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Hill, Elighu Eldrid

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Interviewee: Eldred Hill

Interviewers: Mark Naison, Ricardo Soto-Lopez, Dana Driskell

Date: December 13th, 2010

Mark Naison (MN): Hello, today is December 13th 2010 and we are doing an interview with the Bronx African-American History Project at Fordham University. Today we are interviewing Eldred Hill, a former lieutenant in the New York City Fire Department, a long time resident of Harlem and the Bronx. Joining us in the interview are Dana Driskell and Ricardo Soto-Lopez. Mr. Hill, could you please spell your name for us and give you, us your date of birth.

Eldred Hill (EH): Well, the Bible spells my first name E-L-I-H-U. Found in Job, right. When I got my questionnaire from the Federal Government it said first name, middle initial, last name. At that point I had never seen my first name spelled like I spelled it. Now why I stuck to G and – I don't know, but I enjoyed having it there because nobody else spells it that way. And the Eldred I was always called Eldred.

MN: Now what's your date of birth?

EH: 7/12/28

MN: Now we always begin our interviews for the Bronx African American History Project to – asking people so – to tell about their family history, so tell us a little bit about your parents and how they came to the United States.

EH: My mother left her home at age 16 and went to Venezuela to work.

Dana Driskell (DD): And her name was?

EH: Victoria, Victoria Ellis.

MN: And she was from the island of?

EH: St. Martin. The Dutch half.

MN: Of St. Martins.

EH: Now I have French family too. They were born and grew up on the French side of St.

Martins. Anyway and from Venezuela she came to the United States. My father came from St.

Kitts and was a sailor. And jumped ship [Laughs] and spent a good while in – before going back and taking care of business.

Ricardo Soto-Lopez (RS): He jumped ship where Mr. Hill?

EH: In America.

RS: In the United States.

EH: I don't know what year though, I don't know what year. Anyway, they met, married and –

MN: Did they meet in Harlem?

EH: Yes, they met in Harlem. Well, the islanders had a tendency to group together.

MN: Now, did they belong to a particular church?

EH: Yes.

MN: Which one?

EH: Church of the Crucifixion. It was called Father Edmead's and it was known in Harlem. It was a little tiny church on 140th street. And Sunday school and everything, my mother could watch from the stoop for us to go to church.

MN: Now was it a predominantly Caribbean congregation?

EH: Oh yes.

MN: It was mostly people from the West Indies?

EH: From the West Indies.

MN: The Church of the Crucifixion.

EH: Father Edmead was too by the way.

MN: Ok, now...

EH: It was Episcopal.

MN: Episcopal! It was an Episcopal church which is – that makes sense. What sort of work did your father do?

EH: He was a stationary engineer, elevator operator, he had a problem with alcohol but, leave one job, find another [Laughs]. Until alcohol took him down, and it eventually did. Anyway, growing up, most of it was 140th street and then my mother and father separated and when they got back together again was in 141st street.

MN: And what we're the cross streets, between where and where?

EH: Between Lennox and 5th.

MN: Between – so you're on the eastern section of Harlem. Now was this before that apartment complex was built, River?

EH: That's where I live. [Laughs]. The, I can't remember the name now.

DD: Riverton?

MN: Riverton!

EH: Oh no, this was after – Riverton – there was a newer one. This was after Riverton because I was put up by ---

MN: Now what elementary school did you go to?

EH: PS5

MN: And what street was that located on?

EH: That's on St. Nicholas Avenue and 139th, 138th or 139th?

MN: So that's a decent walk?

EH: It was a good walk. Well I also moved during the separation of my mother and father to 101st, I mean 141st street between 7th and 8th.

RS: So, did you have siblings, how many siblings?

EH: I had a brother and a sister, the sister was the oldest, my brother was in the middle and I'm the baby and only one left.

MN: Now what was Harlem like during the depression?

EH: You want to know what I experienced or what I know about it?

RS: A little of both.

MN: A little of both, yes.

EH: The, what do they call it, the Harlem Renaissance, the poet, Langston Hughes. I just knew I wasn't going to remember Langston Hughes' name. Down in Harlem he taught at 139, PS 139 which I went to and he was my brother's French teacher, I took Spanish [Laughs]. So in Harlem at that time, 138th Street, Strivers Row was doctors and they lived there. 409 and 155th street at the bridge, are you aware of the bridge going over to the Yankee Stadium?

MN: Yes.

EH: I never know what the name is. Anyway, 409 was, I don't know how many stories but it was – at that time the tallest building – and Duke Ellington and –

MN: That was Sugar Hill up there?

EH: Yes, right, ok. That really started Sugar Hill. Because that was – 555 is 100—

DD: 160th

EH: Is that 160th?

DD: 160th, right.

EH: Be careful, not 155th, is that 155th to the bridge.

[Crosstalk]

MN: Now, so you were aware of all – growing up—of all these famous people in your neighborhood?

EH: Well, [inaudible] and I knew where Duke and those – I was – when I lived on 145th street I was around the corner from the Cotton Club. Ok, the Cotton Club used to give out Christmas baskets. Blacks couldn't go in the Cotton Club. Dutch Strokes kept them out. He owned it. But Duke I think was the first band, house band and I think Cam Calloway followed him. And I was in the Cotton Club two or three times, each time to go and get a Christmas basket. Of course I looked around but it was dark, the lights weren't on. The Cotton Club moved out of town but there was a theater that the Cotton Club was above called the Douglas Theater. That became the Golden Gate Ballroom, right. What an interesting thing.

MN: Now what was school like for you, whether, the school, did you get a good education in New York City Public Schools?

EH: Well, James Baldwin and I were in the same class a couple of times. Brock Peters, you don't know who he is.

DD: Great actor.

EH: You don't know who he is.

DD: I know who he is. He's a great movie – stage actor.

EH: Yes, yes. I remember, as a fireman, we had the 48th street Theater. Every performance in a theater has to have a fireman on duty and it's like a detail. So I was in Brooklyn, working out of 212 Engine, but we had that theater, don't ask me why but when you signed in at 4 Truck, Hook and Ladder 4 on 8th avenue and 48th street, one of – in the 40's though.

DD: Let's try to focus on the family then we are going to go to the Fire Department [Crosstalk]
Secondary School. What high school did you go to?

EH: Oh, DeWitt Clinton.

DD: Up here in the Bronx.

EH: Up here in the Bronx. Very good high school, I thought it served me well. Fortunately, my brother was ahead of me, of course. And coming from where we came from, play was what you did all day. And he was out there playing until I got there, then he got scared and he got in there. He was a much better student, he's the student, you know, he – study. He knew how to study and –

RS: Now what years did you go to DeWitt Clinton. When did you start at DeWitt Clinton?

EH: '30 something.

DD: And your graduating class, do you remember?

EH: 40—when did I go to the school?

RS: So out of High School –

MN: You went directly into the military?

EH: Yes, from high school directly into the military.

RS: You were drafted into the US Army?

EH: Yes, I think I was out of High School, 7-months, 8-months before –

RS: World War II?

EH: World War II. Do you – Channel 13 on Sundays, Open Mind, he went to school with me.

DD: The moderator?

EH: The moderator.

RS: At Clinton?

EH: Yes, at Clinton. In fact, he graduated with me, he's in my yearbook.

MN: Now when you went into the military did you end up going overseas?

EH: Well, I went overseas to England, across the channel to France, to Holland. I was never bivouacked in Germany.

MN: Were you in combat?

EH: No. The, you know there was a problem. You know who broke up my outfit was Adam Clayton Powell, screaming for us to fight.

CC: And what was your specialty?

