Goliath over and over. So what's your vision of this Island, what would you like to see happen to Kingman Island?

**FURNESS:** I really like the idea of keeping it a green space, making it sort of an environmental demonstration area and of connecting it to the waterfront and to the rest of the city in ways that people can really take advantage of it. I think that's part of promoting the uses; I was involved in helping promote rowing on the Anacostia, through a foreign service friend of mine who said, "You do work on Capitol Hill, let's talk about this." I met all sorts of wonderful people and helped to push the District Department of Transportation to move their lawnmower repair facility out of a facility that was particularly suited to rowing—to organized rowing.

**WEIRICH:** This is by the 11th Street Bridge?

**FURNESS:** That's right. [laugh] I remember going down—there were docks there and there was this horrible mess [?] but you could see the vision—people coming down for their rowing stuff—the

organizations there were trying to reach out to the high schools—the adjacent high schools—on both sides of the river—and they would organize clubs, they would organize activities for the kids, and they talked about how good the Anacostia really is for rowing. Apparently the quality of the water is less choppy than is the Potomac up by Georgetown that is currently used so much for it.

**WEIRICH:** I was quite surprised to discover that space when my daughter became involved in crew and we went down there. It was amazing to see this. It was some time ago. It was lovely hidden oasis.

**FURNESS:** And it's nice on both sides—there is lots that can be done; there is a lot of access—lots of possibilities—how do you make that area accessible for people on both sides of the river—and how do you make that space that people are going to feel comfortable in—do they have facilities for them to use it—and this is one of the ways that you do that and it's so important—but the key to that was beating back the amusement park which would have attracted just tourists and would not have been particularly friendly for the residents—parking, transportation. There are all sorts of bad things about that one.

One of the continuing challenges to the historic area is our relationship with the Capitol. And that goes back a long way—to the laying of the cornerstone of the Capitol, even before that actually when Capitol Hill was reorganized and divided, essentially for speculation because the Capitol was going to move to this particular area and this was the place to go. You know that process worked itself out. But, since the World War II ... (it's funny—what are the markers—and I think for my generation, it's World War II and I'm not sure what my daughter would think—my daughter is 37 and I'll have to talk to her—what does she use as sort of a marker—because I was born during the first years of the war and she was born in 1968, too young for Vietnam—and there aren't a lot of markers that had such a traumatic effect on people as World War II) ... I digress.

**WEIRICH:** 9/11 perhaps?

**FURNESS:** It might, it is certainly one of the things that has been important in that it has shaped the relationship of the Capitol to the Capitol Hill community. For years, including the period when we first moved to Capitol Hill, the Capitol in the person of the Architect of the Capitol had very little use for or respect for the Capitol Hill residential neighborhood. We always thought that was a mistake, but it was a long time before we got the Architect of the Capitol to acknowledge that a vibrant, viable, peaceful, middle class family oriented residential neighborhood on their eastern flank was worth about two battalions of troops and an enormous police force. Even in their own terms, and I have to give a tip of the hat to the current Architect of the Capitol, Alan Hantman, because he was the one who has recognized that, and I have got to say that he gone out of his way to include us, the Restoration Society and the Capitol Hill community, in the considerations of what he wants to do with the Capitol. He's not always

been in a position to over rule his police. But, in those areas over which he has specific control, he has been responsive. I've worked with him on a fair amount of things and I have been very impressed.

**WEIRICH:** He's a man that would be unlikely to condemn neighborhoods in order to build on them as some of his predecessors have done?

