



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK  
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

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**Interview with Mel Inman Jr.**

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**Interviewer:** Peter Barker  
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[This interview was recorded on digital equipment, so there are no references to tapes or sides.]

**BARKER:** This is Peter Barker interviewing Mel Inman Jr. one of the partners of Market Poultry. The date is Friday, October 22, 2010. We're in the basement of the Caldwell Banker Real Estate Building on Pennsylvania Avenue. This is part of the Eastern Market Voices History Project. So let's go ahead and get started. You grew up in D.C. right?

**INMAN:** I grew up in D.C. as about the age of, say about seven or ten. As far as I can remember we still have family that lives over on the Northeast side, both grandparents live about three to four blocks away from each other. But I lived my actual life in the suburbs.

**BARKER:** Which suburb?

**INMAN:** Clinton, Maryland.

**BARKER:** Okay. So you had a family nice and close then.

**INMAN:** Yes very close. All of the relatives actually live right in the city within several blocks. Matter of fact right over near the RFK Stadium.

**BARKER:** Oh, Okay.

**INMAN:** So we would always get a chance to see the games and the parades that come by.

**BARKER:** So tell me about what the neighborhood was like when you were growing up.

**INMAN:** Quite different than what it is now. We grew up right behind, not Hine, I'm thinking about Eliot, which is right off of East Capitol Street, and the main high school was where my Dad [Mel Inman Sr.] attended which was right over by the stadium, I can't think of it right now. [Eastern High School] We grew up there, just as young kids, visiting the grandparents and we would run around back and forth between the homes ...

**BARKER:** Sure

**INMAN:** ... and the neighbors back in the day.

**BARKER:** So it was pretty wide open as far as the ...

**INMAN:** Yes, back then you could go from here, you could go to the store at the age of seven, maybe ten years old. Didn't have any problems back then in those days.

**BARKER:** You had a lot of friends in the neighborhood sounds like

**INMAN:** Yes, everyone kind of knew—still knows me from where—“I remember when you were this high.” Lot of friends, a lot of older customers that still come through, because we actually lived around them in those days.

**BARKER:** Cool. It seems like you come from a pretty close family.

**INMAN:** Yes, we are. Actually growing up as a young kid, I missed quite a few Saturdays, cartoons, things like that. I would come in, just on occasions to help Dad out once in a while. Then it became, “Do you want to come in again?” I’d say, “Sure I’ll come in.” So it became a thing where it was every weekend. During the summer I would come in and help Dad out, just a little bit. I would go swimming over at the pool [behind Eastern Market on North Carolina Avenue SE, known in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the William H. Rumsey Aquatic Center]. Then it would become more of a, “Okay let’s see if we can do a little bit more work.” So it became into every Saturday before we ever opened on Sundays—it was just Saturday, Saturday, Saturday. That was my little hang-out spot, so I knew quite a few people on the Hill.

**BARKER:** So how old were you when you first started coming to the Market?

**INMAN:** Probably about five. It was kind of like the day-care, because all of the kids, a lot of kids grew up around the Market. I would go swimming, I would go hang out over at Calomiris’ [fruits and vegetables stand], then I would go outside with Mrs. Louise. So wherever you didn’t see me in the first round, I would be with the next—kind of like close family. People—we would just kind of run wherever we would, all over the place basically.

**BARKER:** Did you get into any trouble?

**INMAN:** Not really. Back in those days too many people were watching. As a young kid, there were a lot of things you could get into trouble doing, but as far as swimming, I was into the swimming a lot. I learned to swim during that time. A lot of those guys are still around.

**BARKER:** So was your whole family really involved in the Market?

**INMAN:** I would say almost everyone on my mother’s side. My dad started the business. None of his relatives worked with us, but everyone from my uncles, aunts—my grandmother had about nine kids. Every single one of them worked with us except for Grandmother and Grandfather. So we kind of went through phases. A couple of years this one would work, some things. Families are not as long—longevity, you wouldn’t get a regular employee, so they would kind of come in and out.

**BARKER:** So what was it like having someone who is both your dad and your boss?

**INMAN:** In the beginning it was a little bit, like “Oh God, I don’t want to do this. I don’t want to do this.” But as I get a little bit older, coming into the teenage years, I started to working whole summers with Dad. That way I was able to buy the things that I wanted to get. I was still a young guy. Things like lunch money. I felt proud to be able to have my own money for lunch. Coming in through the thing—was it middle school? Elementary or middle school sometimes you would have to—in the suburbs you would have to pay. That was just something extra to get me extra snacks, what every kid wants to get. Then it came into the older years, I started working full-time. Right out of high school—learned the business, basically all my life in there.

**BARKER:** Did your mother work at the Market much?

**INMAN:** She did yes. From the very beginning it was just Dad. All of the holidays as I can remember Mom and Dad would get together in this whole production that we’d do with the Thanksgiving. It was always with the two heads. So we would always have Mom in right about that time of the year. She did help to organize a lot of things as far as bookwork and what to do with this and how do you keep things neat. Guys are a little bit messier. Mom worked with us for quite a number of years, almost every single year during this time of year.

**BARKER:** So your mom’s the neater one.

**INMAN:** She was the neater one, right. Things have moved on, so now there’s a step-mom in there. She helps out the same way, same way.

**BARKER:** I know your brother works there. When I was there last time you had a nickname you had for him. Was it ...

**INMAN:** You mean the one that’s there now with the bald head? What did we call him?

**BARKER:** Something like Big Eyes, or something like that?

**INMAN:** Big Eyes. We called him everything from Big Eyes, Big Head. There’s this one that sticks out—I don’t know if you like this. We called him Boopie, kind of like as a little baby. That’s what you call a toddler but the name just stuck with him.

**BARKER:** [laughs]

**INMAN:** It just sounded, I don't know, cool. [laughs] It doesn't really mean anything. We called him Boopie because he was just into everything—always hyper, and so, it kind of stuck with him. So I used that as a play. We always do that.

**BARKER:** Do you have other siblings?

**INMAN:** Just the one brother.

**BARKER:** Have you always worked with your dad in the Market?

**INMAN:** He did the same thing I did. As he got about to the seven or eight year old mark. He'd come in and help with the trash, take some things out. There were a lot of little, small things that we did years ago that we don't do anymore now. So that was something to just fill in and do. He could feel proud. He did the same thing, he ran outside, would have run down the street and buy something. He would get into everybody's business.

**BARKER:** What were you getting paid in those days?

**INMAN:** Depending on if you worked on a Saturday—we worked on a very busy Saturday, at that young age, eight years old, Dad would give us about 25, 30 bucks.

**BARKER:** That's good money for an eight year old.

**INMAN:** Yes, this was back in the 80s as far as I can remember. But those were serious hard days. Those days we were not open on Sundays, so all of our business from Sundays and Saturdays was one day—they were huge. So we would have only about four or five of us there back in those days.

**BARKER:** What was it like with the other kids at the Market? I've spoken to Leon [Calomiris], he was saying there was sort of a friendship there and everyone kind of looked out for each other.

**INMAN:** Oh definitely. Leon still looks like he's in his teens. He's got this young look.

**BARKER:** [laughs] he does!

**INMAN:** So I couldn't believe when he was telling me, "Dude I remember we you were just a little you-know-what." And it's like, okay I remember but how old are you? So we're about seven years, maybe four to six years, I believe, I forget how old he is. But, he looked out for me. He was older enough to be my older, big brother. His mom was there, his dad was there. We all bounced around from counter to counter. More likely Leon was one of the only ones that was around. Leon had a few of the other younger guys from Union Meat Company. He had one son in particular he was pretty good friends with coming in.

**BARKER:** What was his name?

**INMAN:** Adam, Adam Glasgow. He helps his dad out, still to this day. He comes in. He has his own crab business.

**BARKER:** Oh wow, off in Maryland?

**INMAN:** I think it's on the Davisville-Bowie [Davidsonville, Maryland] area, a couple of big crab houses there. We kind of grew up with all of those guys. A lot of the guys here are ... they were I guess a lot younger. I was kind of in my own little zone. There's a few other Canales sons. Carlos, he's about my age I believe, maybe a few years younger than me I think. Also friends with the young girls from the Canales deli. Just a few of us around. Most of the kids were already growing up. Customer's kids came by and I would leave for a minute and go out and maybe go to the pool or do whatever was happening at the time.

**BARKER:** So you knew you customers well enough to hang out with their kids?

**INMAN:** Yes. A lot of the customers ended up going out, you know, on occasion, you know, to the movies. I knew a couple of them well enough that I could go over to the homes.

**BARKER:** Oh wow. Do you remember any particular friends from the families of customers that you spent time with?

**INMAN:** One sticks out. They still live here right on The Hill, the Lewis's. Had a real good friend of theirs. Their daughter worked outside as one of the fruit vendors. Her name was Jennifer. We hit it off pretty good as good friends, being around. I couldn't really get away. I had a few friends that lived all the way out in Shenandoah and I'd actually go travel to see them on the weekends.

**BARKER:** So you had good relations with the guys who came in on the weekends to the ...

**INMAN:** Oh man, every single—you couldn't get away with anything outside. One of the big guys that stick out is Jesse. He's a big [Miami] Dolphins fan.

**BARKER:** What was his last name?

**INMAN:** I think Dunham.

**BARKER:** Dunham?

**INMAN:** Yes, Dunham Produce. And now his young son is towering over me ...

**BARKER:** Yes he's ...

**INMAN:** ... way under

**BARKER:** I've met him. He's a big guy.

**INMAN:** Yes he's a big guy, a football player. Every single vendor from the early 90s, before they switched off and started getting under the city management. It was a little more closer. There are a lot of people now that we don't know. But we see on a daily basis on the weekend—like Ma Brown, of course, Angie, the flowers outside. There's a host of other people that we've just been seeing for years.

**BARKER:** Right. I know in the early days the Glasgows were sort of running the inside. Who was taking of the outside as far as rent collection and stuff?

**INMAN:** I'm not sure, I believe ... I'm not sure how long it's been since John Harrod has been handling that. I was around long enough to remember there were only about four or five vendors outside. It was Ms. Louise, Mrs. Bowie and her daughters, and just a couple of other arts and crafts people. It wasn't as big yet.

**BARKER:** This was in the 80s?

**INMAN:** Back in the 80s. There were a few more people out there, but just a few vendors that stuck out in particular. A couple of photographer guys—I forget the guy's name, Larry, he was around for a long time.

**BARKER:** Where did you go to high school?

**INMAN:** Frederick Douglass. It's out in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

**BARKER:** Was it a good school?

**INMAN:** It was a good school. Kind of quiet back in those days, kind of tucked away in, like a corn field right across the street from it. Set right next to a firehouse. They would tease me a lot coming from the city, "You live way out in the country!" I remember that I drove by there a couple times, but it has changed. As you know schools, kids, and everything is totally different.

**BARKER:** Yeah. Did you consider yourself a good student?

**INMAN:** I'm an average student. Then I guess, my mind being into the workloads, not as much. Most guys don't participate as much, but if I had a chance to do it more, I probably would do the same way. Probably would do the same thing.

**BARKER:** Did you always think you were going to go and work in the Market?

**INMAN:** It seemed fun as a kid. A lot of kids look at it as being fun. They go, “I’d like the work there.” I say, “You have no idea.” [laughs] “You have no idea what you’re getting yourself into.” Kind of like wanting to be there under Dad. Dad and I always were the fishing buddies. He’d take me to the football games, and then there was work. When he came home from work it was always—all the time was like this, like we’re sitting—homework. Doing anything together, it became necessary to be there. You fit yourself into something and then you don’t realize that’s your life. You don’t realize this is the way life, I guess, is supposed to be. Yeah, it’s exciting to see from that point, to see how far we are now, and still being able to work together.

**BARKER:** You mentioned kids talking about the work. Are there people bringing kids in now that you’re seeing?

**INMAN:** Kids that’s I’m looking at—and I’m doing the same thing, “I can’t believe you’re this high and this tall,” and they’ve got this glow on their face. We’ve had several kids come in and work with us. A lot of them don’t understand the behind the scenes. It’s much rougher looking. It looks good on the outside but when you get there, I mean, this is work. It’s not the same type of thing if you’re going to a checkout counter, because you’re constantly moving. You’re so new to so many people, you’re getting your hands wet all the time. Keeping yourself clean, when you go out. When you leave you’re going to smell like a chicken. It’s cool to see kids that are still interested in something like that. We’ve worked with a few groups, volunteer groups, where they kind of come in on a time-sheet and then they work, they learn a trade. I think the city did something like that where they pay the kids to come in, but just to learn a trade for a couple of months.

**BARKER:** So let’s get back to the early memories of the Market. I was wondering if you could tell me about what your stand was like pre-fire? Describe the stand you had.

**INMAN:** Oh man, we had it—after right about the time when my mother got involved more with the business, it became more of this—people called it a show because we, as you probably know, had a little music going. We had such a decoration going on back in the day, before the fire. Pre-fire we had all of our Redskins stuff; helmets, wall-plaques, little stuffed animals and then mixed in between that we had this huge wild turkey. A stuffed turkey that was on the counter. That’s kind of like a big attraction. When that thing would sit on that counter and had all this fur—it stood about two and a half, three feet tall. During the holidays we would decorate it. We put this little Santa Claus hat on this thing—I made this little hat to put on there. The little booties that go around the side. I think he had some kind of little cape thing on, but it was kind of like seasonal. Whatever was going on in that season we would dress this turkey. It caused a lot of attention. The way we had it rigged then, pre-fire we were allowed to have a lot



more freedom when it comes to what you could do to your stand. There was nothing that you couldn't do. What could I say? Yes, we used to have the wooden, for instance, we had wooden signs that I hand-painted myself. I loved to—kind of like an artist, so I'd do all the decorations, I'd do all of the signage, and when we'd promote specials and things like that I put my artwork into it. So we kind of had this look, you know when you lose all those things over years of memories, it's kind of like, you lose your race for it. It dies out a little bit. So now, we're in the process still of trying to pick those things back up. Try to get it back the way it used to look.

**BARKER:** But you've got a little bit of Redskins paraphernalia.

**INMAN:** Yes a little bit of stuff there, you know, that's due to the fact that the way we've been playing the last couple of years. So we don't put a lot of stuff up, but we're still hard core fans. Hard core.

**BARKER:** Yeah, it probably was harder for ...

**INMAN:** [laughs]

**BARKER:** ... before [Redskins quarterback Donovan] McNabb got there.

**INMAN:** Yes it was hard then but those days we had—that was a big part of business. You could come in and we would have the TV on Sundays. People are cheering at the stand, at the same time we're conducting business, kind of in a rowdy way. We're all dressed in our jerseys. Usually every Sunday we have our Redskins stuff on, so it kind of leaves its mark. "Let's go see the Redskins guys." We always get the trash-talking there.

**BARKER:** [laughs]

**INMAN:** So whoever comes by, "Oh you're going to get it. You're going to get it. Okay what are you wearing? You're not wearing Redskins, you're going to get it."

**BARKER:** Capitol Hill being a place where you have people coming in from all over the country ...

**INMAN:** Oh man ...

**BARKER:** ... you must get some interesting football rivalries.

**INMAN:** ... awesome. We've kind of gotten every select team of Market Poultry fans to come shop with us. A lot of Dallas people shop with us.

**BARKER:** From what I understand, now I'm a new person to the city, I've only been here about three months ...

**INMAN:** Okay

**BARKER:** ... but the Dallas-Redskins rivalry involves poultry. Something about like chickens being released in people's hotel rooms?

**INMAN:** Oh man, I don't know about that one [laughs]. Chicken is a big part of football, so we're kind of lucky that we happen to be big football fans, and that's one of the main things that you would cook at a tailgate party, or just having something at home. We would always—we would invite whoever to our homes to come and watch the game, no matter what you were wearing. But like you say, you were going to have it—you were going to get it. [laughs].

**BARKER:** So tell me about, because, the last person I talked to was Leon, and he was talking about his fruit stand. Tell me about the equipment that you guys had back then, and the stuff that you needed to do your business.

**INMAN:** As far as the quality, nothing beats those cases, those display cases and those—some of the other things were a lot smaller. Space was configured a little bit differently then. But as far as they main equipment which would mean the coolers, the walk-in boxes and those display cases that we had. They don't make those things anymore. Everything now is kind of pre-fab, aluminum. I remember before the fire we had some of those display cases for about 30 years.

**BARKER:** Wow.

**INMAN:** These things were made by a company called Pinnacle. They made some of the best cases out there. It was hard to see those things go because you knew you couldn't get them again.

**BARKER:** Right.

**INMAN:** Everything else that we had to replace within those years before the fire—when it would finally go out, you know, “Oh God we're going to get something that's not going to last that long.” You'd have problems with rust. Back in those days, those things sat on the ground.

**BARKER:** Right.

**INMAN:** So we were using a lot of water and bleach and stuff like that to clean. You risk those things rotting out.

**BARKER:** You're talking about the new ones rotting out?

**INMAN:** The new ones yes, they do a lot faster. They don't hold up as much. You know, anything that chicken will touch—chicken and turkey will destroy it ...

**BARKER:** Why is that?

**INMAN:** ... unlike anything else. The only beef products that will do that are things that have salt.

**BARKER:** Okay.

**INMAN:** I think it's because chicken does have a little bit of—it has some kind of acid in it. So our boots—we can only wear boots about six months, because they curl, they curl like wicked witch. Chicken is ferocious.

**BARKER:** Wow. So what were you using for a cooler back then?

**INMAN:** We had—I'll take you all the way back. All the way back as far as I remember back in the early 70s when Dad had already worked that business with an old French guy named Leon Becker. Back in those days there weren't any coolers. Everyone didn't have coolers. Some of the bigger meat companies had coolers. I remember ...

**BARKER:** Who had coolers, was it the Glasgows?

**INMAN:** The Glasgows, and of course the fish people had them, but we were coming into a transition time where those things were more mandatory. You had to have them after a while. I remember they used to be able to put—they'd have chickens on this outside rack. You would pack them with ice all day long. The ice machines then were more like a shredded type of ice. They had drip pans and things that you had to use to keep it going. As far as I remember they had like a small walk-in box, but it was something just like a closet-sized, like a large closet. A lot of the time those things kind of like sat out, wasn't a whole lot of regulations going on back in those days. Nevertheless products were fresh. We only got them in day to day.

**BARKER:** So you weren't really storing stuff overnight?

**INMAN:** Yes, we were selling it out pretty much. Then you started getting into the aluminum walk-in boxes which was something kind of new. A lot of old guys weren't having that. They kept their old, old, old boxes. These things were built like caskets. You couldn't tear it down with a bulldozer almost. They eventually did away with all of those old boxes because they harbored, you know, they were made from wood.

**BARKER:** Wow.

**INMAN:** They had floors in them, wooden floors in them, and eventually those things start to trap odors and they start to rot out and stuff like that. The equipment now that we've been using is okay. They're light-weight but they really don't stand up and hold up for today's needs. You've really kind of have got to get things custom made to kind of hold up to it.

**BARKER:** So, were these coolers—did they end up in the basement?

**INMAN:** Actually they were all above ground. Just as of 15 years ago, maybe more. Fifteen to 20 years ago, the Market structure was a whole lot different. It had a little maze things going on. We were actually closer—we were right next to the Market Lunch. The flowers—Angie's Flowers—they weren't inside yet. They were kind of outside, so we were right next to the Market Lunch. We could literally reach over and shake hands with people standing in line. So when we moved over, she fit in, and then the whole structure of the Market changed, because you would come in through the fish counter door, and have to make this whole U-shape to go around. The middle of the aisle was actually the Union Meat Company, sitting in the middle of the Market. So you would come in through the one door, walk around in this long rectangle-type shape. Back in those days they had the trash compactors inside the Market. So you can *imagine* what that was like, without air conditioning, years ago.

**BARKER:** Yeah.

**INMAN:** That thing had to constantly be emptied. The way the Market looked then it was more like an old-school Philadelphia style market, it really have that look.

**BARKER:** When did they start making that change?

**INMAN:** I believe right in—right around the early 90s, started making the move around, because there were new regulations. Everybody was—we had these floors that we were all standing on, except for the produce people. We all had floor boards underneath us. You can imagine how messy that got after a while, over years and years and years. They did away with those. Everybody's kind of on the flat concrete, the flat concrete. All of our coolers and all the machinery has been normally right above. A lot of people still have compressors down stairs. Like do, like they do now. All the compressors are run by remote units which goes all the way through the basement into a single room.

**BARKER:** That's pretty high-tech.

**INMAN:** It is but sometimes it doesn't—they've had a few issues this year where they had to cut holes in the wall to get more ventilation. You imagine you've got 30 or 40 compressors in one room with the door

closed, then you've got a 100 degree temperatures outside. Didn't really work too good, so they had to re-do some of those things.

**BARKER:** As you got older and moved from doing work on weekends, doing chores ...

**INMAN:** Right.

**BARKER:** When did you start taking over more of the sort of business end, and what did that entail as you got older?

**INMAN:** I would say as the summers got here—didn't do a whole lot on the weekends, the weekends were mostly just running. You're running non-stop, but as the summertime got here I got a little more responsibility to be able to learn how to take a little inventory, just keeping things neat. Being here more often, more often times Dad would leave for, I would say a period of maybe a couple of hours or so, to let me handle things. It was always a relative there, an uncle or cousin. Usually uncles, they were there all the time. So I would get a lot of experience being able to kind of just run the show.

**BARKER:** Do you do the buying of your stock?

**INMAN:** Yes, I do like all of it now. We worked together but there are several purveyors that we get a hold of in the morning. It's always first thing in the morning. Wednesday, "Okay you've got to talk to these two guys, I'll talk to this guy here, the phone's going to ring. Get on the line with this guy." We get our sheets ready. We kind of still do it the old fashioned way. We just jot it down. We know what we need off the top of our head. We could be riding on the way to work, and you could be busy and you're on the phone with one of those guys trying to drive in before they came up with the head-sets. You could be—you're just running the minute you get in there, there's tons of work to do.

**BARKER:** How are you guys getting into work every day?

**INMAN:** We commute right in. Dad lives actually further then I do. He lives in Brandywine which is almost in Waldorf. I live right in Temple Hills which is only 11 miles but the traffic is a little bit rough. I can get to work normally in about 35, 40 minutes. So we never actually use any public transportation because of where we live.

**BARKER:** Right. Have you been—historically have you been dealing with the same suppliers, the whole time, or has that changed?

**INMAN:** For the most part all of the same guys, for the most part. There was one other large company that we kind of switched dealing with. We get mostly a lot of turkeys from those huge guys during the

year. They can give you a better break. For the most part we have a guy that we deal with right in the city locally here. He gets all of the things that we need, fresh chicken every day. There are a few guys that live—and this is way out in Pennsylvania, which is our organic supplier. There's a guy out in Thurmont, Maryland we get all of our smoked turkey products from. They do whole turkeys, they do turkey sausages. They recently had a fire.

**BARKER:** Oh wow.

**INMAN:** Destroyed everything just about seven, eight weeks ago. So we had to get a new set-up. Get all new flavors, everything has kind of changed. So he's the type of guy that they're kind of like a family business like us. They're a small operation. They do a lot of the slaughtering. So for what we do, we do it, it's kind of neat, but what they do, they do slaughtering, they have to do processing to produce sausages. They do this terrific turkey bacon, what we call turkey bacon. It's like—it looks like a boneless ham shank thing. It's something that you would slice and eat it like bacon. But yes, most of the guys we deal with from as far as I can remember, 30 years at least, we've been dealing with the same companies.

**BARKER:** These are all—I mean, you said these were all family owned?

**INMAN:** A lot of them are, yes. There's one guy Charles Ritter. He's the guy right in Philadelphia. I just met the owner about a month ago, went out there to go get some products and I met the owner, he's the actual Ritter guy. Right in the city of Philly, so that was kind of cool, it was my first trip into Philadelphia. The guys from [inaudible] they still have their original owners, a couple of brothers. We deal with guys—Hartman Brothers which are right in the city here. They're a family operation. It's usually—most times when I say families; it's usually like two brothers or a dad and son type thing. Yeah, but most of the same guys

**BARKER:** How do you think that—why do you think it is that you guys specifically and the Eastern Market as a whole has been able to survive and thrive whereas most of the mom and pop shops—pretty much all of the other markets have failed?

**INMAN:** Right. Because, like you say, location is everything. People tend to—they have this idea that, “You guys could open up a place. We live out in such-and-such; you guys would probably do good if you open up a shop here.” But like Dad's always said, location is everything. We're in the focal point of what's happening. You get so many diverse people coming from all over the world, people just visiting they get a chance to see our Market. Being right this close to the attractions, downtown and museums it is the heartbeat. Being in food, I guess that takes a lot of it too. Being in food, people have got to eat. So any occasion there's food going on. So I think that's why, and the close customer relations we have with

people, Dad and I both. About 85% I could call your name out when you get to the counter. A lot of times by your last name, if I've knowing you long enough. You could stand in line and I could jot your first and last name down for your turkey order. It's been knowing all these people for my whole life. That's that kind of close relationship that we have, with those folks.

**BARKER:** So, what do you think it is about this neighborhood specifically, because there were other—I mean you look at Georgetown, I mean Georgetown Market was on M Street [NW].

**INMAN:** Right.

**BARKER:** That's sort of the heart of Georgetown.

**INMAN:** Right.

**BARKER:** Is it just that location to the Capitol?

**INMAN:** Well it's kind of the way we're set up too, I think. You've got shops where you have to physically go into that door, and go into that store. The way this Market is set, you can just walk by. I could get familiar with you just seeing your face, and the way Dad and I do business, we see your face enough, we'll yell you out. We'll, "Hey how are you doing?" Get you interested in what we're selling here. So it is a little different. It's kind of like being an on-the-street vendor and people pass by. It's easier to get you involved into buying. Especially when we can dress it up, make it look really nice. We know what it takes to get people's attention.

**BARKER:** So you mentioned that you've got a lot of customers that are, who are coming back, coming back, coming back, coming back.

**INMAN:** Oh yeah.

**BARKER:** Do you get a lot of new people, do the demographics change here?

**INMAN:** Lots, lots. We get a lot of people that, say for instance, during this time of year, a lot of people are travelling. People are calling from other countries, that they're still away, "and I don't want to miss my turkey list, I want to make sure that I get on that list." They're calling me from way across somewhere, maybe in Europe somewhere like, "can I get on the turkey list?"

**BARKER:** Wow!

**INMAN:** So when you get here your name is on that list. So it's a very special feeling to have people that care, to be able to come back repeatedly. Even the new customers. A lot of long term customers have

been invited elsewhere, they may not do it this year, but they'll still drop by and tell us, "no we're not getting a turkey this year because we're going away." It's very special that they share that thing with us.

**BARKER:** So do you—if you've got a new customer coming in, learning the name sounds important.

**INMAN:** Yeah.

**BARKER:** How else do you develop that relationship?

**INMAN:** Well I wouldn't say we lure them in. Something about it that has attracted them to our stand in the first place. So we'll have to strike up a conversation. You get a lot of people that are skeptical of, you know, "what's the big deal over here, what's going on?" Because usually there's a line or, we're making some kind of commotion over there. I think that's what it is, it seems as though we kind of reach out and we make it our business to be personal with you. That's a good part of business I believe, we make it our business. We're not going to just look at you and cut your chicken, I'm going to talk to you if I can for a minute. There's always something in there to speak about.

**BARKER:** One of the things that I've talked to other people about is when the Market was going to through the 70s and 80s it seemed like there were a lot of renovation plans and politics involved. Were you ever involved in different plans about what to do with the Market?

**INMAN:** Just as input. I remember growing up kind of—not young I would say in my late teenage years, just being there with Dad. He would always inform me about what was going on, what they were talking about. As those times were under the management of the Glasgows, so we were just going with the flow, trying to see how this Market is going to change. There were some things that we knew that needed to be done. Not as much as the structural, but as far as making it more comfortable, a little more cleaner. We could see the phases starting to happen, as things started to change, we knew that eventually this Market will get around to it.

**BARKER:** Did you ever worry that the Market would shut down, or did you ever feel threatened by the changes?

**INMAN:** Not actually. Never believed that. I never thought that we would be in the situation of a fire, but I never thought that we would not have the Market. I believed in the Capitol Hill families and the people that loved to shop there. I didn't believe that anybody would allow that Market to pass away. Never really had a fear of that, no.

**BARKER:** Was it because you felt the community was behind you?



**INMAN:** Oh, very strong, very strong, very strong communities. Just the people we talked to on a day to day basis. Stopping by, saying “hello,” looking for Dad, wanting to drop this off. A lot of things that come with the business. Meeting all of these new people every single week, you’d meet new faces every week. It seems as though it’s going to always thrive, until the fire come along, then you’re just like, “wow.” You didn’t realize that it was so delicate.

**BARKER:** Yeah. Did you get involved much with the community when there were squabbles with the [Marion] Barry Administration about changes he was proposing to the Market; did you ever get involved with the community groups that were fighting a political battle?

**INMAN:** Not a whole lot, not personally, but we were always backed by whoever represented us at that time, which was usually one of our merchants there, usually one of the Glasgow guys would always be the ones at the meetings, fighting for whatever we needed to keep. Just more recently that we started to have more meetings, just filling in, listening, trying to hear what was going on all these years.

**BARKER:** Did you ever feel threatened by crime in the area?

**INMAN:** You worry about that. Being a business owner, we do quite a bit now with credit purchases. Thank God for that, because back in the day you would carry so much cash. Things were like cash, cash, cash. You’d kind of worry about it, but you didn’t really think about it. We have a pretty good eye, we grew up in the city here so we can kind of like—I can scope out from a distance if something’s not right. There’ve been stories that, I’m sure the Glasgows could tell you. There was a story, I remember where, I think Chad Glasgow either one of his other crazy cousins. This guy walks into the back of the fish house one day and grabs and steals this whole big fish. This guy decides to start taking off running out the back of the fish house. Chad sees him in his fishing boots up to his knees; he’s running and chasing this guy down the street. He tackles this guy, he lands right on his back, the fish goes flying, and there you go. He’s like, “You tried to get away from me?” He was a lot younger then, this was about 25 years ago. There was another instance where ...

**BARKER:** Where did he think he was going with this fish?

**INMAN:** It was huge. This fish was so big that you really couldn’t run with it.

**BARKER:** Yeah.

**INMAN:** This guy had no plan to put it in a car or anything he’s just running down the street with a fish.

**BARKER:** [laughs]

**INMAN:** So Chad's like running down the street, he has a cigarette in his hand, he drops the cigarette and he took off, like something in a movie. Skinned his whole arm and everything. There was another incident where I remember—thank God I wasn't there that day. He had a—it was a cousin of his that used to own the other meat stand all the way on the end. A guy comes in with a gun and tries to stick them up. This guy, by the way, he had arms like—Mark Glasgow had arms like you wouldn't believe, strong. It was two guys. He actually grabs the gun from the one guy, puts it in a lock, arm lock. Grabs the other guy, twists his arm. Meanwhile the gun discharges, goes off, and breaks one of the glasses in the case. It was that type of family back in those days, where we would—you come in there, you're going to have something on you, because somebody would jump on you. You pull out a stick or anything, we'd do our dirty deeds ourselves so to speak. There are a lot of weird stories. Things happen, you know, we kind of step in if we can to try to deterrent them.

**BARKER:** Did you have security provided by the city, or a sort of police presence?

**INMAN:** During the holidays we'd have friends, police officer friends that would come by and stand to make sure everything was okay. A lot of times we would leave late and before they did anything with security they would have an officer there. If it was a big holiday we would have an officer on the grounds just to kind of walk around. Until they did away with that it became to be so—you had all these legalities you'd have to go through because he wasn't hired by the Market we just kind of had them around. We would all pitch in and make sure that we were safe.

**BARKER:** Do you think you have, since the fire and everything, has the security situation gotten better, or is it still you guys, the merchants, who are ...

**INMAN:** Well now they have security that walks through on the weekends. Not much during the weekday. So they kind of patrol around. You still get the average person trying to snatch a lady's purse or people that come in and they try to pick up a bag that's sitting there. Things like that, but nothing, thank God, nothing seriously has ever—a serious robbery or anything like that. Because of the way the Market is designed, you've got to be coming in there heavy, because you're surrounded no matter what. You turn your back, then you've got the whole gang of the Market on you.

**BARKER:** Let's talk about the fire. Why don't you tell me about that day?

**INMAN:** Wow. Got the call from my dad actually which he received the call from one of the guys from Union Meat. I think it was Roy.

**BARKER:** Roy Glasgow?

**INMAN:** Roy Collins, he's one of the workers there. I think his boss called him. It was about twelve or one o'clock in the morning.

Dad calls me and says, "Mel, we've got to go down to the Market."

I said, "What are you doing calling me? Go down to the Market for what?" I'm thinking, did somebody break in again? Usually people break in.

Roy called me and said, "The Market is on fire," and the way he said it, he said, "The market is on *fire*." Just like that, with that kind of voice. I'm like, "are you kidding me?" Not really nervous, didn't know what to expect. Like okay how much fire could there be at the Market, when he said that. Finally get there with, I can't remember if I took my wife with me or not, because we had a small child. So I went by myself. I met Dad there. When I got there the Market was on fire, it was totally engulfed. They were still attempting to try to put it out.

**BARKER:** Do you remember about what time this was?

**INMAN:** I got there—it usually takes me about 25 minutes to get to work, I got here in about ten minutes ...

**BARKER:** Wow!

**INMAN:** ... basically. Middle of the night, at this point I'm still nervous, but ... why do we need to come to the Market at this time of night for a fire? Shouldn't the fire department be ... When I got there, my jaw just hit the floor. I could see the fire trucks lined up from the beginning of Seventh Street [SE] where the Bread and Chocolate is [Le Pain Quotidien now, at the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Seventh Street SE]. You could see the top of the Market kind of glowing from a distance. You could see it was a serious fire, and we're like, "Wow." All the windows were broken out and the fire department was trying to get in there, they were still putting it out. Watching that, we stood there from about one in the morning until we were able to get in that Market when they finally let us in, it was about one o'clock the next afternoon, that's when they finally deemed that the fire was out, and we could go in and get our—if we had valuables in there. Yes, so we basically stood there for about ten hours. Stood there for ten hours just watching this. We stood there from dark, until the sun came up. It was pretty wrenching then to me. There was this panic on the street. People were still walking by, "What happened to the Market." A lot of people didn't know. It started to hit you once we got in there, once they let us go in that Market, you could pretty much like stomach just turning. Even some of the bigger guys just like, "I can't believe this." There were no words to describe it.

**BARKER:** What was it like on the inside?

**INMAN:** It was total devastational. You were almost walking in debris up to a foot and a half sometimes. Glass, nails sticking up. All the roofing had just kind of caved in and fell into all of our displays. Every piece of display glass was shattered, some of the cases were caved in from some of the rafters and things that fell in. Lots of water damage. Actually one thing that we did not lose, but we didn't get it fixed was that turkey I was talking about.

**BARKER:** You saw the turkey?

**INMAN:** Out of all the fire the turkey survived. I guess he got wet first, but you imagine the feathers should have gone up in flames. That turkey was still standing on the counter when we got there. There was another funny thing, the Glasgows had just got this new, not the neon sign, one of those flashing light signs they were trying something different ...

**BARKER:** One of the marquees?

**INMAN:** Yeah a little small marquee with the pork, meat and beef, thing on it, it was flashing. That was kind of like hanging off the wall, it was still lit.

**BARKER:** Wow!

**INMAN:** In the smoke and the dark, when you looked in that's the first thing you saw, the lights were flashing. That thing was still lit. That was amazing to see that, because the smoke was still heavy, and it's just kind of like, "Wow what is this?" When we were walking around that debris. It was just like, "This is it, what are you going to do next?"

**BARKER:** So you didn't think there was any coming back?

**INMAN:** With that kind of devastation? I mean you're talking about just getting—we would have to shut down for two days or maybe a day and a half if we were getting a new display case in. Because it would throw your business off. You'd have to shut down one day to get it installed, to do a minor little renovation. We couldn't operate. You see that kind of devastation and we're like, "This is it. We can hang it up." The breath was—it was hard to take.

**BARKER:** Did you guys talk about what you were going to do?

**INMAN:** It took such a while—it took a long time before we could even mention anything, because they were cleaning it, moving it around. We just kind of like looked at each other a lot. It was the first time we were actually were off at the same time, Dad and I. We were off at the same time hanging out at the

Market. Every day we were there trying to get things cleaned out, helping the crew move things out, trying to see what personal belongings we had to take out. We were able to save a lot of the pictures that we used to have on the walls. We had big framed photos that were taken by Courtland Milloy that did a few interviews with Dad for the *Washington Post*, some Redskins paraphernalia that didn't burn. So we kind of got those things still in storage now. Every day we'd just kind of like, "what do we do now? What do we do now?" We were in search of, I guess, just waiting to see what the city was going to do. What they were going to do with this place. What was going to happen to 35, 37 years of business for us? What do you do after you've done that for that many years?

**BARKER:** So what ended up happening?

**INMAN:** Well the city came in and they cleaned it. Once they made the announcement that they were going to rebuild then is when you only see the door opening and a light start to shine because they said they were going to do this. Then we had some hope left. So once they started the work on that, then we were able to—we had to get motivated all over again, basically. After 30-something years, we're like, "Oh God, what are we doing?" because we sat there for like a month. We're never off at the same time, so we're sitting together and just going places, doing things, making calls to let the purveyors know. Some of them came down and saw the disaster. It has a big effect on business when we're buying things from people and then we stop.

**BARKER:** Right.

**INMAN:** Then we're trying to keep the ends meeting at home. Family is trying to go on with life. It shakes you up a little bit, but it's real, that's life, you know, things happen.

**BARKER:** How soon did you open up again?

**INMAN:** Right in—we actually had a trailer outside. We were next to Calomiris, they were easier to open because they were using produce, so they could display outside. We were actually able to obtain a trailer through the help of the Capitol Hill Community Foundation, money that they raised for the whole market, we were able to obtain this trailer that had air conditioning in it. It's like a long trailer. It had air conditioning, it had running water, it came beverage display cases that we were able to get chicken and put in this thing. We had a cutting board, cutting block, we had a register set in there. We had this whole little plan. This kind of looks like a chicken-mobile. So we had this thing sitting right outside the door with the running water, with the water tap in from the sidewalk. We had a generator in it. They opened that up I believe it was on Memorial [Day] weekend. I remember this because my wife was going that same weekend, I think, she was having a miscarriage, so all those things were happening. I think it was

right during Memorial [Day] weekend, so we had that outdoor facility to work with. Then the Market opens—the temporary structure opened. I think it was in September of that same year. It wasn't a long time but it was quite a bit of work. They set up exactly the way you see it now.

**BARKER:** When did you find out you were getting this trailer?

**INMAN:** We kind of stumbled across someone that Dad knew from church I believe. A guy had a partner of his that was going to—they were going to take this thing on the road. He needed like a big truck to wheel this thing with, and his partner backs out. I think they used it for a while, so he's like, "Well I need to get rid of this thing." So Dad and I drove over to go look at it. It seemed like we had this new idea, like we were going to start over again like we did years ago. So it came with the beverage cases, it had the clean hands facilities that you need to wash, it had a hot water tank in there so you could wash your hands. It actually had a long, three compartment sink and a hand sink. So it met every regulation for the Health Department.

**BARKER:** This was like a semi-trailer then?

**INMAN:** Yeah, it was about the length of—it was the length of our whole stand, so it's at least 24, 25 feet. It was totally rigged it had everything we needed to get going. We also had like these huge body bag type coolers that we would put chicken in, and that would kind of be outside. We had ice rolling in constantly. We were the only—we were the meat stand out there along with Canales, the bakery set up outside, and then the Calomirises, they set up outside as well.

**BARKER:** So you didn't get all of the merchants weren't set up that weekend?

**INMAN:** Right, right. Some of the things couldn't be done. Of course, Market Lunch wouldn't be able to set up outside in that way because he had—his production was too big. The fish counter of course, you're talking about fish. Not quite the way they do it at the wharf. You can imagine fish, you have no way to put that stuff, if you're renting, you're cleaning. So we were able kind of to pull it off, along with the meat guys. So we did that every day, like Tuesday or Wednesday during the week we were set up, just Dad and I. When it got to the weekend we were still outside, so we started to learn more about what was going on outside with the merchants, and learn more about the merchants because they had to squeeze us in there right away. These merchants went on every single weekend. As the fire happened they were having Market Day the same week that the fire happened, so they went on ahead with Market Day. So we were incorporated outside with Market Day

**BARKER:** So where were you actually sitting out there?

**INMAN:** The first day they had us on the trailer, we were right in front of that Association Building—the glass building. We were right in front of there. We had to tap in with the water, the generator line. So it kind of looked like this carnival attraction thing. A lot of customers that remember shopping with us discovered that we were outside, so it was able to keep us going for a little while. Once we got moved around a few times we were stationary for about a couple of months in one spot. We used to sit next to the guy that did the flowers outside, I remember Carlton, he passed away. We used to sit kind of about two spaces from him. So we would always, you know, get in on the weekend action. We started to learn the about the people outside.

**BARKER:** Okay

**INMAN:** Didn't really know a lot of them before. Once that happened then the Market—the temporary opened.

**BARKER:** How did you handle the holidays when you were out there?

**INMAN:** Well we didn't really have the holiday. We had Fourth of July for the people that took a chance to come down. Of course we didn't have phones—we didn't have our business phone. People that took a chance to come down to found out what was going on were able to get some things. So the only big holiday was, I think Fourth of July and then we moved into the temporary structure, I think it was Labor Day. I'm not sure, I think it was around September we moved in there. So we were able to start to pick business right up. We left off, started taking turkey orders within a couple of months of being in the new building.

**BARKER:** So what was the stand like in the temporary building?

**INMAN:** Kind of set up exactly the same way. They set it up exactly the same way. There were a lot of mishandling of spaces because of the way the building was made.

**BARKER:** What do you mean?

**INMAN:** They had a temporary structure. They had water pipes and things that were built into the building which took away some of your space.

**BARKER:** Oh

**INMAN:** Like now, we have about the same square footage but the way we had to shift things around to get it to fit in. So for the most part, you were still able to conduct business the same way but some of the

merchants needed more room. We've always kind of had the same little square that we could work with. Set up almost exactly the same way

**BARKER:** Did you have coolers to work with?

**INMAN:** Oh yes, full size. Matter of fact, the only things that we did not bring from the temporary were the walk-ins. They gave us all brand-new walk-ins. Again, in this original building. All of the display cases came over, they moved all of those things over. So, miraculously, they did all of that without destroying them. They had to move them over with these forklifts, one by one. That took several weeks to get that done.

**BARKER:** This is from the temporary building to the permanent building?

**INMAN:** Right, all those things that you see, those are from the temporary, all the machinery except for the walk-in boxes, these are all new ones that they erected.

**BARKER:** So when you were in the trailer, you mentioned you had to have ice.

**INMAN:** Right, we would buy those bags, like you get those 40 pound bags of ice to kind of keep the chicken cold, but we had like these sliding door beverage cases that we would put trays of iced chicken in there. Just kind of pull it out and work from that. Basically because we had been doing it so long, anybody else trying to do that would—it wouldn't work. But we knew how to work. It was kind of chaotic but, we pulled it out.

**BARKER:** What was your interaction like with the D.C. Government at the time? I know when I talked to Leon he was talking about the Mayor especially. Did you feel a kind of connection with the government?

**INMAN:** They kind of jumped right out there. Unlike, I've seen them do—we've never seen them do that before, they kind of jumped right out and extended their hands. They had several layers of people that were working with us to get us started. We had to get things operational, like you business licenses, things. So they kind of waived a lot of things to get us going as fast as they could. We didn't have to wait in any lines. We'd go down to the D.C. Department and they'd just kind of—our names were on the list. Get you guys going, get these guys going setting up. So with that part, they kind of worked very fast. There were a few things that we really didn't have a lot of control of as far as the equipment, what we really wanted, but they were able to stick those things in place.

**BARKER:** What were you missing?



**INMAN:** We had everything that we needed, it's just that the type of equipment. Sometimes it did not work. We ordered such and such piece of equipment and it comes in as a refrigerator instead of a freezer. So we had to wait, and send that one back. Sometimes we wanted—the two of the displays that we had, one was too long, you couldn't get into the stand. They built this thing in and we had literally a foot to walk through to get in. I said, "how are we going to get deliveries in here?" So we had to get someone back, get a shorter one. We had to do with the space that we had in the temporary, but as we moved over here the spacing is a little bit different. So we had things that actually fit in better.

**BARKER:** So you were putting your orders through the EMCAC [Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee], or through the government, how was that working?

**INMAN:** They kind of sat us down one by one. We had these appointment that we would sit down. We had an equipment guy.

**BARKER:** Who were you talking to?

**INMAN:** I think the guy was from American Energy.

**BARKER:** Hmm

**INMAN:** And he supplied uh ...

**BARKER:** And was the city bringing him in?

**INMAN:** Right

**BARKER:** Okay.

**INMAN:** They kind of set him in and they did this whole production. You would go in and sit down with the list of things we needed. You had to write down what we lost and to the specs that we knew best. Thank God that the city had already did that part. They kind of came in and took specs of what we had already before the fire. So they kind of knew what we had, and what we needed again. So we just went through a checklist and got things done as fast as they could. Everything that needed came in for us. A lot of the merchants they had a lot more serious issues to deal with. Say for instance the carry-out. They couldn't really operate the first weekend that we opened.

**BARKER:** The carry-out?

**INMAN:** The Market Lunch.

**BARKER:** Oh, right yeah.

**INMAN:** They had more serious things to deal with, the gas lines and some of his equipment wasn't in place, couldn't operate right away. So he didn't open with us that same weekend. That's about it.

**BARKER:** Was there ever a question that the Market wouldn't be coming back the way it was? Was there a worry about the other merchants?

**INMAN:** Well yeah, everybody opened at the same time, but we're just kind of like in doubt. Will this—because we'd been closed so long. Will this pick up again? Will this get back the way it used to be? The first thing I remember was when we were about to open those doors, when the Mayor [Adrian Fenty] walks through. We could see the people outside, it looked like a zombie movie. The streets were completely covered with people waiting to get into what they did to this market. So that kind of like, "Wow the people are back." Then as business goes on you go into the holiday. Thank God that we opened it during that time of year. I don't know if the Market would have survived if it was in the height of the summer, because people buy but they don't, you know, with the Market being closed the way it was, this was close to the holidays coming up, so people knew that, "Let's give it a try, let's see if it's anything like the way it used to be."

**BARKER:** So what were those first few weeks in the, the re-opened Market like?

**INMAN:** Oh, it was non-stop. It was hectic. A lot of people, you know, welcoming you back in, basically. So it was, I don't know, it felt like weirdly it felt like stardom. You felt like you were some type of, who were you? Who were we? People are coming to see us, and giving hugs and, "Welcome back, glad you guys are back here. I'm glad you guys are back," you know. "Glad that everyone was able to get back in the Market." Because there was this question about, "Are they going to let new merchants come in, are they going to add more merchants?" But they kept every single one of us in, only us.

**BARKER:** Did you, you mentioned old customers coming back, did you sort of connect with new people over that, that week too?

**INMAN:** Yes. You do, we met a lot of new people. A lot of the same people that don't come through that often, a lot of people had been coming in, and they didn't frequent the Market. It was strange to see people that hadn't been there in about a month, or a couple of months. The timing for when we had the fire, they remembered the Market as it was, and some of the people that checked back in, because they didn't frequent the Market as often had no idea there was a fire. Strange enough, a lot of people were like, "I've been away for a while." One lady told us that she read about the Market fire all the way in—there was a lady in California, there was another lady over in Europe. She tells her neighbor which lives on the Hill, "Oh my God I heard about the Market fire." She goes, "What do you mean?" She had no idea and

she lived right within seven or eight blocks of the Market, and had no idea there was a fire. So her friend is telling her across the country that there was a fire [laughs].

**BARKER:** That's, that's a following right there!

**INMAN:** Yeah it's a big following.

**BARKER:** So, as we get out of 2000—when did the Market re-open, it was in—a couple of years after the fire wasn't it? Two years?

**INMAN:** The temporary building opened that same year. The fire was in April we opened up the same year, I think in September. We stayed in that, I believe it was almost two years in that temporary building. I think it was in the end of 2007 or 8, I believe. [Eastern Market reopened on June 26, 2009.]

**BARKER:** Yeah.

**INMAN:** Because we did, I remember, we did two total turkey seasons in there. So we were able to do that twice in that building, and then once we were like, "Okay, God, how are we going to move all this stuff, all this equipment across the street and conduct business?" I said, "We're going to be shut down again!"

**BARKER:** Right.

**INMAN:** It's like the same thing all over again. But that only took a couple of weeks actually.

**BARKER:** So who was doing the moving. Was it the city?

**INMAN:** The city hired, yeah, the city hired a bunch of contractors to come in. Some of the same guys that—I talked to some of the young guys that erected those coolers. There were about three or four guys that had a crew and they were responsible for assembling all of those walk-in boxes. Can you imagine all those walk-in boxes, putting them together, making sure they run? So they had quite a task to do. These were like the same guys that helped re-erect the newer ones in the permanent structure. Yeah, the move was—that move was not as painful as seeing things destroyed, but it was still exhausting because right after that we were going to go right into the new season again. So the timing was good that they moved it right before the holidays got started.

**BARKER:** Who was paying for all these moves and this equipment?

**INMAN:** The city, the city paid for everything.

**BARKER:** Oh.

**INMAN:** The city paid for everything. Talk about quite a bit of money used to erect the building itself, and what the cost of the equipment that went into it. I forget the numbers but it was pretty high. It was pretty high. Pretty high and with all the new things they did to this building. So you're talking about a continuation of improvements and things. It's a whole lot—what was done, what was needed to be done. The fact that they squeezed those things in, like the air conditioning and the—you know, to make it cleaner. So it was kind of like a good thing that it happened. Kind of a good thing it happened.

**BARKER:** So when you look at the Market pre-fire, I mean you look at where the Market's going now. What do you see changing?

**INMAN:** Other than the way, the neighborhood kind of, the people stayed but the neighborhood slightly changes, the way that we do business is the same. People come in and out. It's the way they structuring the outside now that has changed dramatically. Like on the weekends, we're used to having the streets open. So now that the street is continually closed since the fire, they kept that street closed. So it's more like an outdoor festival at all times. You used to be able to drive through on the front of the building on Saturdays and Sundays.