EH: I was in the, I was drafted into the Tank Destroyer, 659th Tank Destroyer outfit. I don't know if you've seen them. It's a panther with a tank in its mouth. We were bad.

[Laughter]

EH: Anyway, Powell was back here screaming and I was in France at the time, next thing I know they broke up the Tank Destroyer outfits and you became a trucking company. This became such and such a trucking company. So we ended up on the Red Ball express. You heard of it?

DD: Absolutely.

EH: Ok, I thought you were too young [Laughs]. And – do I have to go back? What else do you want to know about?

DD: How much – just the music, what did you do for recreation in High School as a young guy

[Crosstalk]

DD: Who were your singers?

EH: The Yellow Lantern. There was over on Lennox Avenue, one flight up, the Yellow Lantern, ok. And we would go up there and feed the jukebox and dance. We found out that in the kitchen were adults buying booze.

DD: Now you were what age at this time?

EH: 15, 16.

DD: And which were the artists that you would put in when you were picking the tunes, who would you pick, who were your favorite artists off of the jukebox.

EH: In those days, Richie Robinson.

DD: The actor?

EH: The actor.

MN: He sang?

DD: No, the music, what kind of music did you play?

EH: Oh, the music. Ok, Fate Tarrow, you ever heard of him?

DD: Not familiar.

EH: I thought I'd hit you with him. Andy Kirk, Andy's Clouds of Joy. And Fate Tarrow was the singer. And he sang, oh I guess he must have had 4 or 5 hits in a row, love songs.

DD: This was and orchestra right?

EH: Andy Kirk was the orchestra, Fate Tarrow was the vocalist, the male vocalist. I don't think Andy Kirk had a female vocalist. And I know it was Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy.

MN: Now what made you want to enter the Fire Department because today this is, you know, an occupation that African-American –

EH: Who said I wanted to enter the Fire Department. [Crosstalk] You came out of the service and you took every exam, you were looking for a job. Post Office. My brother wanted to be a fireman. Police department called him, ok. So the one that called you was the one you took. I wanted to be a policeman. We had a black mounted policeman. Oh! I didn't mention the Savoy Ballroom. I hung out on 140th, you know the two blocks I told about, 140th and 141st, the Savoy was on Lennox Avenue from 140th to 141st, ok, so I was on either side of the – when I lived 141st street the Savoy Ballroom put me to sleep. Do you know what the Savoy Ballroom was?

MN: Very famous place. It was closed down eventually.

EH: Yes, but all the bands...

MN: All the bands, yes

EH: ... Benny Goodman.

MN: The Autobiography of Malcolm X mentions the Savoy Ballroom.

EH: Oh yes.

DD: And who was your favorite – who would you go out and pay to see at Savoy Ballroom?

EH: Jimmy Lunceford

DD: Jimmy Lunceford

EH: The big argument was who was the best Jimmy Lunceford or Duke. Early teenage, Jimmy, later teenage, Duke. It was like a growth, ok. The same with Ella Fitzgerald to Sarah Vaughn ok. Used to fight about it, Ella was better than Sarah and then there was a transition as you got older, Sarah, you saw more in Sarah than you did in Ella. Thanks for the questions, because, you know I will miss a lot unless you guys ask questions.

MN: So you ended up going into the Fire Department because that was – you took civil service tests and –

EH: Right, and the Fire Department called me first.

MN: Yes, now this is a very interesting question, why did you decide to pursue civil service rather than private enterprise.

DD: Good job.

MN: I know the answer, but I like still asking it.

EH: No, it was one of the better jobs, work was available.

MN: In other words, if you were –

EH: I didn't have a profession so –

MN: Yes, but if – was this part of what a generation of bright African-American's did. They took civil service tests, because they weren't – you couldn't determine it on the basis of race.

EH: At City College, before my brother went into the service, there was a two year program to prepare you for Fire and Police Department.

MN: At City College?

EH: At City College!

MN: Now did you end up going to City College?

EH: No. I went right into the service and when I came out I went into the Fire Department so all the extra education I got was in the Fire Department, the Fire College and studying for the exam at Delantey, the institute and all of that. And then at Columbia they had kicked, and I knew this guy's name, he taught administration and management to me.

MN: Now did you have to pass a lot of difficult physical tests to get into the Fire Department?

EH: Yes.

MN: What were some of the things you had to do?

EH: Press 80-80, left and right hand, 60 with the old abs.

MN: 60 sit-ups?

EH: Yes, run a mile. Ok, that was the first exam I think. When I took the Police exam, you had to run – No, Fire Department was you had to – the Police Department you ran a mile. The other one you ran with –

DD: A dummy.

EH: A dummy on your shoulder.

MN: Up, up – did you climb?

EH: No, you ran around the track.

MN: With a dummy on your shoulder.

EH : A dummy on your shoulder.

DD: And what year, '47, '46, do you remember when you started?

EH: I, well, I entered the Fire Department in '47.

DD: In '47.

MN: Now were you married at the time?

EH: Not when I went into the job but I was a fireman when I got married.

MN: Were you still living in Harlem when you joined the Fire Department.

EH: Yes.

MN: So, when did you meet your wife? What year?

EH: When I came out of the service I went to work for the VA. That was the job that was readily available.

RS: Went to work for where?

MN: The Veterans Administration.

EH: Veterans Administration.

MN: As a clerk?

EH: Yes, and we were pushing my wife and her groups out.

DD: So this is, the guys are back and the ladies got to go back home.

MN: So you were literally pushing them out of their jobs.

EH: That was actually the fact. And most of them were supervisors too. Because by pushing them out you also got an opportunity to go up.

MN: Ok, so you, you were responsible for her losing her job and she married you.

EH: No, well [Laughter] she married me before she lost her job. But it might have been in the back of my mind.

RS: Just, could you talk a little about your wife's background.

Eh: My wife's background. Maybe I could start by telling you what my brother used to say about me. That I went up on Sugar Hill to find a wife.

DD: Good place to look.

EH: You might, I could look at his face but he doesn't understand.

MN: I know what you're talking about.

EH: They were upper class.

MN: And does that also mean lighter skinned as well?

EH: Oh yes it did.

[Crosstalk]

EH: Anyway, and I met here at work and...

MN: Took her job.

EH: [Laughs]...and she lived 161st street and –

[Crosstalk]

MN: No, it would have to be closer to Broadway because Lennox doesn't go up that far, Lennox ends at 140—

[Crosstalk]

MN: Now, ok, she was in the 160's, not too far from Columbia Presbyterian Hospital.

EH: Yes.

MN: Now, now was her family originally from the South or the West Indies?

EH: They [inaudible]

MN: What?

EH: She was half and half.

MN: Half and half?

EH: Her Mother's family came from Charleston, her father's family came from St. Kitts.

MN: Now how did they, the parents feel about you? They were ok with you?

EH: Oh yes. And oh, her Grandmother was alive and a very active lady, her mother, grandmother and her father is, I'm July 12th, he's July 15th, he was a ballplayer and bowler. He was the first person in the General American Bowling League to bowl 300.

MN: That's good even now.

[Laughter]

EH: And made the General American front page.

MN: Now I want to ask you a little question about politics. Was there any political activism in your family background? Any people who were in the Garvey movement or the communist party or anything like that?

EH: No, no, there was no politics. Talk of the older guys, you know my father, my uncle, and my uncle lived on the other side of Lennox Avenue, so he was a strong fixture in our lives. And especially during the separations.

MN: So you didn't go to demonstrations or rallies or marches growing up?

EH: No, wasn't the type. I was always a laid back sort of guy.

MN: Ok so you're getting --

RS: So the elders are talking, they're talking the politics. Who were the activists that they admired the most or that they disliked the most?