**FURNESS:** Yes, his predecessors have been all too willing to do and have done so almost whenever they had a chance to do it. The Madison Annex to the Library of Congress comes to mind. An enormous building, inappropriate dimensions to the surrounding neighborhood, done with a maximum of insensitivity. The street closings even before, the siting of parking lots, the encroachment or the threat of encroachment on residential neighborhoods where at one point they were going to knock down St. Mark's, an historic church, a true jewel—which dominated their sort of thinking. They knocked down a couple of houses to build a Page School near Stanton Park. I remember standing outside carrying signs about bulldozing part of our heritage. When they did that—in companion with the leadership of the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association, we stood together with them on that score—unsuccessfully, but we stood with them on that. The big fight though—and I think it was conducted largely in the trenches—under the radarscope—was to influence a significant study done primarily in the early '80s—which was the master plan for the Capitol of the United States, which was billed somewhat grandiosely as the follow on to the Macmillan Commission Plan in 1901, which attempted to analyze the coming uses, the requirements of the Congress and to lay out some thoughts and dimensions on how that would be addressed. The Restoration Society took the lead and organized a Capitol Hill Community Organization (CHCO) that brought a lot of pressure to bear on the planning process that eventually in a decision that the space needs of the Capitol would be met by expanding north and south rather than east into the residential neighborhoods.

**WEIRICH:** What year was this that you did this?

**FURNESS:** The Master Plan, I believe was put out in 1982 or 1983. If memory serves (and that is not a reliable indicator). Well, let's say the early 1980's. That consensus has essentially held even though for a variety of reasons it was never enacted into law. It's also fair to say that the Capitol space needs have diminished at least somewhat. The rapid expansion that the Congress underwent came a cropper with some re-thinking about how big Congress needed to be and not many budget pressures I suppose. (Congress does the budget after all). In any case, with the completion of Rayburn, I don't believe there are any major office buildings in the works at the present time, although the Capitol Visitors Center has a fair amount of space so that at least some Congressional services can be put there freeing up space in the various office buildings.

With respect to the Visitors Center, the Architect of the Capitol touched base with us. We met a couple of times to talk about the kinds of precautions that would be put into place. We spent a lot of time talking about how they were going to save as many trees as would be possible. He talked about the restrictions that would be placed on contractors to avoid particularly moving materials through residential neighborhoods, how visitor traffic would be redirected to minimize impact on adjacent residential areas. He pointed out that the method of construction would minimize dust and dirt. Some of that was done for their own reason; if it doesn't fall on us, it's not going to fall on the members who approved the budget for this project. That is something they certainly thought about. And they took the time and effort to come to the community and explain what they had in mind; they took into account the concerns that we had, touched based with us to see how they were doing, how well we were meeting their expectations and I've heard very few complaints from the residents about how that project has been managed in terms of impact on the neighborhood.

**WEIRICH:** Very successful

**FURNESS:** and, you know I accept the rationale that it was something that needed to be done and I'm not going to talk to the budget—that's a price we all pay—but I think that's the kind of interaction that has fostered a feeling of mutual respect between us and the Architect of the Capitol. I wish I could say the same about the security precautions that seem to dominate so much of the Capitol's thinking these days, certainly the police force. As a Foreign Service officer, I lived overseas and we certainly lived in some fairly high threat environments and certainly environments where security precautions, physical and others, were certainly important and *personally* important to us. At least abroad, in the foreign service environment, we always remembered that we also had a job to do. And that that was inconsistent with hunkering in the bunker.

The other thing we realized was there was no end to potential security precautions. Our security people were talented and conscientious people and protected us against ever more unlikely threats—they recommended measures—that's their job and it's also important. If something unlikely happens, somebody got killed, they bear the first line of responsibility—and nobody wants to responsible for something like that. At some point, security gets in the way of doing your job. Diplomacy requires that you get out. It requires that you talk to people. And, even abroad, when I was at various embassies, the security precautions were such that you couldn't use the office to see people, only the ambassador could receive people, because he had enough clout to make sure that the security precautions and inconveniences to visitors were minimized. It's very discouraging and this going to an area of considerable contention between the Capitol community and the Capitol and the demands for ever increasing security. One issue that's likely to come up is the Station Place, the new SEC headquarters on

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Second Street NE around F and G and H [Streets]. As we pointed out at the time, this was built virtually on the sidewalk. The current guidelines require all kinds of setbacks, glass facades, hmm, probably not counseled, huh?