**BARKER:** Has that helped you or hurt you?

**INMAN:** Some of us will say it's kind of helped and hurt. It keeps it stationary more, it keeps more traffic—keeps more walk-through. But some of us believe that closing that street affects our drive-through traffic, because a lot of people drive. We get a lot of customers that buy a lot of heavy hit items. You really—it's hard to park on the weekends. You've got some of the rear parking, but then you've got—you know you've got people that have loads and loads of stuff they've got to buy, and so they have to walk quite a distance now to get in. A lot of time, it takes about an hour to get in on the weekends, if you're lucky.

**BARKER:** You mentioned your wife. Does she help out at the stand?

**INMAN:** Oh, she's the main part of that business, when I can kind of hand the phone to her now. When we first met, she's kind of like, "Wow this is crazy, the way you guys are running all over the place." Literally like chickens with our head cut off. But we're maintaining.

**BARKER:** [laughs] That's a good metaphor.

**INMAN:** Yeah she steps in like the really good wife. She handles whatever it is I need to handle.

**BARKER:** What's her name?

**INMAN:** Myra, Myra Inman. It's kind of hard because it's kind of a guy spot thing. A lot of—we've had some of the figures of the women come in and work with us and try to handle what we do, but we kind of leave it up to our wives to help us. If you're really tough you can stick it in there. We'll let you come in and help us out, but you've got to be able to do everything. You've got to lift boxes. You're going to get wet. You're going to learn to cut chicken. So she can do all those things. Basically anything I can do, I can kind of leave if I need to. She can run the show for a minute.

**BARKER:** Do you see the business staying in the family?

**INMAN:** Oh yeah. Definitely still see that. I don't know about my little sons. I don't know if they'll be the hard working type like that. Generations change. It depends, it depends. We'll always, I think, we'll always have our hands on it. You've got distant relatives with new kids all the time, so as long as I'm able to be able to work it will still be part of this family.

**BARKER:** Do you bring your kids in the Market?

**INMAN:** They do. They come in. One older—oldest one, we used to pick him up from school we used to ...

**BARKER:** What's his name?

**INMAN:** Rommel.

**BARKER:** Rommel?

**INMAN:** Rommel's the oldest, he's nine. We would get him picked up from school. We used to go to the Holy Redeemer Catholic School. I had a friend of ours that would—he would also make rounds to pick up some chickens sometimes if I needed to pick something extra up. He would pick my son up and bring him into the Market after school, and he would kind of hang out there with me. He would do the same thing, he'd run around to Calomiris, he would get something to eat. Get some cheese from Jack's stand. Go to the bakery. Yeah, it became like his after school thing. It kind of starts itself right over again whether or not we want it to, it does it anyway. It happens.

**BARKER:** Are your kids—are there other kids from the Market that your kids are playing with like you were when you were ...

**INMAN:** A couple, yes. A matter a fact, one in particular next door Flora, she's the worker for the Calomirises. She has a little daughter. Sometimes they have other friends that come over and they stay with her for a day until her mother-in-law, I guess can pick the kids up. She'll have them with her for a

few hours once in a while. Some of the other merchants don't really bring their kids around as much as we did. A lot of them I guess are too busy, it's really a busy, busy thing now. We were more relaxed back in the day, but now it's like you're handling more, you're doing more. You've got to watch your kids now. Everybody kind of still gets along the same exact way, it's just in a different way, it's more high-tech. Kids are there but they're not, you don't even know they exist, because they're in the corner playing a game or, you know. They're not really into the Market they way we used to do it.

**BARKER:** So do you —do you think you guys are, as far as the business, that as you head into the future here, you feeling pretty good about it?

**INMAN:** Yeah, I feel pretty good about it. We make it happen, like you say, you get to this time of year and it, the stomach is more butterflies, you're like, "Oh God, here it is, here it goes." But we do it every year, and it becomes more aggressive, or it becomes more—as we go each year we try to make it easier. More likely, just like giving yourself a break, getting a rest, making sure that everybody is in line, we're all working together. Usually under that kind of pressure, you're going to have some kind of little rough time once in a while. Working those kind of hours it gets to you. Going home in the evenings, that's the one thing. Trying to be a dad and a good husband, it's trying to be able to stay awake I guess. Trying to get the occasional movie in, and cook a little dinner, sit with the family, watch the kids do a little homework. It's a busy life, you're running non-stop. Before you know it's like phew! Everybody's grown up.

**BARKER:** Alright we've got about an hour and 24 minutes here.

**INMAN:** Wow, cool!

**BARKER:** Is there anything, I know you have to get back, is there anything that you'd like to add? Is there anything you think I forgot to ask?

**INMAN:** Let's see ... Don't know, we kind of hit everything about football. I mean being in that Market is actually changed the way I think I might have turned out ...

**BARKER:** What do you mean?

**INMAN:** ... as a young man being very, very shy. I would never have thought about sitting here talking. I'm very more open now to just sitting and talking in general now, I kind of get that from Dad. Dad can talk.

**BARKER:** I've seen his interview.

**INMAN:** Yeah, he can kind of like go. So I kind of get that from him. So I apply that to everything I do. I need to talk to my son, or speaking to my wife. It's kind of calmed me. I used to be really, really shy, closed kid. So as I worked with my Dad, I think it's important that we attach ourselves to something, and that's my attachment is my relationship with my Dad. We could have this big argument one minute, and then we're right back into the work the next minute. The next day it's like it never happened. You've got to keep going, you've got to conduct business.

**BARKER:** So it keeps you together?

**INMAN:** It does. It keeps us together. Just being around, I'm kind of more—I guess he's more like of a friend. I can reveal anything to him, no matter what it is, I could talk to him about. Being able to use that as my tool to be—to break out of that shell as I used to be in as a kid.

**BARKER:** Do you have that kind of relationship with the other people you're working with, or—I mean, your brother for instance?

**INMAN:** Oh yes, he's a little more tightly wound than I am, he doesn't speak a lot. So I don't really know what's going on. Whatever we bring from home, we release there. That's our business, but it's also kind of a therapy. If you don't bring it up, you don't speak about it, no matter what it is, it's going to eat you alive. We kind of use that as a medium to get through the day. I try not to bring anything from work home. So whatever my home things—because when I get home, totally chill. I don't talk a bit about the Market basically except for, something funny happens. Something serious? No. I'll get back to it, when I get back to it tomorrow. So it's kind of calmed me down, to get me dealing with life a lot better. If can work in that Market, and you can do that day to day, you can do *anything*. You can work any other job, we get kids to see, “look, if you can do this, trust me, you're going to have good scores out there. You'll be able to handle any other kind of job. Nothing's going to be harder than doing this, except for getting on a hot roof on a construction site. Doing this kind of work, you're doing every angle working with people, talking with them. You have to be able to project yourself.” A lot of kids are very shy when they first get there, they don't speak. You learn a little etiquette about, “thank you.” A lot of kids don't say that, they don't—they just kind of look at you. So you learn to be a little more personable with people in that place. It makes you get like that.

**BARKER:** I can't think of a better way to end it than there.

**INMAN:** Yeah

**BARKER:** Mel Inman, Jr. thank you so much for being here

**INMAN:** Thank you, Peter

END OF INTERVIEW