EH: Marcus Garvey was, was the big.

MN: What about Powell, did they like Powell?

EH: Yes, when he came out and – oh, one this is like one incident, when he was on the bus boycott, a close friend of mine, they attacked the bus and the close friend who wasn't too bright, punched the glass, the window and of course he almost lost his fingers [Laughs].

MN: Did anybody mention Ben Davis, was that a name –

EH: We were aware of Ben Davis.

DD: He was –

MN: He was a city councilman, who replaced Powell in the City Council. Now when did you become aware that people were moving to the Bronx. When did the Bronx come on your radar screen.

EH: Well they been, they had been moving to the Bronx. I guess my early teens.

MN: So even in the late 30's there were people moving to the Bronx?

EH: Oh yes, yes. These two brothers, Reggie and Vinnie Julius. Reggie died about a year ago and that tore me up because we used to talk on the phone all the time and he died and I didn't know it, nobody called me and I know his brother who retired to Florida must have come up.

MN: Now you mentioned that you lived near a bridge that went to the Bronx.

EH: Yes, the 135th Street Bridge.

MN: Ok, so when you went to the Bronx, you'd walk across the bridge, what would you do in the Bronx, were there people you visited?

EH: No, we went across --

[Crosstalk]

EH: Trying to find out what was over there.

MN: Oh, so yeah, just to figure out what –

EH: And what was over was mostly industry.

MN: Industry, so it was an industrial district.

DD: So you were coming over into Monthaven and that are of the West Bronx.

EH: More the South Bronx.

MN: The South Bronx, right.

EH: You know where the Yankee Stadium is?

MN: Yes.

EH: Stay towards the river and come down.

RS: Right, that's the Lincoln Avenue, it was an Italian enclave back then.

MN: Now when did you start hearing, you know, for the first time going to what I guess you'd call Maurisania. You know, the area between Boston and Prospect.

EH: The Chief of the 6th Division, I'm working now in 41 Engine, which is now Squad 41, I started to wear my Sweatshirt [inaudible]

MN: Right, now where is that located? Where is the station house?

EH: 150th street off Cortland Avenue.

MN: Ok, see, you would start working at a fire house—

EH: Can you picture where Cortland is?

MN: I know exactly where Cortland and 150th is. I know it's, because its right near the 149th street, that business district.

[Crosstalk]

MN: Ok, so that was your first posting?

EH: No I was working in Brooklyn.

MN: You were in Brooklyn first.

EH: With the Captain Queeg of the Fire Department.

[Laughter]

EH: I knew you guys would understand Captain Queeg.

MN: So this guy was a piece of work?

EH: Captain Love.

MN: Captain Love?

EH: That was his name.

MN: Now what neighborhood was this in?

EH: This was on Kent avenue, you know where Domino's, not too far from —

MN: I know where that is because its near the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

EH: Yes, not too far from that.

MN: Near Williamsburg, you know Bushwick.

EH: Yes, Kent Avenue, if this was on White Avenue, Kent Avenue was right next to the river.

MN: I know exactly where it is.

DD: And that was your first, when you first started out as a fireman?

MN: Now, did Captain Queeg try to get you to quit, did he try to make your life so miserable –

EH: No, he made everybody's

[Laughter]

EH: This wasn't racism by the way, I want –

MN: This was just being a bastard.

EH: Oh man, he loved to kick butt. And, trying to get – this was before I got here, in trying to get him to take it easy on the firefighters they sent his brother, when his brother came on board, they sent his brother to the company.

DD: And this would have been, '48, '49 or what are we talking about?

EH: The brother was there before I got there.

DD: But you started there in –

EH: Like '47.

MN: This was your first posting right out of the training center?

EH: Yes. And –

MN: Did they know what they were sending you to?

EH: Of course they knew [Laughs]. The reputation of this guy was throughout the whole department.

RS: But what kind of neighborhood was that, was it an Italian neighborhood, was it –

EH : It was a Polish neighborhood.

MN: It was Polish at that time, ok.

EH: A little down, this was north east and down south Second was Italian.

MN: So its Bushwick, Williamsburg kind of, yes.

EH: Don't say Bushwick. Williamsburg and –

RS: [inaudible] By Greenpoint and that area?

ES: Green – thank you. Greenpoint and that Williams—

DD: Yes, Greenpoint, that was the Polish area, right.

RS: The Gowanus Canal and that whole mess over there. Newtown Beach.

MN: Newtown yes.

EH: But even with the captain, the neighborhood, the people were good. The firefighters, we were a unit.

MN: What percentage of the, of that fire house was African-American? You?

EH: Thank you.

[Laughter]

DD: That's it.

EH: But I give you another joke. When I got promoted, I didn't go to 41 until I got promoted. And they, when they assigned me there, they assigned me to 41 Engine. One brother was there, Lieutenant.

[Laughter]

EH: So they had two blacks, both Lieutenants, both officers, which would be unusual

MN: On Cortland Avenue.

EH: On Cortland Ave. Which would have been unusual too.

MN: Wow. Now was the department as Irish dominated then as it is today?

EH: Oh yes. The Italians had started coming in, ok. But it was, all – I don't know if you know that the police department, when the Irish started the Irish migration, I'm at the age where I forget words. They came over and they had a lot of hooligans. Ok, now number one, the artisans who built New Amsterdam were black, ok.

MN: Fascinating, yeah.

EH: And the Irish hooligans came over and attacked the blacks and there was –

DD: A lot of those jobs. They wanted those jobs.

EH: Now. And they just about got them and you will hear Congressman Crowley today talk about, "we built New York."

DD: Crowley.

EH: He's a congressman.

EH: Yes, I know him, yes we know him.

RS: From the Bronx.

EH: Yes, Queens and the Bronx.

EH: Over the bodies of black folk.

DD: They say the same thing with the longshoremen.

EH: And they didn't know that there was a key community down in lower Manhattan until they found a burial ground.

RS: We were there, remember that?

EH: But there –And I know through my wife's grandmother, that her first New York city was [inaudible]. Then up to 96th, 99th.

RS: Nobody asked you if you left the military with a rank? Any particular rank?

EH: No, I made PFC and they took it from me. My first court marshal.

DD: Your first?

EH: Yes, my first, my first court marshal, the first thing they announced was I would be reduced to private. My mind jumped open; I had forgotten I was a PFC.

[Laughter]

EH: That's how important it was.

[Crosstalk, Laughter]

RS: What'd you get in trouble for?

EH: Oh, all kinds of foolishness. I was never in trouble for anything really bad but I had been involved with something, ok, in the Philippines. That –

MN: Philippines? How did you end up in the Philippines?

RS: Yes, nobody –

EH: You didn't take me out of France yet. When I left France they put me on the ship, they went through the canal to the Philippines.

MN: They wanted to get you out of France that badly? They had to send you to –

EH: They shipped me the furthest they was – in a Muslim area, I met my best friend that I hung out with in the street. Oh there must have been three or four of us. Guys that we knew back here. And so I had friends on the ship behind me and they got to New York before I did.

MN: Now did you get to –

EH: I went through the canal and they came straight through New York, the ship behind me, straight to New York.

DD: Before we get, leaving Europe. You're in Europe.

MN: Your court marshal.

DD: What was – how were you received; now you're in this all black unit right?

EH: Yes.

DD: And Powell is trying to get you guys into a higher profile. How were you perceived by your white fellows in the Army, by the civilians that you come in contact with? How was your experience in Europe?

EH: Oh, French people loved Americans, period. They didn't care what color they were.

RS: Lots of brothers had already been there.

EH: And the brothers that learned to speak the language because, you know. They made out like bandits. I never learned to speak the language. [Laughs] Anyway, but through Belgium and Holland, everything was beautiful. I guarded German prisoners in Belgium. Ok, one Christmas Eve, if you had seen it, you know, your mouth would drop. German prisoners on one side of a fence, American soldiers, black American soldiers on the other side of the fence singing Christmas carols together, ok. I can never forget that, you know, it, because even then, you know, I realized how unlikely it was, you know. See if you don't want to give me a little boost, I forget everything.

MN: I want to get back to the Fire Department experience, now when were you married? What year?

EH: '46 --

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

EH: -- or '45.

MN: So you're, do you go into the Fire Department married?

EH: In '47, no '48.

MN: You get married—so you're in the Fire Department for a year before you get married.

EH: Before I get married, yes.

MN: Ok, and how much – when you're in the Fire Department is living at home and how much is living in the Fire House.

EH: Ok, while everything was three platoon when I went in, that means 8-4 for a week, 4-12 for a week and 12-8 for a week. Now I was in the 11th division in Brooklyn, at 212 with Captain Queeg when they decided to implement the two platoon system which they had had once before they said. Now, the two platoon system was two days, off for 48, two nights, off for 72 hours. Now a lot of time was home. And in fact, I had a radio program for a while, remind me, you can ask me about that later. But I interviewed my wife for the radio program.

DD: This is before she was your wife?

EH: No, she was my wife. [Inaudible] We had kids. Anyway, she, I asked her about – I had a friend Dudley Glass who became a deputy assistant chief, and you know I told you that you have to study for that. And I asked her on the program was she upset because – Dudley I think was a

battalion chief at the time and I was still a Lieutenant and she said no, she said you proved you could do it to yourself...

MN: Wait a second, let me see if there's somebody here, oh he's just going to the office.

EH: ...and the help I get at home I don't want to lose. In other words I would rather have you at home helping me than chasing after promotions, being a lazy son of a gun. I loved that, you know, that's why I was still a lieutenant.

MN: Now, what year did you, did you and your wife move to the Bronx.

EH: Early, because –

MN: Did you marry her in Harlem?

EH: In Harlem and was living in a room and trying to get into a project.

MN: Ok, so the goal was to get into a housing project because that was a step up.

EH: That was – well that was where you could find an apartment.

MN: Ok, and where was your first housing project locale.

EH: Sedgewick. They tried to send me to Canarsi and then one of the friends I told you I met going to the Philippines at the marshaling area, he was in Lincoln, you know where Lincoln is.

MN: Lincoln Houses in Harlem.

EH: In Harlem. And he told me I could refuse it if I wanted to. You know, they won't drop me.

DD: They won't drop you off the list, right.

EH: I said ok, that advice.

DD: So you moved to Sedgewick right up above the expressway, the Cross Bronx Expressway?

MN: Now had the Expressway been build at that time?

DD: No, that was before the Expressway.

EH: This was the first – it was considered a middle-income development for veterans. It was only one and two bedroom apartments.

MN: Apartments, so everybody there were veterans and their families?

EH: Yes.

MN: Now, what percentage of those people African-American? Once again, you?

EH: It was a good percentage.

MN: Oh, so it was – there was a sizeable Black group in Sedgewick Houses of the first group moving in. And the other people were Jewish, Italian, Irish, or?

EH: Jewish, Irish, a few Hispanics. I guess the biggest white population was the Jewish population.

MN: Right, was this the early 50's?

EH: Yes.

MN: Ok, now were you happy with your apartment?

EH: Happy with my neighbors, the family beneath us were Cuban Jews I think.

DD: Sephardic Jews I think.

MN: Wow, now was your wife happy in this situation?

EH: Oh sure, very happy. Black, the lady, you know who I'm talking about?

DD: The Chancellor, chancellor woman.

MN: Yes, the new Chancellor, Cathy Black?

EH: She's a – a school she visited the [inaudible] school.

MN: Up in Morris Heights, that was your neighborhood?

EH: My -- both of my kids went to that school.

MN: Went to that school. Wow. One of my tennis partners grew up in that housing project.

EH: Sedgewick?

MN: And, Howie Lippmann. His father, so the name is Lippmann and his father, like owned a store and then started going into mutual funds and became very successful. So I have to ask, what was the name of the building you were in?

EH: I was in –

MN: His father's still alive I'm going to – so what was the building? Sedgewick Houses?

EH: Sedgewick Houses. 140 – It was three numbers, some of them had four numbers.

MN: Right, yes, could you see the river from your house?

EH: No because I faced the –

DD: Did you face the University? Or you faced the --

EH: I faced University.

MN: University Avenue?

EH: But there was a building in the development on the other side, just like Fordham Hill, you drove in, went around a horseshoe and drove out. Same way.

RS: Also, don't you still attend services in that community?

EH: Yes, oh yes. I was getting to that.

MN: Now is this also an Episcopal church?

EH: No, Presbyterian.

MN: So you, which Presbyterian Church?

EH: Featherbed Lane Presbyterian Church.

MN: Featherbed Lane!

DD: [Inaudible] Right down the hill there, from University.

EH: Right.

MN: Wow, Featherbed Lane Presbyterian – that was the church that you and your wife started attending? Was she Presbyterian?

EH: Yes. She was Episcopalian but her grandmother was Presbyterian.

DD: She was tolerant then.

MN: You didn't want to keep your connection with the Episcopal Church?

EH: We tried. The nearest Episcopal Church was across the bridge, into Manhattan to the George Washington Bridge!

MN: So you decided better closer?

EH: And we liked the priest there.

MN: What was his name?

EH: He was Scotch. In fact he became the Riverside – the [inaudible] Riverside.

MN: Right, oh wow. So how many children did you have?

EH: Two.

MN: And were they born after you moved to the projects or before?

EH: Oh, one before, one after. And I've lost, you want to know about that one too? The youngest one I lost to MS and in those days they used to say MS didn't kill you. Any sickness that attacks organs can kill you! Because it can attack the heart, you know. And I don't know whether the doctors did it to make you feel better or to keep you from worrying but I questioned it when they told me it. It attacks organs. But, my wife became an angel. She beats up on me like crazy, she can do anything [Laughs]. [Inaudible] Because I saw what she did for my daughter. OK, she became an angel and when I tell you, she had to go up my daughter's backside to pull the movement out, ok. Without – trying to hurt as little as possible. She had charts like that on the medications, the side effects, I'm telling you, she did a remarkable job.

MN: Now how long did you live in the Sedgewick houses.

EH: A good while.

MN: For ten years, or more than that.

EH: At least ten.

MN: And then what was the next step?

EH: And then, did we buy the house? Yes, I think we bought the house.

RS: Another part of the Bronx?

EH: Yes. We bought the house on just below 167th Street.

MN: And –

RS: Board 3? Community board 3?

EH: No, 4, Board 4.

DD: West Bronx? West Bronx.

MN: So you bought the house in the same neighborhood? In Morris Heights where you went –

EH: Yes, Morris Heights.

DD: That would've been on – do you know what street that was?

EH: 167th, below! South of 167th.

RS: Board 4.

DD: Right, I'm trying to figure out [inaudible]

MN: Was it near Jerome Avenue or is it more up the hill?

EH: Not far from Jerome Avenue.

DD: Was it east of Jerome or west of Jerome?

EH: Oh, it was west of Jerome.

MN: So you – you're in Highbridge.

EH: No, no, no. Highbridge, Ogden Avenue.

DD: Right, over in that area.

MN: Right, so you were over in that area?

DD: You were more down in the valley so to speak.

EH: Yes.

MN: Ok, and was it a two family house?

EH: Three.

MN: Three family house?