**WEIRICH:** This was started before 9/11?

**FURNESS:** No, after. It was done with full awareness that these were going to be issues. We pointed them out in a variety of different contexts. They elected to go ahead with the current plan, which we opposed for a variety of reasons, but one—anticipating that as soon as the SEC gets into it, they are going to discover that the security setbacks just doesn't really meet the guidelines and there is going to be a lot of pressure to close streets and otherwise limit access in a way that will have an even greater impact on the residential neighborhood. The area behind the Supreme Court, for instance, is another where we have concerns for over-reaching and over-weaning security precautions are going to impose an enormous cost on that immediate neighborhood by closing streets or otherwise doing setbacks. We have all seen the problems that have been caused for traffic in and around the Capitol. Truly sadly we have lost the kind of intimate, day to day association with the Capitol that we had when I moved to the Hill, where you could take kids sledding on Capitol Hill—that is our Hill—that's our green space—I used to bike to work by cutting through the Capitol grounds. Well I'd probably get shot if I did that these days. And so would our kids if we attempted to take a sled and go down the west slope. One would hope not.

**WEIRICH:** Maybe it's a different feeling ...

**FURNESS:** And there are certainly a lot of challenges and there is a lot of—harassment is probably too big a word to talk about this, but it's hard to avoid feeling somewhat harassed just getting around when they have checkpoints at the end of the Capitol and with some of the restrictions on traffic.

**WEIRICH:** It's just not very hospitable for a democratic country.

**FURNESS:** While there are things that can and should be done, I think somebody has to think a little more carefully about how these relate to the purposes of our society and how the institutions of government relate to the people who are governed.

**WEIRICH:** Well, hopefully, there will be community members like yourself who will help us think that through. What are the challenges in the Capitol Hill community that you foresee coming at us?

**FURNESS:** The key challenge to my way of thinking is how do we ensure the level of commitment and the willingness to work for community causes among the people who live on Capitol Hill.

END TAPE 3/SIDE 1

TAPE 3/SIDE 2

**FURNESS:** Capitol Hill has been fortunate to have people over the years who have been willing to work hard, incur the personal sacrifices—in my own case, certainly there is a lot meetings, there is a lot of work, a lot of time, and that's time essentially away from your family to work on community projects. While I found that personally satisfying and fulfilling—otherwise why would I do it—but there have been some, but probably there have not been enough. For a real crisis situation, it's relatively easy to get people organized—the clear and present danger is right there—you can get people to look up and to work together to get things done. But the hard thing particularly is to foster commitment and participation one day at a time kind of thing—to keep a community centered vision before you and to undertake those little steps over time that keep our neighborhood what it is and move it ahead and to create a sense of commitment, to create a sense of willingness to put in time that often seems thankless and what often seems frustrating—you take two steps forward and one step backward—there is always something—and to find people with that kind of commitment and that sense of participation and that sense of community who are willing to put up with it and who are willing to find that satisfying, to find that important to their lives and provide a sense of reward that will keep us going into the future. I don't feel that I have been as successful at that as I wanted—communicating the need for that kind of participation and finding the people who will do it—that's one of the challenges I leave to the people who are going to be carrying all of this on.

**WEIRICH:** I certainly think that Capitol Hill is a much better place to live because of the kind of commitment that you did make to this community. It wouldn't be as nice a community to live in today without a lot of those long, long meetings that you attended throughout the years on behalf of people that you may never see. I want to thank you for that and I thank you for this interview and the time that you have spent with me this afternoon.

**FURNESS:** Thanks so much for the opportunity to share my experiences and I hope some of the enthusiasm for Capitol Hill and for the process of working with people and with issues and with institutions just to move things ahead a bit. It's been fun; it's been challenging; but, above all, it's been fun. I've had a good time, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW