



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK  
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

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**Interview with Chuck Burger**

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

**DEUTSCH:** This is Stephanie Deutsch. It is January 22, 2010 and I'm here with Chuck Burger at 500 East Capitol Street. Chuck, why don't we start off by telling me where you grew up.

**BURGER:** I grew up in Western Pennsylvania. And actually our family is from a small coal mining town south of Pennsylvania, about 1500 people. Then in third and fourth grade ...

**DEUTSCH:** So that's where you lived as a small child.

**BURGER:** Yes.

**DEUTSCH:** What was the name of the town?

**BURGER:** Bentleyville. And it's all based around shaft number six and the Hanna coal plant and that's where my father's family originally came over from Germany to—they were plant managers and then my mother's side was a very mixed community, primarily Slavic and German. They worked in the mines at that time; most of the mines then were run by German companies. And then eventually my dad got a job as a streetcar driver. He wasn't much of a union man when the mines were unionizing. He ended up driving a streetcar and eventually he started a business in Pittsburgh. And I moved there when I was about third and fourth grade.

**DEUTSCH:** That must have been a pretty big change, to move from a town of 1500 to Pittsburgh.

**BURGER:** It was, they always say it's hard to go back, and I think it was more of a change for my friends when I came back than actually for me. It wasn't exactly we went to the big city, I mean Pittsburgh at that time was only about 30 miles away but when you lived in a community when you're ... My grandfather for that matter was a very active man, I don't think he, in his whole 86 years he probably traveled twice more than ten miles from ...

**DEUTSCH:** Wow

**BURGER:** ... the town. But that was that area, that generation. So it was harder for me to go back to the small town, I found my friends getting more distant. But we lived in the south part of Pittsburgh, in the suburbs. In an area—my mother still resides there, and I have one sister still resides there. But we had five kids, so it was a change, but it was a very interesting change, not too traumatic.

**DEUTSCH:** So you went to school there?

**BURGER:** I went to school there, I had a very good high school education which I've always been grateful for—Mount Lebanon High School. Was a strong participant in choir and barbershop. Actually I think I have a school letter in choir.

**DEUTSCH:** I didn't know you could letter in choir.

**BURGER:** Neither did I until I found this letter about five years ago in an old trunk. [Laughs.] I'd completely forgotten about it.

**DEUTSCH:** And you sang in a barbershop ...

**BURGER:** A barbershop quartet, actually. We had a competitive group, actually. But music was a part of it. It was a high school where we had 700 students, all of which about six went to college. Very good academic background, and I liked music.

**DEUTSCH:** Sports?

**BURGER:** Yeah, it was basically built around sports and choir. We had all-state champion teams and so we always—golf, tennis—mandatory that you spent most of your ... a typical summer there would be waking up in the morning and getting in about a round of golf, then playing tennis for about three hours, and then hanging out at McDonald's. Yeah, it wasn't a bad life.

**DEUTSCH:** Did you do sports?

**BURGER:** I tennis, primarily, actually tennis and golf, which I promptly stopped the minute I went to college.

**DEUTSCH:** Where'd you go to college?

**BURGER:** That's probably an interview in itself. I did go to Kent State; it was a year after the shootings. And I think the reason I went to Kent, it was far enough away from Pittsburgh that my parents wouldn't drop on in me. Close enough that I could be home in three hours if I needed to do laundry or needed to ... Kent was pretty wound up because it was the fall after the shootings and I promptly got pretty involved politically.

**DEUTSCH:** So that was 1970?

**BURGER:** The fall of 1970, yes. And was pretty active. My studies were primarily political, politics and actually the Quakers came on campus to ... they were at that time promoting a third party peace marshaling effort, because there were a lot of protests going on.

**DEUTSCH:** What do you mean third party peace marshaling effort?

**BURGER:** There was a peace marshaling that the Quakers started, they would go to college campuses, urban areas, and basically teach practices and protesting in nonviolence.

**DEUTSCH:** Kind of like in the early days of the civil rights movement.

**BURGER:** Exactly. And so we had a trained group of about 75. Actually I was head of training for that. What we'd do ... I had pretty active connections with the administration and with the police, and with protesters. We'd go in as a third party and communicate to defuse any situation, communicate between the groups, in order that ... I mean sometimes the police thought violence was necessary. Or maybe sometimes the students thought that, also, so we would be there to defuse. It was pretty interesting

**DEUTSCH:** Very.

**BURGER:** And, from that, I kind of got disillusioned with Kent at that time because I found myself more or less arguing with professors. It was a rather conservative place. So the second year at Kent I was selected to go into—what they had was Action, at that time, Action was a program of VISTA, and VISTA was a domestic Peace Corps program. And I went and worked in Model Cities, in Akron, Ohio. So at that time I was taking some evening courses at Kent while I was a Kent student working full time in Model Cities. I was a kind of a housing specialist, until we got the director of the housing program there indicted on bribery charges and then I think I became an economic development specialist.

**DEUTSCH:** Did you know anything about housing?

**BURGER:** No. We basically worked in community activism. The Model Cities program in Akron primarily consisted of tearing down marked sections of it and then figuring out how to keep the people happy that were left, so. But at that time the Akron Model Cities Program was the first Model Cities Program of about a 180—the goal was to develop small companies that you would spin off, and they would become economically self-sufficient. Using federal dollars to incubate them. And the Akron program was the first in the country to have ... It was a trash company that was run by an ex-felon who was very good at hiring other ex-felons. In fact to the point where he was bidding for the Akron city trash contract, which the Mafia wasn't too happy with, but [laughs] he had a company that was profitable. And again, our director called down to Washington and said, "Look, we have a company to spin off." Which shocked the people in Washington because they didn't have anything written up to allow that, because they never expected anyone to actually spin off. Typical government program. That was pretty educational.

So after a year there—it was a one-year program—I was living in Akron. At that point I wanted to transfer because I didn't want to go back to the campus on Kent. So my dream in life was to go to Northwestern, which at that time the tuition went to 5000 dollars, the highest tuition in the country at that time. That's the only time my father said No to me. [Laughs] So, I was in a quandary. Vanderbilt or Northwestern, I remember I wanted to transfer to. I had a girlfriend at Duke. Another great rationale to go to a school. And I filed for transfer papers, but then the president of Kent at that time, who had been there when I was a peace marshal, and I had fairly good relationship with him, there was an honors college there, which I belonged to and the dean there was quite connected. They kept trying to keep me at Kent so that's how I got in that VISTA program, and then it was Glenn Olds who was, he worked in the UN in the State Department at one time, and eventually tried to run for senator from Alaska. And he was at Kent at the time and there was new college forming in Washington, kind of an experimental school, a cross between cultural—what they were calling cross-cultural education.

**DEUTSCH:** A spin-off from Kent?

**BURGER:** No, it was started by a guy named Bob McCann who's I think still down here at the Wilson Institute. His concept was to use cross-cultural education, you know, we are the world. And Glen Olds was on the board of this new college that they were forming. So they were taking representatives, 25 representatives from the United States and 25 from around the world. So he convinced me I should be the representative for ... I had never been to Washington before. I kind of hopped in the car ...

**DEUTSCH:** So this was going to be like a university program?

**BURGER:** Yes.

**DEUTSCH:** You'd be going to college?

**BURGER:** Yes, it was a college.

**DEUTSCH:** So you'd never been to Washington.

**BURGER:** Got to Washington, I met my cousin who was living in Arlington at the time, who was from Bentleyville. She was the farthest person who'd ever gotten out of Bentleyville. [Laughs] And I met her there, and I remember, we walked in, I was about 18-19 by then, 20, and we went into Nathan's, in Georgetown; I was very impressed. I could find M and Wisconsin. So I met her there, and we went in, I remember talking, and I was used to drinking a pitcher of 3.2 beer. What you would do up at Kent, you'd give blood, then go out and immediately smoke a cigarette, and then have a 3.2 beer and get relatively high. And get 11 dollars for the blood. [Laughs] And so we went in, and I remember we ordered two

beers, which I don't drink beer at all, but I remember we had a lovely talk and then I had to leave. And then I remember I said "How much?" and he said "five dollars", and I said, "God, this is incredibly expensive beer." I remember giving the guy five dollars. And then we left and he almost tackled me outside, and they were five dollars apiece. I was overwhelmed, because at college your life revolves around a 50-cent pitcher and the idea of spending ten dollars on two beers was like ... [Laughs] So I knew I'd arrived in the big city. That was my awakening. [Laughs]

But from that, the school's up in Columbia, Maryland. In the Kattamaquindi House—I could go on this for hours, that was an incredible year—which is now a community center. That was the name it was given. It used to be the Major Mansion, that owned the plantation when Rouse started assemblage of the properties up there. We lived in the west end which was primarily built for Rouse employees when they first started. All that was there was this West End and Wild Lake which is where the mall is, and the Rouse Building. Oh, and they had just finished Merriweather Post Pavilion. It was kind of a joke. They'd have like Red Skelton there, just terrible, even we thought he was dead in the '70s. And Antioch—they had an urban studies program there, like they had Antioch Law in DC, they had Antioch Inner City Welfare in Baltimore, and in DC, they had this urban architectural institute. At that time they built the largest pneumatic structure, usable structure which was about the size of a football field. Tensile structure, you know, an inflatable structure. That was pretty radical in '73. I remember we'd go over there, because you had to keep the tensile structure on this thing, because ... now they have computers do it, but if a wind would come and it would ripple, it would just rip the whole thing off. So you had to watch these gauges all the time. So they had to have people, but you know, Antioch people were stoned all the time, so [laughs] one day they got stoned, and the guy was totally out of it and the thing ripped away. That was the end of the university, I think, at that time.

The school in Columbia was an excellent school during the course of the year. It was pretty high-profile among academics, especially New York academics. So we had 50 kids, some of which, well, some of them are still friends. We had 25 from US all over. The countries, we had the goalie from Ethiopia's soccer team, a friend who's now in the Diet in Japan, a number of Swedes, because I eventually did live in Sweden for two years. Sweden and several from Africa. We had one from Estonia, he was kind of strange, Denmark, and Japan had a fairly good delegation. So during the course of the year we'd have guest speakers come in, and I was able to meet Buckminster Fuller was on it, and Margaret Mead, and I had a lovely dinner one weekend with Norman Cousins, and William Kunstler. I mean these were pretty wild. So I was the driver for the school, too, so I'd pick up these people at the airport and then horn in on a dinner with them so I could sit and talk with them. But they'd come in and lecture for a weekend. And it was pretty cool.

And then we took courses, and I was interested in urban studies. I wanted to work with this one professor they had, Philip Hammer, who is a very prominent urban architect, at the time, nationally and internationally. And we were all going to take a tour of Scandinavia and look at new cities, like Columbia, Maryland. And unfortunately, he got ill and we couldn't do the program. So that actually is why I didn't go into the urban studies route. There was another group that was going to Japan, so I tagged on to that one. And that was more Asian politics and the politics of Japan. And we only went to Japan for two months and first we went to the UN. It was the first time undergrad students were allowed to study at the UN. Because of this tie-in with the cross-cultural. We lived in a YMCA up there for a month to six weeks. And we studied at the UN, met a lot of incredible ambassadors, had courses there. And then we all went abroad. We split up into different groups, one group went to India, to Europe, another one Latin America.

**DEUTSCH:** You went to Japan. Where in Japan?

**BURGER:** It was a pretty incredible trip, all through Japan. At that time, my roommate who's in the Diet now, his father was Minister of Defense, the equivalent they had of Minister of Defense. And so what happened, it was a pretty high-profile trip. We went to live with a family. We each had a family that we went to live with for these months. And we'd commute to classes. But we met with all the cabinet members. Tanaka was Prime Minister at the time, we met with Tanaka for an afternoon. And there was couple funny stories there, because Tanaka was a very union-type labor-type guy and we were sophisticated students and I remember a friend of mine, Brian Hazelbaker [?], I remember, our hair was all down to here. And it got to the point that Tanaka was just ... was boring, so we started making these cracks over there in the corner and some of the women, who were vicious, they'd say, "What's your favorite color?" and we'd be [snickering], and we'd be really obnoxious. Somebody got up and said, "We noted that Tokyo is based on a simple model of concentric circle urban development; how's that impacted by the, you know, the rail system?" It was a fairly sophisticated urban studies question. I mean, just to ask him a question. He'd have no idea. To amuse ourselves. Tanaka looked in our direction, and we thought, we kind of, because we were kind of snickering. And he said something in Japanese, and the guy behind us the whole time got up and in flawless Oxford English, gave a brilliant answer to this question. And it was really pretty amusing. We were rather embarrassed, but he really, he laughed because he didn't think much of Tanaka. But we spent a couple months there, and we worked with different Japanese scholars on different things. We went to Kyoto and traveled around.

**DEUTSCH:** Sounds wonderful.

**BURGER:** It was a Nobel, he won a prize in literature, Kawabata. He wrote, was it Snow Mountain? I think it was Snow Mountain. I can't remember his name. But anyway we went to his house, we spent an afternoon with him and his wife. Japan was just a cosmic eye-opener. I had a course at this—that was probably a life changing thing. But I had a professor at Dag Hammarskjöld, Tran Van Dinh who, at the fall of Vietnam, at that time he was the cultural attaché for the Vietnamese, and his father was like poet laureate—was a major poet in Vietnam.

**DEUTSCH:** This was a kid who was in the program?

**BURGER:** No, this was my teacher at the university, in fact, during Dien Bien Phu he was the guerrilla captain for the North in Hanoi. So he had all these stories. But he was very strong with Prince Sihanouk. You know, this is that old revolutionary crowd, you know. He was having dinner with the head of the Communist Party in Mexico, he was introduced to Patty Hearst who was down there buying arms. [laughs] He eventually left, when Dag Hammarskjöld folded, he went up and took over the Asian Studies Center at Penn. He was primarily a poet and literary. But as far as discussing Asian religion and just ways of looking at things, he was really—that was pretty changing. And then going to Japan after, you're very aware of different ways to think, and then you could apply it in Japan, because it was ... You just had a different way of looking at things. They'd probably call it out of the box, now. It was a little bit more profound than that. Some of the professors we had there are still active, Said's (Edward Said) a big guy up at—he threw me out of his class. But it was a very good year. But after that I really couldn't go back to Kent, because I was already ...the academic ...

**DEUTSCH:** Were you close to graduating now?

**BURGER:** Actually no. Yeah, I had gotten full credits all the way through. I was very persuasive ... I always went to these programs with the authorization of the president, so I always made sure that I was covered. And at that time, too, college was very much about making up your own. There were programs, you could have gotten a degree in science and baking if you could talk your way in. So then I finished up at GW. Couldn't get into Georgetown, it was winter, so they wouldn't take transfer students, so ... So I said, well, if I don't go back to college, because I'd skipped that fall, I may never go back. I was ready to move abroad, I had a Swedish girlfriend, but I said if I don't go to college it'll be pretty bad, so. And GW, I didn't have any connections, that was the thing that threw me off. So I camped every day at seven in the morning and I'd sit out in front of the Director of Admissions' office. And wait for him. And finally he took me to lunch, and I told him my whole story. He said, OK, OK, I'll give you credits, so that's how I ended up at GW. I think I ended up with a BA and my major was Revolutionary Politics. [Laughs] And so were my professors. They were pretty good then. I was able to take some graduate courses down at

GW when I finished up, so it was a lot more interesting. I took a graduate course in International Relations and one in Philosophy, so ...

**DEUTSCH:** So you've graduated from college ...

**BURGER:** So I went home and I'm washing my clothes, and my mother says, "Well, what are you going to do next week? Are you going to look for a job?" I said, "No, no, Monday I'm moving to Sweden." So she says, "Oh." Only time I saw my Dad cry. He had a tear in his eye when he was waving goodbye. I still think they thought I was going to Switzerland, it was really kind of confusing.

So yeah, I moved to Sweden, went to school there a little bit, lived in Uppsala, dated a wonderful woman and our relationship slowly deteriorated. She's now head of Swedish television. She's incredible. But it's hard going abroad, and I didn't know if I was over there just to have fun or, if I'd made a commitment. So a lot of people—all the friends I had, we were either moving abroad or moving back. And a couple of my friends from Dag Hammarskjöld, they came over there and one was a Peruvian friend of mine, he started working at an OK gas station, and I said I can't do that. He ended up having a computer company, selling it for seven million. He lives very well in Sweden now. There were a number that came over that moved back. It was just ... That was always a debate, that generation, it was just a matter of seeing if you could live abroad. And you know, I got an incredible the only job offer I got there in two years, a serious one. One I did a fair amount of work for the Russian Embassy, intelligence work, [laughs] and then the other ...

**DEUTSCH:** What were you doing for the Russian Embassy?

**BURGER:** They had a ... my Peruvian friend from OK, he called and said—every afternoon I'd pick him up at the gas station and we'd go in a park and play chess for four hours, routine every day. I'd bake bread in the morning so I'd have something to eat And so he said, I just saw on the bulletin board, he spoke about five languages, he said, there's a graduate student looking for translation service, from Swedish to English, and his English was excellent. Maybe I could bring you along. Work out a deal. Well, this guy was a Russian, he was just a deputy attaché, and he was talking about papers he needed translate from English to Swedish. And we thought we could do it as a team. My friend was just trying to help me out. And he said, A friend of mine would like to meet you. I was an American and I was living in Sweden. Which was, you know, the mid-70s, a real good sign that I was dissatisfied or that I was mentally ill. One of the two.

So I met this guy, very personable. We were talking. I think Kissinger was coming to Sweden at that time and there were protests. So he said, do a thing on Kissinger's visit here, look at the American papers, see

what kind of feedback. It demanded a little research. Do a paper and analysis. I did that, I think he paid me 800 crowns which at that time was \$200 which was good, and I really needed it. And then I did a couple of political analysis for him, and I didn't know why he wanted it, he said it was because he was a cultural attaché. And I was willing. I gave him a fake name, Dave Jones, and he asked me things about myself and I just made it up as I was going. And then it started getting a little bit more serious—he asked me to do a paper on—there was a lot of technology transfer going on between corporations in countries, a lot of espionage, and a lot of economic warfare between these states. So he asked me to do a paper on US licensing of technology in Sweden. Who had what. You don't have any, you can't go to a library or the Internet, you'd have to actually dig that up through interviews and magazines. I wondered why he'd ask me to do that? And the only place to get that information is the Export Rodet which is basically the government facility that manages all this type of stuff. Well, my ex-girlfriend's uncle, who I knew well, was head of that. And he had helped me, when I tried to start some import-export companies, he got manufacturers for me to talk to. I was thinking, boy, this is pretty serious, I have to be careful with this guy. So I started delaying it a little bit. The next time—we would meet at a different place every two weeks, different pizzeria—we met and he asked me about my brother. I thought, I never mentioned a brother. Well, my brother at that time was in the Air Force doing top secret work.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

**DEUTSCH:** Go on.

**BURGER:** So, getting very suspicious of this. It starts snowballing. So then I go down and there was an American, it wasn't American-run, but it was a European center that studied America and Scandinavia. So I go down and I'm meeting with this guy who's an American, a two-tour ex-Green Beret, and he had married a Swede, he's like done with the Vietnam War, he just moved to Sweden, he met a Swede, married her, eventually he got a degree from Stockholm University, joined the center. And I had met him through one of my courses, liked him. I knew that he had told me one time he had been approached by the CIA and the KGB to work for them, because Sweden was that type of country. So I told him—he was very stern with me. He looked at me and said “Well, who the hell are they meeting with?” And I gave him the guy's card, and his face went ashen—and this guy was head of the KGB outside of Europe, because they couldn't be in Europe, but this was a major guy. He goes, “Whatever you do, never see this guy again.” He chewed me out for 20 minutes. He thought I was just cocky and stupid—and I was.

And so I'm pretty shaken now and wondering what's going on. I go and then later in the week, I go to dinner at my Italian friend's, whose girlfriend was also a Dag Hammarskjöld student, whose mother

happens to be the number two person. The people, the Swedes that came here, they're old aristocracy. She was the number two person in immigration. So we're having dinner over at her house. Her mother was just delightful, we're just sitting there eating, and the mother just says casually over while we're eating, she says "Chuck" and I say "Yes", and she says "Why would the Swedish Secret Service be calling me for your file?" [Laughs] So three weeks later, I had set up on a plane back to the United States and of course what airline do I pick to fly? Because it's the cheapest.

**DEUTSCH:** Icelandic? In the old days ...

**BURGER:** You'd think. But that could only get you to Luxembourg. So I picked Aeroflot [laughs] because they were the cheapest. So my friend who had a travel agency, he sets it up on Aeroflot, but I couldn't afford to go from Scandinavia, so I took a 24-hour train to Paris, pick it up there. So the first week he calls me and my flight, I don't know what happened. Your flight was just canceled. Now I'm starting to get real paranoid. I'm starting to worry about my brother now, and so we're all waiting for a knock on my door, you know. And the next week I go and they say your ticket's been confirmed, they wouldn't tell me why they canceled last time. So I take the train down to Paris, I get in—Orly was the only airport you'd travel out of. So I'm sitting there and waiting for my Aeroflot flight, and it was probably two hours before the flight and I hear this [announcement] "Will Charles Burger please come to Gate 24." I go that's odd, the flight's not until I figured—and again, I'm freaked out, so at that time you'd go down to this one section where they had all the problematic airlines, because this was when the airline jackings were occurring, you know, El Al, Aeroflot, and any Saudi Arabian airline was in this secure area with little tanks driving around. And I get up to the gate and I go, "I'm Charles Burger," I said "What is it?" He says, "We're leaving early", and I go "Well, what do you mean?" "Well, we're leaving now." And I go, "OK." And so I throw my bags on the metal detector and they start taking them all apart. And then they go and they put me up on a wall, and pat me down. This is weird. And I'm thinking ...

**DEUTSCH:** Probably another airline would have been a better choice.

**BURGER:** The weird thing is, I get on this plane and the plane is just empty, there's like 12 people on the plane. No, maybe 20, but, 19 of them are old ladies in babushkas, who are all in the back with these big bags of hams, and that's another customs story. And there's one guy in first class. So I'm walking to the back with my ticket and the stewardess comes up and goes "Excuse me, your seat's not here," and I go "Well." She takes my back up to first class and she sits me next to this one guy. [Laughs] And I'm freaking out. I go OK. This guy was a plant, you know the AFL-CIO, they had a transfer program bringing labor people over from ... and all these guys were spies, I don't know, CIA was sending spies back to Russia. But this guy spoke fluent English. And I could tell he had familiarity with me—he

immediately started in, and it was kind of my debriefing, you know, when I went back to the United States, He's asking me policy questions, you know. So I got off the plane and never heard from him again. Anyway that's a long story.

**DEUTSCH:** Probably breathed a sigh of relief.

**BURGER:** Yeah, but it's a great story, isn't it.

**DEUTSCH:** Yeah. I can already see my introduction at the dinner. Something about how I don't believe we've ever had an honoree who was recruited by the CIA.

**BURGER:** No, no, my brother's going to be at the dinner! He's still sensitive about that. [Laughs]

**DEUTSCH:** OK, I won't mention it. [Laughs]

**BURGER:** And my nephew has top secret clearance now too. I don't know if it's a good idea. But anyway, I had a very diverse education.

**DEUTSCH:** You certainly did!

**BURGER:** And I did learn some Swedish, and in the summers there I did labor work, you know. Everybody liked Americans in Sweden.

**DEUTSCH:** OK, so now you're back home.

**BURGER:** Back home, during the time I was at GW, I started working in retail in Georgetown, Georgetown Coffee Tea and Spice, which was an incredibly busy store. Highest gross per square foot in the country. It was an incredible store. And actually got into a managerial role there. So I came back and I went back, worked there for a little bit. But as I got into the trade, we had such a high profile I got offered a job in Pittsburgh. So I went through this thing—well, I'll go back to my roots, because I love Pittsburgh. Washington I've always liked. But Pittsburgh I love, it's just, Washington was always a good town, when you were young, it was always a good town because you could always get a job here. You could go anywhere, you'd find a job in a bar, you know. [Laughs]

But I went to Pittsburgh and had a brief fling with it. At that time I was in the gourmet business, and we were probably cutting edge down here, we opened another section in Georgetown and we were pretty cutting edge in that we were one of the first lines outside New York to carry copper, we imported tons of French copper. We were the only source for Jamaican coffee on the East Coast. We'd go down to Hatteras and buy boats that people would make down there for 90 bucks and bring them up to Georgetown, sell them for 600, you know, we had a lot of fun. We'd drive around in Mercedes, we were

like really hot stuff. But then I went to work for this company that was going to design a what—what did I do? That didn't work out. The plant burned down.

So then I came back to Washington and got a job out in Virginia for a guy who wanted to open some high-end cooking stores. This stuff with cookbooks didn't even exist at the time. And so, we opened a store here in Montgomery Mall and one actually in Cherry Hill [New Jersey], which was a bridge too far for gourmet. Because we had food, we did kind of a Zabar's thing with our dinnerware and cookware. And the first customer that came in at our grand opening in the 2000-3000 square foot store in New Jersey had somebody there cutting Brie and she asked what kind of cream cheese that was. So we knew we were in trouble then. So that store eventually went down. But we started to work on that for about three years. And it was pretty good. But we were the first people to have Calphalon, we were the major sellers in the whole area, these were all—we beat anybody outside of New York in Calphalon, you know, Henckel knives. These were all radical things at the time.

**DEUTSCH:** Right.

**BURGER:** But it was really cool being at the beginning of that whole wave. I eventually got offered some jobs in New York, because I had about three of these stores I was running for this guy, and that was going nowhere, because the guy wouldn't give me any—he paid me well but it was building too much. It wasn't exactly a career track, being a mall store manager. So I went to New York and went to work for a Swedish company, which—I had always wanted to live in Sweden, I could never find a job and the irony was after all this I end up going to work for this Swedish ... called Hammarplast and that was pretty cool because every six weeks I would go to Sweden—but then I had a full expense account, and it was really the cat's meow.

**DEUTSCH:** What was the company?

**BURGER:** It was Hammarplast, in Scandinavia it was the equivalent of Rubbermaid. They were very high design, and they were owned by a company called Perstorp which is an internationally, is a major chemical company. And we were like a blip. I figured out we were .02 percent of the gross of the national company, but we would always go to Perstorp for meetings because that's where Hammarplast was headquartered. But again, everybody loved Americans so I'd hang out with the head of Perstorp because I was, like, the token American. So, it was fun. I did that for about two years. But it was really fun because it was really cutting edge of this what they called—It became an [??] Gourmet Magazine for the industry. They call all this stuff “gourmet” and that's when Crate and Barrel started taking off, Pottery Barn, those were the clients we had in New York.

We did Macy's and, you know, I'd fly around the country, everybody live like Europeans, or try to, everybody tried to look European, and it was a lot of European design stuff. I did that for about two-three years, and then the guy I worked for decided he was going to steal some of the design ideas, take them to Starlight. Starlight's the number two plastic company in the US. And we were nothing, we were this little blip design company, we did bring solid colors in the plastic, that was our ... If you see a true red or a true black, that was our big contribution to the world. But, so that got pretty ugly. And that's how I ended up leaving New York because I had to, for lack of better word, eliminate him from—I'm pretty loyal to anything, God, that's why I stick with Don Denton, Coldwell Baker. That ended on a pretty bad note. He tried to basically steal the entire rep organization we had, so after I blew that up,

**DEUTSCH:** How would you say, it was like a turf war, or what?

**BURGER:** No, it was just sheer industrial—it was espionage, literally, because I had all this practice with the Russian, I knew how to operate. No, because he had taken me up, we had met and become good friends with the president of Starlight ... I thought we were just taking molds over there for domestic production, I didn't realize he was cutting a deal on the side. And he had cut a deal for me, too. He and I were going to work for Starlight.

**DEUTSCH:** Oh.

**BURGER:** But he didn't tell me and I wouldn't have done it anyway because the Swedes are—I'm not into that, with the corporate stuff. So what happened is, I found out about it through a back channel. Because he had approached people and basically they didn't want to see any damage come to me so they told me, and I basically informed Sweden that I was going to be taking over the branch. So as a matter—he came to work one day and actually I didn't get in the office before he got there, because I changed all the keys and—it's one of these things where you clear somebody's desk out. And he said, "You found out." And I go, "Yeah, sorry." But I did call him last year [laughs]. We were like best friends, too. It was pretty bad. He's a very very successful—he leases high end—he's a leasing agent for high end chains, you know like high end Italian chains that come over? And they need store locations, that's what his company does, very successful in Manhattan. At least he's doing better in real estate than I am. He's doing pretty good. But then I left there ...

**DEUTSCH:** You came back to DC?

**BURGER:** Yeah, I came back to DC again, and ...

**DEUTSCH:** So by now it's mid-70s?

**BURGER:** Yeah, and so what I started doing, I went into repping, because I knew all these ... Frankly, my dad died that year, too. It was not a good year. So I regressed, I left New York, and probably I should have stayed there, career-wise. Because I had a pretty high profile in this gourmet industry that was folding. But it was just—all that stuff that went on, it left a bad taste in my mouth, I probably wasn't ... I bury everything and I don't think subconsciously I was handling it very well. So it was just getting too much. So I came back to DC and I picked up a friend of mine out of Atlanta was, you know he'd rep these lines to different stores, you know, as far as sales. So actually I got the account of the Cuisinarts, it was just hot then, they were just selling hundreds of these stupid machines, and so I was the Cuisinarts—and we had a couple of other gourmet lines but I did mid-Atlantic region for Cuisinarts. And that went well for a couple years, and then this guy I worked for there, suddenly I missed retail, and this traveling, going to Reading PA, and this guy I was working for, he started cutting corners. So I moved on. I just had to go back to retail. And I hooked up with some friends of mine whose father was very wealthy and the other guy who I'd worked with in Georgetown years ago with, and we opened a couple stores together, and we picked our first location, which was going to be above Forecast, and we'd planned that. I quit my job, I was living in Old Town, and so we were going to open a store on the third floor, which I think there's a hair salon up there now.

**DEUTSCH:** What kind of store was it going to be?

**BURGER:** It was going to be a gourmet store, coffee, tea and spice. It was pretty radical, actually we were going to do kiosks in malls with coffee and spices. And this was pretty rad, too, this was still the '80s, so all our business was tying together all our expertise. We had about four locations started, you know, but it was the same time Chesapeake Bagel Bakery was opening, we were all—all of us were friends because we were all going to open up our little franchises. Chesapeake did alright, they did pretty good. And it was like six months before we were supposed to open, these two get divorced. So there goes our money source, and my other friend, I threw together a partnership with someone up here on the Hill who will go unnamed, and who I'll never see again.

**DEUTSCH:** Not someone associated with this house?

**BURGER:** No, no. This was someone who was around Eastern Market, you'd know the name. Anyhow, there was a partnership formed, and we were going to go in the basement of where the Forecast is. But we had no money, it was just a bad decision, because I'd been forced—I'd quit my job, and we had already planned—we had to re-plan the store, and a couple people came up with some money. We did a tremendous business but we never had any capital. That was the big problem. And then eventually we just sold, we sold it after two years. We did a lot of volume there, it was just always difficult to make money,

difficult to pay Debbie the rent, and it was grueling, it was just wearing me down. The store did very well, you learned to like the neighborhood, we used to store stuff at Safeway.

**DEUTSCH:** Were you living up here?

**BURGER:** Oh, I had to move up here, there was no choice, I began because there was such outpour of participation I felt guilty living in Old Town, and so I moved and I got a basement apartment down on Seventh Street. It was kind of an interesting time to be at the Market. Because at that time you know, remember the old Oktoberfest, the big ones we used to have? I used to run those; we gave those a rebirth. So I did that a couple of years, we organized those And you know CHAMPS was forming at that time, and we had revived the Market Row Association, you know the shop owners there. So it was all—all the situation with Hine, the situation in people's minds, literally. But we always kept involved in that. At that time Hine—the flea market started, you know Tom Rall started on the weekends, we worked on that. Everybody fought that because they thought the flea market on Sunday would bring the quality of the Market down. And then everybody was fighting because the Market was going to be destroyed because everybody saw what Balducci had done to Georgetown, they thought Balducci's was going to come and open it, or Safeway was going to buy it, you know, it was just ...

**DEUTSCH:** Quincy Market.

**BURGER:** Exactly, which was so far from the truth. But it was an exciting time.

**DEUTSCH:** But that's how you got involved with all that?

**BURGER:** Yeah, you know, CHAMPS—there were 40 of us, I think I was the token store they let in, and the only two retail representation was Keith Fagon and I. [Laughs] CHAMPS. But those were good ...

**DEUTSCH:** So you were a founder of CHAMPS?

**BURGER:** Yeah, Drew Scallon got me involved in that. You know, Tunnicliff's had just opened; I was Tunnicliff's first customer, that is probably my claim to fame. And Drew actually started at the same time our build-out started for Provisions. But Drew got done, ours didn't. So, but that was that whole crowd. And there was a community down there. It was—Eighth Street was pretty vibrant, you know up here they had a lot of live music all over the Hill. It actually was a nice time to live up here. There was quote unquote crime, people would talk about it, but it wasn't anything that you couldn't handle, you just had to be a little bit more careful. You know, October, we had everything but 23 robberies in October to alcoholic drunk Santa who we hired to talk to the kids.

**DEUTSCH:** I'll leave that out.

**BURGER:** But you know, it was good, we had a nice community up here. And it was a good group of people, and we were all very close and all very competitive, so I remember we'd have Brie cheese wars, and I think Brie got down to \$1.99, at Prego's. But then we found out he was buying old Brie. That's how he could do it. [Laughs] But it was a pretty good time up here. But I did that until—as they said the store was under-capitalized, it was never ...

**DEUTSCH:** And what was the store?

**BURGER:** Provisions. And then I sold it to some old friends from Old Town, and it went through a number of different owners. Reincarnations. And I think Debbie's done a nice job with that. Very nice. So that was kind of, but then I went into, you know Don and I used to hang a lot, we used to be old gang, Don, I and John Gordon, Thursday nights the Diddens would come out, a couple times we got George out with us. Do the rounds. So, it was a good time up here. A lot of camaraderie. It's another group now, it's still happens up here but it's, everybody's married and older now.

**DEUTSCH:** At what point did you get married?

**BURGER:** When did I get married? Probably about 15 years ago now. I should remember!

**DEUTSCH:** And what's your wife's name?

**BURGER:** Nancy Broers.

**DEUTSCH:** I won't tell her that you don't remember when. How do you spell her last name?

**BURGER:** B-R-O-E-R-S. She does meetings, she's a meeting planner for Exxon. She used to be with Washington Inc. She actually was one of the first teachers down at Capitol Hill Day. She taught there for about ten years, I think. She was the music-phys ed teacher. And then she went over to, she got this job at Washington Inc, she did a lot of stuff there. She did Clinton's birthday party, opening the Korean Memorial, she did the presidential golf tournament, so she did some good stuff. Yeah, we met and actually it so funny, 30 years earlier or 20 years earlier, she started working at Georgetown Coffee Tea and Spice the week after I left. And then two years later she was the, I don't know if you remember Schwartz's, down in Dupont Circle?

**DEUTSCH:** Oh, the old drug store?

**BURGER:** Yeah, well, there used to be Spider [?] who used to work the grill back there. I lived there. That's where I lived when I finished up at Georgetown, I lived there, at R and 21st. And not only did she,

at the same time I was there, she worked at Schwartz's, which I didn't remember her at all, because we spent every Sunday morning in there, maybe because we were hung over or something, I don't know. But then ironically, she lived above me at 21st and R. We lived—I lived in the basement unit, and she lived in the house. There was main house which exited out onto 21st, I was at R. We actually lived at the same house together for a year.

**DEUTSCH:** It was meant to be.

**BURGER:** Yes, and you know I met her in a cab when I was in Georgetown on some business thing and I was coming back across town. And I got in the cab—this was when I had Provisions and she said “Oh, hi, Chuck how are you?” And I didn't remember her—she'd been going into the store every day. [Laughs] So I was resisting, I guess, the whole time. But everybody got married. It was like Larry Hodgson, Don and I, we always hung out together. And then everybody got married, I was the last of the three to marry. And actually the irony of it all is, Jean (Don Denton's wife) and—they all knew each other. They said, You're dating somebody. Who are you dating? And I said who I was dating, very serious about it. And here they lived next door to each other. They had been neighbors for several years, so it was all, this whole thing was—it was just very scary how these degrees of separation that were there.

**DEUTSCH:** So you started working for Don?

**BURGER:** Yeah, I started in, I don't know, '83 it must have been. Don said, “We only take seasoned agents here, you'll have to go up and work in our northwest office.” Well, I didn't have a car. And I'd just put every dime and lost every dime I had when I sold the store. I was just glad to get out with my teeth intact and not owe any money. You have to work in our Northwest office, he said, Just for six months or so. Well, after three years [laughs] of being up there—and this was their office, the old Dale Denton days. But it went well, very close to just couple houses shy of being rookie of the year without a car.

**DEUTSCH:** How did you do it without a car?

**BURGER:** It was very interesting. I'd be sitting down at Logan in the mid-'80s with my Hartmann case and suit, and police would stop me because I'd be there at dusk, so I was obviously looking for a woman or something, you could get your whole selection down there. And it was—and my clients drove a lot. But I'd bike to work and take the Metro and bus up. But then after that, you know, real estate's been fine. I've taken a couple sabbaticals, so that's been good. But I think, frankly, I've just been involved community-wide, I've found—Nancy and I actually—I really got out of my—I had pretty much been volunteering, like, in college, it was just the way we always did things. And then I went through the business stage when I was up in New York, and obviously didn't have time for anything like that, and

then when I got to Capitol Hill, we started doing this stuff with Market Row and CHAMPS and then Nancy and I, at that time they had just started a band at Hine School. In fact they didn't—I became friends with the music director, and I would note that they would just march around, like five of them would march around in a circle with sticks. And I asked them about that and he said, Well, they didn't have any sheet music, they didn't have any instruments, so they were kind of ...

**DEUTSCH:** Who was that music director?

**BURGER:** That was Ed Lewis [?] Ed. What's his last name? I'll check that.

**DEUTSCH:** They had no sheet music?

**BURGER:** No, I think he would buy it.

**DEUTSCH:** And Princess Whitfield was of course, the principal here and I'd done a lot with Princess because I defused a lot of stuff with this flea market, I arranged for the contract, you know, when the flea market moved into the Hine School lot. I took Tom Rall over there and we negotiated that with the school. And that was good because the proceeds of that went to a fund that Princess Whitfield would use to buy clothes for kids that didn't have clothes. And so, but nobody liked Hine, everybody hated Hine, and everybody hated the vendors and she put that fence up, the one that's four feet away from the other fence, everybody thought that was an intrusion on public space.

**DEUTSCH:** Lots of hostility in that whole interaction.

**BURGER:** I'd call it racism, but you can call it hostility, but it was [laughs], it was pretty nasty so I went and talked to her because Historic Preservation was freaking out about this fence. And the reason she had the fence was to keep—one it was her property, she could do anything she wanted, but it was to keep the dealers away from the fence. And so she conceded and had it painted green so everybody was happy with that so you could see it less. But this band thing got kind of—because I'd been in music before and I'd actually tried to play trumpet for a while. And Nancy, her degree's in piano from American, so she's very musical. So we started, formed this thing called the Friends of Hine, and which we started helping them out getting—here and there—finding instruments, we'd have a drive—you know, turn your used instruments in to Hine—helped them out. They actually started a band, and there was a lot of—like at any junior high school—people were really making fun of the band people, you know, hassling them on the subway and stuff, and what happened was, somebody went and set fire to the band room.

**DEUTSCH:** I think I remember that.

**BURGER:** Which was pretty upsetting, and so we got together our Friends of Hine rallied and ...

**DEUTSCH:** And who were the Friends of Hine? Basically you and Nancy, and?

**BURGER:** We got some people, some principals from Washington Inc involved and there are some people to this day I can't say, I promised never to reveal that they were involved, but we did get some very heavy corporate hitters. The only reason they didn't want to get involved is because everybody would start asking them for money. [Laughs] But we used some connections to get them involved. And we ended up doing two things, because it really took off. We had this thing, rising from the phoenix—the phoenix rising.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

TAPE 2/SIDE 1

**DEUTSCH:** OK, the Friends of Hine.

**BURGER:** We had the Friends of Hine. So, as a result of those efforts, we raised close to \$350,000. And also one of our Friends of Hine, Jean Marie Neal was able to—because she's a Democratic operative—she was able to have Hine Junior High School play at Bill Clinton's inaugural, which is the first time in the history of the inaugurations that a junior high school band has ever played.

**DEUTSCH:** I got to get this right. First junior high school ...

**BURGER:** Band that ever played at an inauguration.

**DEUTSCH:** And it played at the parade, or?

**BURGER:** At the inaugural parade, for Clinton. And they went in their new uniforms, and I swear those kids practiced six hours a day for six months. So they'd be—you know. And they went on, they were very good, they won contests at Disneyland, and—the only other band—there was no other band, junior high school band, playing except for Jefferson—down near Logan—Jefferson Junior High School. But they had a band room and any money that was spent on instruments always went to Jefferson and didn't go to any of the other schools. But Ed Lewis he did a great job with those kids. It was really pretty cool. And so that was pretty good. And at that time we were doing a lot of things with Hine. There was a lot of anti-Hine, sentiment, there was, more people were concerned about—everybody just didn't like it so they found a reason not to like it.

**DEUTSCH:** There was a lot of complaining about the trash in the streets.

**BURGER:** Yeah. God, junior high school kids! I'd be in jail, considering that what these kids do is nothing to what I used to do in junior high school! But there'd be things like out-of-boundary kids, like

who cares! But a lot of people just didn't want it there. I was at a meeting once where someone suggested that we contact—this was in the '80s—that we contact Macy's, because Macy's was looking for locations. And possibly Macy's. We could tear that place down. And I got very defensive about it. Frankly, a lot of people I just tuned out to. I think a lot of people did come around. Why people have to come around to kids going to a junior high school and trying to make the best of themselves is beyond me! There was a lot of, how shall I say, engaged conversations during those days. But we did a lot of work—another—Jean Marie's husband Greg Farmer, through him we delivered probably, we did some consortiums, pulled together, we probably between cash rewards, and training, and computers, we probably put about \$150,000-\$100,000 in equipment and training money into Hine.

**DEUTSCH:** Computer equipment, you mean?

**BURGER:** Computers, and cash, so. But that was when Princess Whitfield won Reader's Digest teacher of the year award, which for all intents and purposes, nobody paid attention to that. [Laughs] It's just—what it is is was. So, you know.

**DEUTSCH:** You must have been sad when Hine ...

**BURGER:** Things change, I mean Capitol Hill's different. You know, that's kind of the way I look at Hine. Things move on. I still have friends of mine—they're still friends, but they talk and complain about something happening, and I'm going, it's just a new era. Sure, I liked it better when it was in the '80s. That was my Capitol Hill. It's other people's—it's still my Capitol Hill now, but you have to change with it, I mean there's different needs here. Actually, I told a friend at lunch yesterday I said, I think you should just move. [Laughs] This area is just not working for you right now. But I was more concerned about the solution they had, moving the junior high school to Elliot, because I really do think that was just real estate. It's just a real estate game. I thought, an incredible opportunity, very vibrant, that you would have kids involved in an urban setting, in a neighborhood setting, but this is more just warehousing kids. Elliot's a dump. I don't know if you've ever been to Elliot.

**DEUTSCH:** I have.

**BURGER:** But they've renovated Elliot, so it's a dump with nicer windows now, so—I find it acceptable, but I didn't find it complimentary or I didn't find it admirable, I think I'll probably leave it at that. But the new thing going in there is dynamic and very exciting, I'm involved as far as business stuff, obviously—the stuff I'm involved in now, everybody's very excited about it.

**DEUTSCH:** The redevelopment.

**BURGER:** Yeah. It's—Now compared to the—probably the way some of the groups have matriculated or grown or developed, or—we have a full range of—one thing interesting about this area, you've been able to at least organize all the time and the work the Foundation's doing great, and CHAMPS has moved along nicely, but, and of course the restoration—you know, these groups have been able to articulate positions and do it in a professional and respectful manner with each other. I think that's one thing that's admirable, that we have so many different groups and diverse interests, that we don't cannibalize ourselves. We actually can belong to different groups without swearing oaths of loyalty. But you compare it with other areas in the city and there's nothing like it. That makes this neighborhood kind of special.

**DEUTSCH:** Yes. So, what about working with Tommy Wells on the Boys and Girls Club? That's a more recent thing.

**BURGER:** That's interesting. What I'm working on? Just to give you an overview: I'm vice chair, and I was a founder, I was in the first setup—we did all this committee work for Eastern Market, I'm vice-chair of EMCAC. And have been there since the beginning. First I was Sharon's [Ambrose, city council representative for Ward 6] representative, and yeah, I ran Sharon's campaigns.

**DEUTSCH:** Oh.

**BURGER:** I probably have forgotten more than I'm—I'm skipping entire decades here, it's easy to jump over them. And also I'm on the boards of CHAMPS and Barracks Row, and Capitol Hill Restoration, and, those are the pertinent ones. What are other things. Oh, and I was chair of the ABC Board for six years. That was volunteer work. Everybody thinks that was a job [laughs]—that was volunteer work. If anything is rectified, I'd like to rectify—I really thought I—I got a small stipend, I had to quit that. I loved doing that, but, it was impacting my real estate business too much.

**DEUTSCH:** Because it took too much time?

**BURGER:** I really got into it, because we rebuilt the whole department over that time, and rewrote the law. There was a lot going on, and so. It was pretty exciting, and you got to carry a badge. It was one of these high status-low pay jobs. Who did those charts? Was it Max Weber? High status-low pay, it was one of those. But that was really rewarding. But, it ended up I was working like 30-40 hours a week, it just got too demanding.

**DEUTSCH:** Why was it so rewarding?

**BURGER:** Because actually we were autonomous, through the bill that Sharon originally introduced, which got it out from under DCRA. And in essence, we were a government facility run by citizens. We

had oversight. The executive director was supposed to have a cabinet-level position with the mayor, that never was accepted, or worked, but the point is we had clout. And considering alcohol's related to about 12 to 15 percent of the capital budget, the general budget that comes in, that income comes from 12 percent is somehow alcohol related. It might be with destination management, down to licensing, or just how much the tax on booze is, and beer. So the point is you're in a position to affect public policy. And if you don't allow yourself to get politicized, you can really make government work. And after—I've been involved in—I've done a lot of work on Harold Brazil's campaigns, I did Mayor Williams's, I ran his campaign, for two months, you know, after the writing scandal, remember that? The petition thing where he didn't get the names on the petition? You know, I worked on his campaign and ran that for the last three months before the election. So I've always been involved in getting people elected. And this was an opportunity. Most of them ended up being disappointing. Obviously some I named worse than others. But actually, this was a good thing which I always wanted to do—I want to affect things. If I'm going to get involved in it. So this was a great opportunity to work with some really great people, for one, develop great people, and a lot of times we were protecting the department or people that worked there from the intrusion of bad government. So we did have that degree of independence so we didn't have DCRA anymore. We were able to clean out the bad apples. And there weren't that many bad apples, there were a lot of people that were never trained to do the job they were doing. The first meeting that we had with them, we asked them—we had a retreat with about 75 employees there—and we asked them, what is the one thing about your job that could be better. I expected them to say I want more money. Everyone to a person said, "No one's ever trained me to do what I'm doing. I want to do a better job." And to the person! And these were people that were not getting paid much. And so it was just very good, that's why I stuck with it that long, and I stayed with it a little bit longer to protect the politics there, I find it fascinating.

**DEUTSCH:** Were you on it with Ellen?

**BURGER:** Yeah, actually Ellen [Opper-Weiner] was there when I served. She was on it for a year and a half. We served together. It was just a lot of politics. But I enjoyed that. I have a fairly thick skin when it comes to that stuff. But it is kind of protecting the idea, protecting the intent of the law, and it was a very policy position. It's a regulatory law, but the point is through regulatory, you can assist the lawmakers make policy that you could enforce and not veer from, so. That's a whole 'nother chapter.

**DEUTSCH:** Yeah.

**BURGER:** But that was pretty good. And that's probably one of the most rewarding things I've done. And the second thing, you know we were working on—you know, Capitol Hill's always been good. I

think it's always been kind of funny because of the way volunteerism develops up here, it always goes different routes. Has a different—some have a degree of Hollywood to them, some don't, some is more nuts and bolts. One thing is, everybody's always operating on so many different levels. You don't see a lot of the stuff that goes on. So it's like, people are surprised that Jan's Tutoring House [formerly Friends of Tyler School], that has its ups and downs. But anybody can get up and do a project. We have new things happening now. You know that blog? Hill at Home? I was looking at that—they get 15 to 20 thousand pages read a month, which is not bad for a website. But that's a whole new culture coming up with that. There's so many people doing things and that's basically a volunteer job, what they're doing. There's just some really interesting things always happening up here. Those—like I said, I'll probably think of a bunch of things, I'll send you emails.

**DEUTSCH:** Yeah.

**BURGER:** No, I won't. [Laughs]

**DEUTSCH:** No, I'd love to have them.

**BURGER:** I'd be writing all the time. I probably forgot more than I remembered.

**DEUTSCH:** I know you're working on the Boys and Girls Club.

**BURGER:** The task force that Tommy's Wells instituted.

**DEUTSCH:** And you're the chair of that.

**BURGER:** Yeah. That was the other thing I did. I was chair of the redistricting—for this data, so we redefined the ward. That was interesting, too.

**DEUTSCH:** When was that?

**BURGER:** Last census, must be ten years ago, then. Seems like yesterday. I've always been, because I've been doing Sharon's campaigns and city-wide campaigns, I know city-wide—I'm very hooked in politically around. And through the ABC board, obviously I know a lot of people, because you run into everybody with that. Capitol Hill East, which I think they can call themselves—they change their name all the time. Remember they were trying to get their own name about eight years ago? They were trying to, like sit around a circle—

**DEUTSCH:** Barney Circle.

**BURGER:** Yeah, they didn't want to be Capitol Hill. Well, the Capitol Hill East people won out. That's been pretty interesting. Tommy asked me to serve on that. The group we have up there—it's a very—it's diversity out there in a sense there's a degree of clash going on. There are a lot of questions raised in the area, due to two things. One, they've had an influx, not an overwhelming influx but an influx of new people into the area. It's kind of a little clash of old and new. Secondly there's a tremendous amount of development happening around it. Be it development in the neighborhoods, or reservation 13, or what's happening along Pennsylvania Avenue, there's just a lot going on. A lot of that stuff has gone on with not a particularly strong degree of participation from the neighbors.

**DEUTSCH:** Is that because a lot of them are relatively new?

**BURGER:** No, it's because nobody pays attention to it. [Laughs] Well, they're demanding. Before they were old, they weren't the money people, then it became, they weren't electing the politicians in the ward, there's a whole series of reasons why they felt forgotten. And there's never really been a lot of neighborhood structuring out there, not any strong groups have—Neighbors United cropped up, I won't comment on them. But some good people involved in that. They went through a coup. And they changed...

**DEUTSCH:** They kind of disintegrated?

**BURGER:** Yeah, but it was self-imposed. They didn't like where they were going. I'll tell you, that group was a bunch of hot air from day one.

**DEUTSCH:** I won't quote you on that.

**BURGER:** Okay, please, don't get me going on that one. That kind of upsets me, because that's what I was saying about the Hollywoodness of volunteerism. The people that are in it now are very committed. They have a very strong program going on at Payne, and they understand what they are now, or they act the way they are now. There was a small group that was going to need help, they're an incubator group, they're not out to rule the world. Because that created a tremendous amount of hostility in the area. It's also things about Capitol Hill East and Capitol Hill. There's a turf war there. There's people that live in the east that think they should be just like the west. And vice versa. And there's people out there saying Hey I don't mind being called Capitol Hill East, but we have our own culture here. And others saying, No, no, no, we're just like they are at Fifth and East Capitol. We want to be like that. You know, Where's my fancy restaurant? Where's my tablecloth restaurant? So, as a result we just have a wide opinion. They are very smart people, but it's just—they're not, let's say, they have not been enforced into organizations like we have up here. Up here, you immediately start plugging in and it's great. Because it's kind of a

sophisticated system up here. Out there there are still a lot of cultural questions they have to ask. As a result, I guess I was picked. As a middle child I'm good at that, I guess. We got together a very good task force, good because it's a cross section. Secondly it's something that had a very high profile. And they didn't have anything to say in reservation 13, I mean the city just ignores them. What's been built there so far, no one ever asks them. And so this is kind of a lightning rod. Because this is something that they think is theirs.

**DEUTSCH:** They?

**BURGER:** The neighborhood. This is their community center. One, they thought all was lost until the city paid a tremendous amount of money for three derelict buildings. Another fine expenditure of taxpayers' dollars. [Laughs]. But we have it now. And I think even Tommy, he just accepted it, because they threw it in the packages I think to help justify the price. It made more sense paying 20 million dollars for three buildings than to say it was for one. [Laughs] And Tommy's on the right key, that where that area is, a Boys and Girls Club for youth, it just doesn't function.

**DEUTSCH:** Because there weren't enough children?

**BURGER:** It's a matter of programming. The programming never adjusted to the neighborhood. And that is a combination of demographics. And it's matter of having an old building that's 45,000 square feet—that's huge—that is a big building—and again, the definition of community has changed a great deal from a demographic and from a geographic perspective out there also. So there are some serious questions that need to be asked out there. Our task force is not there to design what goes in the building. At least my intent and the council members' intent is to make that a community activity. What we need to do is to serve as a facilitator, to allow that discussion, one, to go on in an education and hopefully assist because, through education and the way the information and discussion is carried it's in a civil manner.

**DEUTSCH:** So that the community can articulate what they want to see there.

**BURGER:** Yeah, our job's to figure out, to define the asset. Secondly our question—the critical question of any of these things is a technique and content question. What's your content and how do you run it. What are your programs. How do you run it. That effects sustainability, that affects how you finance it, that runs the whole thing. Now there's no money coming from anywhere. So the question is, how do you finance the retrofitting of a building, and have it sustain itself for the long term, with programming that you want.

**DEUTSCH:** And especially when we're in the process of getting a community facility of some sort in the Hill Center. The location is different, but ...

**BURGER:** The Hill Center. Right—Steve [Cymrot] and I were talking about that the other day and we're going to continue conversations, but it's a little bit different. And we didn't see any overlap. One, I wish I could tell you where to go get money, but the money we're getting, you're never going to get any more, so. He's going to help us out with different ways. But this center is primarily not to provide any social services, which neither is the hospital, but to provide family activities. And it's primarily an activity center. We may have a standing day care center and there may be a gym, there may be a senior counseling center, we might even go talk to Unity, about having a health center there, we might go to Capitol Hill Day, I met with last week, they need—and please don't mention any of these names, no one's committed, but everybody's excited about the possibility. Capitol Hill Day used those facilities out there for ten years. Why can't we do that again? But have it better. But these are all kind of partners, again, where you build legs. They're very stable, large organizations that have cash flow. So in a sense they could be, for lack of a better word, they could be leaseholders in the building. And still we wouldn't even get near 45,000 square feet. But we could get something up and running. These are all the options. But you have to figure out what kind of model does this fit in for it to work. That's kind of where we're focusing the task force, one, we're learning much more about the building than the city knows. Because we have to have accurate figures on how much do we need to spend to get it to this level or that level.

**DEUTSCH:** How many members of your task force?

**BURGER:** About ten of us. They include representatives of the ANC, Neighbors United, I don't think we have—Judy Canning's over, she just came on to act as advisor for Capitol Living, because I felt we didn't have any senior. I'm getting senior myself but I don't think I'll ever think like most seniors. Not that Judy is, but she's around them more. And we have a representative from day care so somebody's running a very successful day care, one of our is head of LISK [?] which is a national consultant for funding for nonprofits, and obviously a representative from Tommy's office, Sasha Bruce, the director there, she's on the group. And some neighbors.

**DEUTSCH:** Sounds like a great group.

**BURGER:** It is. And everybody there has worked for or against each other at any given time. So we all know each other, which is another good thing. And again, all we're doing is teeing up questions that the community will have to ask, but we're teeing up the questions with the background information that we think we could turn this into a pretty productive project. The difficulty, it's going to have to be is that somebody's just going to have to step up and lead this thing. You know, I'm basically, have been criticized for it, that I get stretched too thin. I'm the first one to realize that, so it's not that—we need somebody to come in and say I want to be known as the savior of the Boys and Girls Club. And that's

something, somebody from the community has to do that. What we hope to breed in that is some sort of, how shall I say, hit squad out of the community. You know, get people generated, excited, it might be different neighbors that step up, so we're setting up a committee structure, the people and then hopefully that task force can obviously become leaders in these groups. That's the next stage. Because that's going to be about an 18-month process just to figure out what we're doing with this place. After that. But I would think that in a couple years I think we could get that up and running, and I haven't given any time quotes to anybody but that's the kind of process. I think we'll be involved with it for another six months or so. But we're working—that's a pretty exciting project.

**DEUTSCH:** It is exciting.

**BURGER:** But we're giving tours of the building next week, if you'd like to go.

**DEUTSCH:** I actually have, not recently, but I've been to the building back when it was the Police Boys and Girls Club. Because they used to apply to us for grants.

**BURGER:** Oh, yeah, that's right!

**DEUTSCH:** And I went over and ...

**BURGER:** That swimming pool is so—did you ...? So sad. And everybody's saying, and that's what a lot of the neighbors want, let's have the swimming pool open. Which—it's crazy, you go down to the swimming pool, you can, there's like these, stalactites and stalagmites—the ones that go down?

**DEUTSCH:** Stalactites.

**BURGER:** It's lime deposits from the cement. But you could go like this with the cement, knock away a chunk, and grab the rebar and crush it with your hand. It's pretty bad. But they have a great gym there, you know they have a great community center, they have all the plumbing for a commercial kitchen. It's they have an old room upstairs that had those split logs, like from the '50s, like for the Boy Scouts, and they have a—the NBA went in and put a gym in, so on one section of the wall they have Shaq O'Neill, all these players came in and autographed their wall. Yeah, there's a lot of cool stuff in there. So, we're working, we're trying to keep it very open, I've invited all the editors from all the papers, the blog, there's two or three blogs that work out there.

**DEUTSCH:** Well, let me know when the tours are.

**BURGER:** Yeah. We're going to do a media tour and then actually one of, Jim Myers who's a neighbor out there, he came up with the idea—I was kind of skeptical at the beginning—but we talked about it at our last meeting—that it would be great to have, if neighbors want to go through

**DEUTSCH:** Oh, yeah.

**BURGER:** Because everybody thinks that, well, they should see it.

**DEUTSCH:** Well, if you're hoping to turn someone on, if your future leader of the thing is out there, they got to get excited.

**BURGER:** Exactly. Everybody thinks you can go in there with a bucket of paint, and a couple extension cords and—we're going to hopefully at least get rid of that. Yeah, like put some lipstick on it, and the laughter of children will make it happy.[Laughs]

**DEUTSCH:** It's going to take more than the laughter of children.

**BURGER:** They said—the kids could be in there tomorrow. But, yeah, I said who's going to pay for the air conditioning, the heating. And then that stops them. The city will! That's a pretty good project. Another one we're going to kick off, you know we have this Sign Tiger group.

**DEUTSCH:** Sign Tigers.

**BURGER:** Our Sign Tiger group which is pretty cool, and that's an ad hoc group.

**DEUTSCH:** How did you get the name Sign Tigers?

**BURGER:** We were talking and I said, we could be sign tigers, and everybody looked at each other. We're kind of an edgy crowd, so everybody goes, Yeah, that's a cool name. [Laughs] We don't have tiger names yet, so we haven't abused it. And that's something—we just wanted to get something done, so.

**DEUTSCH:** Are you responsible for the manhole covers?

**BURGER:** No, no, that's the Ken Golding, Monte Edwards -- that was Ken Golding's personal crusade for the last two years, so he should be very proud of that. Fact is, a photo is going around now about the use of the misspelled manhole covers. There's a design page forming at [??]

**DEUTSCH:** This is very funny. I should ask Ken. I was just cleaning up some stuff and I found that I had sent him a note years ago and it was written on a picture of a Nantucket manhole cover.

**BURGER:** Oh, really?

**DEUTSCH:** Uh-huh. They had personalized—special manhole covers, I can't even remember what the picture was, oh, it's a map of Nantucket. And I had written him something and it was on this card. He might ...

**BURGER:** He stole your idea.

**DEUTSCH:** He stole my idea.

**BURGER:** [Laughs.] So that group, I just went out and got representatives from all the groups, Dave Garrison's on it, from the ANC, and Nina's for the BID, and Julia's on it, and Sharon is on it from Barracks Row, and John from the Navy Yard You know he does the outreach for the Navy Yard. And I think Charles is going to join our Sign Tigers, Charles Allen, because we're doing all this interface stuff now, and Nancy Metzger. So we got this group together, and primarily we just saw a need for directional signs. So we got like about, we met with DDOT [District Department of Transportation] a couple times and they liked our idea because, especially the Market was opening up and nobody knew how to get there. So we went out and they said we could do four signs, and so we went down and they kind of opened the sign shop to us. So 26 signs later! [Laughs] And we did an inventory of a number of different signs. So that's kind of how we started, you know we're looking to do—it's a very activist group, which is good. So the one thing we did, we put in ...

END TAPE 2/SIDE 1

TAPE 2/SIDE 2

**BURGER:** We went out and got from DDOT, we, through a series of events we received a 70,000 dollar grant and that's going to do two things, one—you know all these misplaced discs they have that say Capitol Hill Historic District? Blue and orange. Those should be so prominent they should hit you in the head. But they're either mis-installed or they're installed on bad corners. So we got to buy a hundred more of those. Which they did have a hundred more but they never put them up. They rotted in a warehouse. We found all this out. And so we're going to have all these signs and we're going to do a branding effect for the historic district. And secondly, another project that was never—these signs were actually built but they were never installed, and then they were thrown away—about 30,000 dollars' worth—were these signs, when you come up the Metro, we call fancy way finder signs, white on blue? In the big black? The kind of thing, You are here? Which has the circle, and so we have those to put in each of the Metros at Waterfront, Navy Yard, and that's about it. So, then also we're looking for money too, that we can fund out own maintenance program on any signs we have up there. The DDOT has no maintenance money in their budget, none. So if you see any sign we put up for the Heritage Trail, if it

gets knocked over or stays crooked, that's because there's no money to fix them. Any monies we ask for, we're looking to get monies to straighten that out. Now the second thing is, this Impact Parking fee [?], which I am totally [appalled??] by all the new parking plans Tommy has but nothing I haven't told him, but at least it's generating income, so I'll take advantage of that.

**DEUTSCH:** You mean the machines?

**BURGER:** Yeah, the Impact Parking Zone, which is primarily south of Pennsylvania, except where it juts up in the 200 block of Seventh but does not go in front of the Market. That area generates revenue from the parking meters—it creates dollars that can be spent in that impact zone. Which obviously, a portion of that south of Pennsylvania out to Ninth is in the impact zone. But that generated over 280,000 dollars to be spent in that area, and that's all the way to the ball park, down to the waterfront. And so from that, when we got our 70,000 for the funding for restoration for that. And secondly, Sign Tigers is working—and I got on the Impact Parking Advisory Committee. What we're doing is, we're going to be kicking off, so we've kind of taken that group and merged it with the Impact Parking group. And I'm more about getting groups together.

**DEUTSCH:** Impact Parking?

**BURGER:** Impact Parking. So, I'm more about getting teams together, because, again all these groups we have are distinct and they all have different interests, but it's always good when you get them together because you get a lot of great ideas. But what we came up with is a—what are we calling it now?—a community information center. And this is going to be a fixed structure, it's going to be nice.

**DEUTSCH:** Like a kiosk?

**BURGER:** We don't use that word anymore. We used it in the beginning. This is much bigger than a kiosk. But it's about a 75-100,000 dollar structure.

**DEUTSCH:** Where?

**BURGER:** Right at Eastern Market, the Metro plaza. And what this will serve is—we've got DDOT to agree that from the impact parking funds to match funds. So we're going to have to go to the community to raise anywhere from—well, I'll tell you why we don't know in a second—30 to 50,000 dollars. We've gotten Catholic University, who did Stuart Hobson Library and a couple other school projects to take this on as their project for their concept design lab. And I was just at a three-hour thing at Catholic U, we were talking to students yesterday. And what they're going to do is design kiosks for all three of the Metro stops. I think we'll probably be the first ones out because we're better organized. This kiosk is going to

everything from taking that bike situation we have at the plaza, with a hundred bikes, and it's a mess, we're going to actually turn that into kind of like a bike valet service, where we can get more bikes, but people can leave helmets there and baby carriages, and it's going to be a visitor center. We've documented that out of that Metro alone we get about 275,000 people wake up on a weekend who say, I want to go to Eastern Market and then they get on the Metro. The trouble is, we don't get dollars out of their pocket when they're here. Now one of the reasons why—there's a concept that within two hours they're going to be in the area. This is a very big concern with CHAMPS, the Chamber of Commerce. And obviously Barracks Row, and plus Market Row Association—how do we maximize those dollars? So we're going to use—a lot of that will be for the information booth, to give out information. We can run business information and promotions out of that. We see electric jitney cars coming up and using the power station there to recharge. At that time for those that can't walk the Heritage Tours which are leaving from the information center, you can take a jitney ride. Or you can take a jitney back and forth to the Naval Museum, which gets over 250,000 visitors a year, and not one of them have probably come up Eighth Street. So we run a jitney service for that, too. This is something that's going to be an actual center. We might have tables and chairs around it. We incorporate—one thing we're working on now is a wi-fi zone for the whole area. There's just a tremendous amount, but every one of our groups that are involved in this see, not only do we provide tourist information, but half the people, three-fourths of the people who come to the Market, they don't even know what's going on. So this is a great way for any community group to get their information out. So, we're going to be turning—this is actually a pretty exciting idea, so.

**DEUTSCH:** And what's the time frame on that?

**BURGER:** If everything goes well, we could start constructing this thing next fall. We've been working with a BID, with having a beta tent out there, you know people come up off the Metro, and they're just like looking around, they don't know to go to Eighth, they don't know to go to Seventh, they just go, Hey, I'm at Eastern Market, this is where they told me to come from the hotel. And so that's what we want to take advantage of. But you know, it's going to be pretty good. But we're probably going to kick off working with CHAMPS or other groups to start raising money for this. Catholic's willing to deliver to us in about 30 days, probably about 50 to 60 designs.

**DEUTSCH:** That students have done.

**BURGER:** Yeah. So it's going to be pretty cool. And then if we agree to one of their designs or compilation of some of their designs, they'll build it, too.

**DEUTSCH:** That's great.

**BURGER:** They have a team of about 13 other architects but, you know I hooked it up with Amy, Amy Weinstein, Amy's going up there to lecture them on urban design—because we want it to blend in with the Hine project, which is going to be the major architectural element. There's so much going on. That, and then you know, Tommy's trolley car, going down the middle. And I don't know where that Capitol Plaza concept's going, but.

**DEUTSCH:** The Capitol Plaza?

**BURGER:** Yeah. You know the big thing they're talking about, that study, looking to renovate the entire Capitol Hill Metro plaza. I don't know if that's going anywhere, but. That's way down the road. I hope we're all alive to see that.

**DEUTSCH:** You mean the Eastern Market Metro?

**BURGER:** Yeah. And then, the other thing—we have another group, it's just another ad hoc group that works on economic development. Again, it's the same, that one has Patty Brosman [?] on the BID, Donna Scheeder's on that. These are people that all live in the neighborhood we're discussing concepts of—how do I describe it? We're looking at—while maintaining the vitality of our commercial strips, and that would encourage the quality of life in our neighborhoods. That's our theme.

**DEUTSCH:** [Laughs]

**BURGER:** Maintaining the vitality of our commercial strips, commercial districts, with the quality of life of our neighborhoods. Basically that means no more bars. [Laughs] No more noise, no more bars, I want to be able to park my car someplace, that's probably the subtitle of that group. What that group's doing is just examining and educating itself on different approaches to the natural synergy or conflict between neighborhoods and commercial strips. It all can't be like Jimmy T's, you know.

**DEUTSCH:** Right.

**BURGER:** It's not like that. Jimmy T's had dancing until three in the morning, and had a capacity of 300. That's more the issues. But that's kind of an interesting group, and we met through the fall, and—but again, that's an ad hoc group. We're not attempting to be a policy group. Again, I think that's the kind of synergy of getting groups together. If we do come up with ideas, with these groups, these individuals, they're all leaders in their own group. They'll go back to ...

**DEUTSCH:** Their own ...

**BURGER:** Yeah. And then, if the groups decide, Hey we should ally ourselves with another group to get something done. And we may come up with some ideas, but to enact any policy, we have enough groups.

**DEUTSCH:** You must go to a meeting every night of the week.

**BURGER:** I'm known to go to a lot of meetings. I'm trying to cut back now. That's—I have a tendency to do that, so I just.

**DEUTSCH:** But you're trying to cut back?

**BURGER:** Well, my real estate business is going very well, so.

**DEUTSCH:** So you actually have to work sometimes.

**BURGER:** Yeah, I have to come in early, I used to come in early all the time. I mean, in other businesses I had. One thing about real estate is, most realtors don't crank up until maybe 11.

**DEUTSCH:** Then you work late.

**BURGER:** Yeah, well now I'm up early and I work late, but it's pretty contained. now I'm not taking on any new projects. But there's just a lot going on. Tommy has a lot of great initiatives he's working on.

END OF INTERVIEW