EH: I had two grown daughters then.

DD: Ok, that worked, huh?

EH: Didn't work. One went to California and the other one went to Washington [Laughs].

MN: Right, so you bought a three family house and this was what years, in the 60's, the 70's?

EH: Don't ask me that.

MN: Was it a wooden house or a brick house.

RS: That had to be in the late 50's, early 60's right?

EH: I'm trying to remember the street!

MN: Now did you – were you still in the Fire Department when you bought this?

DD: Was it Creston, were you near Creston Avenue?

EH: No, no, no, no. Morris Avenue and there's a Catholic church that I was a few blocks up from. Oh, 167th Street, what was 161st Street?

MN: That's the Yankee Stadium area.

EH: No, no, no, no. The courthouses.

DD: That's the concourse, Gerard, you got [inaudible].

MN: Was the Catholic Church –

EH: No on the other side of...

MN: Concourse.

EH: ...the concourse.

MN: So you were the other side of the concourse. So you weren't too far from Taft High School.

EH: Oh no.

DD: Ok, right.

MN: So you're right there.

EH: Standing in front of my house I could look up and see Taft.

MN: And see Taft. So you were near Christ the King, was that the school? That was on 170th street and concourse.

EH: Yes.

MN: Ok, I had a girlfriend's sister who was in Grant Avenue and 167th Street.

EH: Grant, that's the street!

MN: So you were there, so I was hanging out on your block?

DD: That can be.

MN: And you had a house there?

EH: Yes, 100 yards into Grant, south of 167th.

RS: And that's below Claremont Park?

MN: No, yes. Yes, Claremont is further up. I had another -- my girlfriend had another sister by Claremont. I was there in the 60's all the time.

RS: And that's a predominantly Jewish area.

EH: Where is Tremont? I mean where -- Taft is on --

DD: Taft is on 170th and Tremont is like 178th.

MN: Is further up. This was a Jewish neighborhood becoming Black.

DD: Because I went to school and – at Junior High School 22 which was on 167th and Morris.

EH: 22 was around the corner from me.

DD: Ok, so that would have put you, we can see right here.

MN: Right, and this was a 3 story brick house. Now how many Black families were on the block when you moved – bought the house?

EH: Well the same [inaudible] that I grew up with –

RS: That's on this side, there's Clermont over there, it's in here someplace because this is, this is ward 3.

DD: So it would have been on the other side.

MN: Yes, it would be on this side, your right, yes. No, I know this – look, I was there as much as you were, almost.

DD: College Avenue –

EH: I mean, yes, yes, College Avenue.

DD: Morris Avenue.

MN: I used to hang out – my girlfriend's sister was there, I was there all the time. She was gorgeous my girlfriends sister.

EH: What did you look like as a young man?

MN: I was thinner. And I – people tell me I look a lot the same, but you know. I had a Black girlfriend, I had a very good looking Black girlfriend, so we were pretty visible. But anyway, people probably thought we were Puerto Rican. Because, that was, you know, that was the thing about the Bronx, you couldn't tell who anybody was because of the Latin influence. So I used to say we get off the subway in the Bronx and breathe a sigh of relief, because a Black-White couple in a lot of parts of the city would get a lot of hate looks.

RS: That's how my uncle felt when he was in the South and he married my mother's aunt who is as light skinned as –

EH: Yours.

MN: So you bought the house there in the late 50's or early 60's and how long did you stay in that house? Through the 80's, 90's?

DD: You can get on the internet and, you know, the next interviewee, we have software where you can walk through all of the blocks, all of the streets so that gives you something to do.

MN: Right, Google Maps, right. So you lived in the house for how long, that house?

EH: From there I went to Fordham –

MN: Oval.

EH: Oh, no. Have I been in –

DD: We're off of 167th, how long were you there?

MN: We went from the Sedgewick Houses to 167th street.

EH: Oh we have, oh wait a minute no.

MN: Was there something in-between?

EH: Yes.

MN: You went from Sedgewick houses to –

EH: To condo on 161st. Over the railroads.

MN: Over the railroad yards?

DD: Is that the Concourse Village?

EH: Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

MN: So you went to Concourse --You went from Sedgewick Houses to Concord Village to a house –

DD: On the Rail Yards.

MN: You know who lived in Concourse Village, Joe Galliver, state senator. You know him?

EH: Oh, yes.

MN: So you guys were buddies?

EH: He's the only politician that I really became friends with. We lived in the same house.

MN: In Concourse Village?

EH: In Concourse Village.

MN: I remember visiting his apartment in Concourse Village. We set up an internship with him just before he was indicted. We had all these students working for him when the FBI confiscated his file cabinets. But he was a good guy.

EH: He was a good guy.

DD: He was one of the – He ran – he was one of the first Blacks to run for Borough President, against Simon.

EH: The, he was like a lynchpin and would have probably been the first Black Borough President. After he got in trouble there was really nobody behind him.

MN: Now did you get involved in local politics when you were in the Sedgewick Houses. Did you join the local Democratic Club?

EH: My wife did. No, she did. The school –

DD: School Board?

EH: School – yes. All the parents –

DD: Had to look out for the kids at school.

EH: Yes, she was tight with them.

DD: So [inaudible] with the parents association and that leads you into the School Board.

EH: She became some kind of district leader.

DD: Ok, you talking about the school district.

MN: No, district leader for the Democratic Party.

EH: Democratic Party.

DD: Democratic district leader.

EH: Right.

MN: Now, ok did you get to know Wendell Foster?

EH: Yes, I knew Wendell.

MN: Because he was from that Highbridge area, you know, Featherbed Lane. He lived up there. He bought a house, we interviewed him, he bought a house there in the 60's. So you knew him pretty well?

EH: What do you want me to say about him?

MN: No, no I don't need to know anything about Wendell Foster other than – but – so it's –

DD: Do you know his daughter who's now the councilwoman?

MN: Helen Foster, yes.

EH: With Wendell there were, depending on who I'm talking to. I get along well with Wendell, now what I think of him as a politician.

DD: That's a different story.

EH: That's a different story.

MN: Now, so how did you – ok, so here you are, you're a Fire Lieutenant now, ok and you're at 150th and Cortland and you're wife is very politically active.

EH: She's not active! Her friends are using her name. You know and when she's – I mean, she wasn't upset about it or anything, you know.

MN: But the point is, somehow, you get to know everybody who is, you know, in Bronx politics.

EH: I knew Joe Galliver. And, in fact, I worked for him, in a sense volunteer. He opened 173rd street; it was an old supermarket, an office there. Frank Gibbs had a large contingent of Puerto Rican's that he was friendly with. We took care of that, I mean we had a road test, you could speak Spanish, English, whatever, whatever you needed, you know.

DD: It was the old-style politics.

EH: Oh, you never gave me a chance. I was about to tell you about becoming a community relations officer.

MN: For the Fire Department?

EH: In the Fire Department. That is what got me into the politics.

DD: Ah, ok. Then it sort of becomes your job to know all of the politicians.

EH: Now you got it.

MN: Now did you speak Spanish by any chance?

EH: No, I should though. I told you, I'm lazy.

DD: We say laid back, we don't say lazy. It's laid back.

EH: Laid back, and I worked in Puerto Rico. I have to admit that I was at a disadvantage because all my friends down there spoke English. Now when they saw me, hey, that was their opportunity to use English.

MN: I have to do some – so I'll let you take over for me, I'll be back in a second. I got to do some stuff in my department.

EH: You going to bring another young lady in?

DD: Is this going to cut off or –

MN: No, it's not. It'll go on forever.

DD: So, ok, now you're – around what time were you into the community relations function. This is at Cortland, when you're stationed at Cortland Avenue.

EH: Oh, that was before – [inaudible]. Out of Cortland Avenue I went to – I was mentioning the Chief, the first Black Commissioner. He was head of the 6th Co. The 6th Division because – oh, Forrest House.

DD: Forrest Houses, right.

EH: Clermont neighbor centers.

DD: Ok, these are all of them, like the halfway houses, the community centers in these different developments.

EH: I was involved in both of them. I became president of Forrest House, ok. There was a cop involved at Clermont. Anyway, through working at Clermont and my Fordham College friend, Monty Grey.

DD: Monty Grey. He used to be my boss, going back. He just retired from Bronx Community College a couple of years ago.

EH: I don't think he retired did he? He teaches it too.

DD: Yes, he teaches a couple courses up there.

EH: Right.

DD: Yes, I knew Monty going back to the 70's when I first started working on Boston Road.

EH: Oh, you son of a gun.

DD: He was on Community Board 3 before you started. And that's where I met him, when I was working there.

EH: Well Monty calls me his mentor.

DD: That's another guy we need to get in to do an interview.

EH: That's what I said too. Monty, I did – because he attended Fordham. I don't think he graduated but he attended Fordham.

DD: He had a social worker background.

RS: I've heard that name also.

DD: He was on Board 3 when I was working there. Great guy, very competent, very competent.

EH: Yes, beautiful guy. And from there, at Forrest House, I was on Edwin Gould's Services for Children Board which is now on Laurence Street. But – and because of that, there's a foundation – there was a foundation behind Edwin Gould's services, based on Services.

DD: [Inaudible] Gould I'm familiar with. And now this is in the, I guess we're into early 60's by this point?

EH: Yes.

DD: And that's when, sort of the Black political movement in this Bronx began to take form.

EH: No, not the 60's because I didn't get into – I retired in '71.

DD: From the Fire Department.

EH: From the Fire Department. And I became a part of Edwin Gould, like in '72, '73. And the president of services was also president of the foundation, where the money was. Now, there was, we had a storefront at Forrest House. There was a white girl, blond white girl, she ran it. In fact, she put the whole damn thing together. And [inaudible] Limier, the president who was enamored with that operation, she created a directory of services, agencies that could provide services and all. He really fell in love with the operation. When, Edwin Gould foundation spun off – oh, it became Forrest Gould.

DD: Coming out of Forrest Houses.

EH: I mean Gould, that's how much he thought of it. And Forrest House got 1.8 million dollars out of the foundation.

RS: To do what?

EH: To run programs.

DD: That center on, what was it, 161st street. That they call Forrest House. And that used to be the recreation center, the athletic programs. Archie used to run basketball tournaments. Archie used to run the basketball programs.

EH: Southeast Bronx Neighbor Centers now, because they, they had senior programs, they had the day-care centers.

DD: That's right. That was, like what they would later call the multi-service [Crosstalk]. This was in the 50's now? That this is going on?

EH: Well, it was before me. How old—

RS: Because that was the 1st generation of low-density housing that was done in that area. That's the beginning of Board 1, and Board 3.

EH: Monty supervised [inaudible] at Forrest House and gathered to write a program that got funding, project career. Project career now has a building on 3rd Avenue.

DD: Still in operation?

EH: Still, oh yes.

DD: That's great.

EH: They got like a 3 or 4 story building. And it's doing well, Project Career.

DD: Then you knew the guy, his name was – they had something, 163rd Street improvement?

EH: Oh, yes, I know what you're –

DD: He was involved in politics.

EH: Those houses on the corner are named after him.

DD: Right, that's right. Al Goodman.

EH: Al Goodman.

DD: Al Goodman, that's right.

EH: I used to laugh all the time. They used to knock Al Goodman. He's the only son of a gun with something with his name on it!

DD: Something left, with something left. I remember when they had the race between Simon, for borough president and, we just mentioned his name, who ran against the guy that was living in Clermont Village, you mentioned.

EH: Galliver.

DD: Yes, Galliver ran against Simon.

EH: Oh, I don't remember that.

DD: And all of that area, Goodman was saying, I'm not sentimental, I'm running for the winner, I think Simon is going to be the winner. Everybody else backed Galliver, of course Simon, there might have been some fooling around with the votes, but at the end of the day –

EH: People didn't listen to him. That son of a gun.

DD: That's right. He was saying, I'm not about sentimentality, I'm a professional, I got to pick the winner.

RS: Who is this?

DD: It's Albert Goodman, you know Goodman Plaza, 163rd and 3rd.

RS: Yes, yes, Goodman Plaza.

DD: Right, he used to run a program called 163rd Street Improvement Council.

RS: Yes, I remember that.

DD: And his office was right on Third, right next to the fish market. We used to have the old fish market there, a premium fish market as I remember. And he was -- that was his spot and he really tied into the Simon connection.

EH: How do you, I know you're a district manager, but how do you know the neighborhood so well?

DD: Well, I used to live on 162nd right off of 3rd Avenue, right behind the courthouse that's now Boricua College, I used to live up in 165th, off of Boston Road.

EH: Have you been down there?

DD: I, I mean, you know, occasionally I'll go down there.

EH: Completely different.

DD: Oh man, you go down there you can't -- you don't even recognize her, you know. I go to try to go to take pictures of the half a dozen or so buildings that are still there from when I was there.

RS: [Inaudible] I got these maps.

DD: But when you go through there, big changes, big changes. My brother was married in Grace Gospel Church. Did you know Father Benti? He was on 164th off of Boston Road, like up

on the slope in between Caldwell and Boston, opposite the park that Archie's been fundraising for. So yes, and I – we lived all around that area that you were talking about your parents were separated. And my grandfather owned the building on 170 – Brook Avenue and 165th right below – over by the, used to have the dairy, Sheffield Farms over there on Webster, into Webster Avenue. Yes, so I mean we were all up in that area, an interesting thing you said because I know when the parents were you was living high on the horse and when they wasn't together it was rough, you know. And that's the way it was. You know, I remember we used to go down, when my parents were split and we would have to go down to the public assistance to get the cheese and the garlic butter and the flour, you know. All of that stuff.

EH: You had to make ends meet through any way you could.

RS: So it seems that we got you pretty good through the Fire Department time period, right?

EH: Ok.

RS: We've run through 1971.

DD: Ok, so we're retiring from the Fire Department.

RS: You spent 24 years at the Fire Department is that correct?

EH: Right, 24.

DD: And how long was the shift between leaving from the Fire Department and starting back with the Community Board 3.

EH: Well, when I left the Fire Department, I'm sorry –

RS: You assumed responsibilities for the federal government in Puerto Rico.

DD: Oh, after the Fire Department, ok.

EH: Thank you, good thing –

RS: You talked about this, the timeline.

EH: While I was at 41, the state Equal Opportunity. There was a state office on 161st street over by Southern Boulevard. Eddie Mercado was the director, Angel Rivera was the Secretary to the Fire Department and Angel, under the Protestant Mayor.

DD: Lindsay?

RS: Lindsay?

EH: Lindsay!

RS: 1960 –

DD: '66 to '72, maybe, '73, yes, right.

EH: He started, I don't want to say Districts, the not the districts.

DD: The Community Boards.

EH: Boards.

DD: The local, neighborhood –

RS: That came into play in 1963, ok date.

EH: And he was the moderator of those boards were workers for the big shots. And that's how I met Angel Rivera --

[End Tape 2, Side 2]

[Begin Tape 2, Side 2]

EH: -- who was secretary --

DD: And now as I remember, I think this was Lindsay's way of kind of, he wasn't a Democrat so he didn't have that machine all around so this was his way of...

EH: Reaching out.

DD: ...Reaching out into the various communities.

RS: Well not necessarily because in 1963, I think Robert Wagner was still the Mayor of New York.

DD: He was the mayor, right.

RS: He was the mayor and the Community Boards come into play in 1963 on the charter change of 1963. In 1975, Lindsay had been out of it, but between '63 and '75, very tumultuous years in the City. We had the riot in Harlem when Dr. King got killed, Malcolm got killed, right. The – Adam Clayton Powell is being pushed out of Congress.

DD: Right, in '68.

RS: You have all these things going on.

DD: But I think he's talking about something that Lindsay did put together, wasn't the community board.

RS: No, it was the Administration, it was –

DD: It might have been the CDA, you know, there were so many acronyms that were coming down.

EH: But it was a board-type operation that people could come to –

[Crosstalk]

DD: Wasn't cancelled, wasn't that. We can look up and see, but I know there was that, sort of something –

EH: Angel was the moderator. Eddie Mercado, and they were political buddies, I found out later.

RS: Lindsay, connected with the Lindsay administration? Or the Wagner administration?

EH: No, this was Lindsay.

DD: This was Lindsay, yes.

EH: Because I don't see Wagner being involved in the community at all, ok. And – so that when I left the Fire – the reason I left the Fire Department, Angel. This was where I met him and working together with him servicing the community. It was like a board of operations and he offered me a job. He said “come on down” and I said, “I'm happy, I'm in the Fire Department,” you know. That's why I'm – 24 years, you know, I was ready to go 30. And he hadn't offered me. A year later he called me and says “come on down,” I said, “you got a job for me?” He says, “Yes.” [Laughs]. I said –

RS: Come on down to Puerto Rico?

DD: Yes, I said, "What is it?" He said, "Field representative for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands." I said, "Wait, let me talk to the boss." Ran home and the boss says, "You been in the Fire Department long enough." [Laughs].

DD: She sees the opportunity.

EH: Yes, so I took it. And I became field rep for –

RS: For what agency? What agency of the Federal government?

EH: It was OEO but it became the Community Services Administration.

DD: That's the Office of Economic Opportunity?

EH: Yes, Office of Economic Opportunity.

DD: Started out, yes.

RS: Sargent Shriver.

DD: That was Sargent Shriver, right.

RS: That was a Kennedy, you know, and then after, Johnson, the Great.

DD: That was the beginning of the war on poverty, right.

EH: So between the Fire Department, what did I say I was in? Community Relations, relating to community groups and my work in Puerto Rico.

DD: Come in!

EH: Come in!

DD: Oh, they're tapping next door I guess.

EH: And Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. My expertise in serving community groups.

DD: Community relations, right. Tied into that skill set.

EH: Plus, in Puerto Rico, we concentrated on economic development.

RS: And that was the time period where that was taking off.

DD: And you were based in New York?

EH: Oh, yes.

DD: And your offices were where, do you remember?

EH: Here in New York.

DD: I mean here in Bronx, in Manhattan, or do you remember where?

EH: Yes, 26 Federal Plaza, [Laughs]

DD: Ok, ok.

EH: But I had two agencies in Puerto Rico, one for San Juan and one for the Island, the rest of the Island. And of course when I walked in down 26, everybody looked at me, number one I wasn't Puerto Rican.

DD: No es Boricua.

EH: They expected Angel to hire a Puerto Rican and this black face walks in there. You talk about jealousy, oh man!

DD: You got one of our spots is the mentality, that's right.

EH: If he's not going to select a Puerto Rican, you know –

DD: What do we have him there for? What's the point?

RS: Were they Puerto Rican at that point in time?

EH: No! No! Irish, Italian, Black, they were everything.

DD: So you surprised them?

EH: Oh man! They was shocked when this Black faced walked out, they went “Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands?”

DD: And how much time did you spend travelling in the Islands.

EH: As much as I wanted.

DD: So you were back and forth frequently.

EH: Amen.

RS: Did Dolores travel with you?

EH: Not at the beginning. I got my feet wet and then when I had people to introduce her to that she could make friends with, then she started going. And then after a couple years she says, “this is costing us too much money.” Because I had to pay for her. And that was [inaudible] the money.

RS: So did you – so between when you left the Fire Department in '71, and this is to say, were you with the feds for 11 years, 10 years?

EH: Yes, about 10 years.

RS: Because I understand that you had gotten to Community Board Number 3 about 1983 or so.

Correct?

EH: Yes.

RS: And you were at Community Board 3 when?

DD: Oh, I even left, jeez, maybe, I left around '80 because I remember I started working on recreation about when Reagan came in –

RS: '80

DD: So it probably would have been like maybe '77 to '80, '81 was when I was there.

EH: And Hamilton followed you.

DD: Right, and Vera-Lynn Hamilton, right, she followed me. She was a board member when I first started. As a matter of fact, her daughter is now working at HBV, we're working on a project now. She's going on –

EH: [Inaudible]

DD: Yes, she's the Deputy Director for Bronx Planning. I remember Vera-Lynn and I went to Egypt together on this tourist – it must have been maybe '87, '88, you know the Pyramids and so forth and so on. Great trip.

RS: And Vera-Lynn was like a mother to me.

DD: Beautiful woman.

EH: I got a picture of my daughter, the one that died. In front of, what do you call – the pyramid. She's 21 years old. She – I think, you know, after she died I started looking at her life and I realized, that's why she had such a full life. She travelled, you know. And let's see, at 21 she was in Egypt, the – there's a, why can't I remember, Mitsubishi, I never heard of Mitsubishi, it's in Peru, right?

DD: Oh, Machu Pichu!

EH: Machu Pichu, right.

DD: Ok, the mountain range, I thought you were talking about the Japanese auto maker, Mitsubishi.

EH: No.

RS: That's in Peru, but –

DD: She was there also?

EH: Yes.

DD: Wow.

EH: Got pictures of that. I never heard of it.

RS: It's an Incan ceremonial site up in the mountains. It was a holy place, it was like a last stronghold too, the Spanish came in there and wiped them out.

EH: Well I think – that's why I get mad at you guys. You know, it's like they have so much damn respect for Spanish. You know, they were some brutal sons of bitches.

RS: You don't have to tell me.

EH: And American is two-faced but the Spanish were really brutal.

RS: So 11 years in the Federal public service and then, what's the transition about? Back to New York City, local Bronx, how did that happen? Because this starts to take you into my time period. How do you become district manager for Community Board 3? And then on top of that you're a Republican, a registered Republican.

EH: You just reminded me, Goldstein, a black social worker, female was executive director at Forrest House. And I always touch base with Forrest House. What's her first name?

RS: She was a black social worker? Was she married to a Jewish man that's why she had the name Goldstein?

EH: No, I think that was her name. I don't know where it came from.

RS: So she was a black social worker at Forrest House?

EH: At Forrest House. She was the executive director. And – I might have been still on the board [inaudible]. Anyway, she knew the job opened and I don't think she had seen me for a while or something but I walked in the office and she looked at and pointed at – she says, “there's an executive director's job open,” because I had – I was unemployed then, you know, or I was telling her what I was planning and everything. And she said, “get me your resume.” I gave her the resume, she gave it to the judge.

DD: McGee, Hansel McGee.

EH: Hansel McGee, right.

DD: He used to – he was at IBM, he used to work at IBM before he got involved in the community. He would probably – he was on the board at, he was on just about everybody's board, he was a very active guy.

EH: We had a – we grew up, he was 136th street, I was 140th.

DD: He was a great guy, a great guy. Hansel MacGee, right.

RS: M-A-G?

DD: M-C-G-Double-E.

EH: He fell in love with law. And I went – they honored him when he left somewhere.

RS: Was he a Bronx judge?

EH: Yes.

DD: He was right on 161st Street, Supreme Court.

EH: What was his – before him the Senator, the State Senator was the little short guy that became a judge?

DD: Oh boy, here in the Bronx you're talking about?

EH: Here in the Bronx right. He went to school with my brother [Laughs].

DD: I'm trying to think who that would've been.

RS: So she connects you, this woman Goldstein who's the ED at Forrest Hills – Forrest Houses.

DD: She let you know about the opening at board 3.

EH: Took my resume and gave it to the judge.

RS: Now again, the dynamics are, you're stepping into local Bronx Democratic politics but you're a registered Republican. Where's the dynamic – how did that happen? When does that happen? Does that happen through the Reagan years in the Federal government?

DD: I guess the question is how did you happen to be a Republican in the Bronx where 70 percent of the people were Democrats?

EH: I can explain how I became a Republican.

DD: Yes, please.

RS: Freddy Ferrer, don't let him forget that at all.

EH: What's his name, Angel and Eddie were Republicans.

DD: So through the Lindsay connection.

EH: Through Lindsay and Javits.

RS: Oh, and Javits, of course.

EH: Javits was the connection. Javits, who became president, our Republican friend from California?

RS: Reagan.

DD: Reagan.

EH: Reagan. Reagan [inaudible] cousins. The president was Nixon.

RS: Nixon, correct. When Jacob Javits –

DD: Oh, the other Demo – Republican from California.

EH: Right, that's when I became a Republican, under Nixon. And Nixon was supposed to do away with the agencies.

RS: Right all the New Deal – not the New Deal, all the Great Society agencies. Shriver's thing went out the window.

EH: And Javits had 10 names, that he was going to protect their job. I was one of the 10. I was one of the 10 because of Angel and Eddie. Ok, now, but I said, I don't want Javits sticking his neck out for me and I'm a Democrat. You know –

DD: The least I could do that – that's the least I could do for him.

EH: So I became a Republican.

DD: Oh, interesting.

EH: And I tell people in a minute, I'm a Javits, I was a Javits Republican.

RS: Well Javits was a very liberal Republican, coming from New York City and then the Jewish base.

EH: Well, he did for everybody.

RS: Oh yes, he did for everybody. In fact it was through him that I –

DD: He was a Rockefeller Republican.

EH: Yes, but when the job was open the powerhouse was Gloria Davis at the board. Right, so the judge gave her [inaudible].

DD: Do it.

EH: And the funny thing was I got a call from Arthur –

DD: Al Goodman you mean?

EH: No, Arthur Richardson.

DD: Arthur Richardson, of Tremont Improvement Program, he was involved in a lot of the community organizations, Southern Boulevard.

EH: He says, “You know, there was a lot of people against you.” I said, “Yes, I figured that.” But they came together because some of them knew me and they went along with it. Those that were Democrats that were pissed at me for being a Republican, finally said ok [Laughs].

RS: Which goes to show but you were active in the community, plus you were a Lieutenant in the Fire Department, plus you had gone through the Federal Government.

EH: That’s the whole point, they knew me and they knew the things I had done. I had helped some of them, you know. And, you know, as a district manager, I must have gotten a half a million dollars from foundations because I was involved in two foundations, Edwin Gould’s foundation, the –

RS: We got the 15 thousand dollars from – that’s a good lead in to the 197A because we got the 15 thousand dollars from the Parodnick foundation.

EH: Yes, well, the what’s her name?

RS: Jeanie Flatock.

EH: Jeanie, you know, talking to her about the money –

DD: Her you interacted with when you were part of the Fire Department, I mean you initially made the relations, or this was after when you were working for the Federal government?

EH: Yes.

DD: So those connections, so they helped you when you went back into the South Bronx to work.

EH: I'm telling you, God has given me a blessing.

DD: God is good.

EH: He – I lay on my bed and I said, a beautiful wife, a beautiful wife. I mean I never became rich but I didn't need to be rich.

DD: You know what they say, more money more problems anyway.

EH: Not only that but the things I'm concerned about, they're there [Laughs].

DD: Absolutely.

RS: Now it looks like from '90 – '84 – from '83 through about '91 that's about another, that's about another 10-11 year run until you retire again, ok.

EH: Oh yes, I think I put in about 10, 11 years.

DD: At board 3.

EH: Yes.

DD: Ok, well let's start with that. You were coming back, now the neighborhood obviously was in bad shape, what is your recollection coming in?

EH: My recollection is that, Vera-Lynn had, I don't want to call it a chart because they were this high and it had all the capital projects on it and as the city would knock them down to do something, you know – and one day I looked at them and said, “Oh, my God.” They just about given us everything they can. That's when I snagged him and we started talking about 197A.

DD: What's the next step.

EH: Yes, because I saw that as the way to develop the capital projects. I mean how else? You know, you got to plan, you got to make sense.

RS: The – and 197A had been, you know –

EH: I had read that on the charter, that we were authorized to plan, see nobody told me that I had to do – in reading the charter.

DD: But everybody read the charter, but why was it that you and Ricardo, you guys were the first ones to really say let's go and do it? Why do you think that was?

EH: Oh because I had up, you know, the minute I saw him and he, “Yes!”

RS: Because I came out of the Paul Davidoff school of Urban Planning. Right, so Paul Davidoff had, you know –

DD: I worked with him for a few years actually.

EH: He was my urban planner. Who do I go to!

RS: And it made all – and since it was codified, right, and because we had been working a year prior to – we started doing the 197A around '95.

EH: I don't remember the year. I know I had a young man from my church, computer and you here were supervising him.

RS: With the land use, we started looking at the –

EH: Laying out what was on every block.

RS: Right, because the assignment at the office was, if you recall, I think you came in right after Burns had given us the assignment was to develop local policy goals for all our different neighborhoods, for all the different neighborhoods that made up the district. Because it wasn't like looking at Community Board 3 as one entity.

DD: It was like 4 or 5 smaller neighborhoods that worked that way.

RS: That's right, and so community and neighborhood planning was, you know, where I was going, relevant to looking because the neighborhoods had, of course the abandonment was so, was so prevalent.

DD: Pronounced.

RS: Right, pronounced was the right word, but the neighborhoods were different in character, they were different in scale, they were different as it related to access to public transportation. For example, Central Maurisania didn't have access to public transportation, right. The 3rd Avenue El was coming down.

DD: Right, had to go either to Southern Boulevard or over to the Concourse.

RS: Over to the Concourse.

EH: How much input do you have with Board 3 right now.

DD: I mean I know the District Manager over there, I'm not heavily involved, I work in your old neighborhood actually now. My area is District 5 which includes Sedgwick houses and the old NYU which is now the Bronx Community. So that's the neighborhood that I'm working in now.

EH: Oh, ok. I just wondered because I got a sneaking suspicion that what was put in, in Board 3 came right out of downtown. I don't think the 197 they planned was even looked at to be honest with you.

DD: This is the question because...

RS: They was.

DD:...the neighborhoods really, you had your list, we want downtown to take the items off our list but it was always when they had housing money, we want housing, when they had criminal money, you know, it was whatever is available and that plan was really the first thing to say, I remember you talked about the population goals, right, you wanted to reroute into the area and so this was saying, well, going beyond what you got on your list of projects, this is where we want to go. We are telling you what we want to do.

EH: Because from 150 thousand it was down to like 50 thousand.

RS: But you got to remember too that what was happening from a land use policy standpoint was the reduction, downscaling of even without really plans we were downscaling the density of the Bronx. And the infrastructure that we had in the Bronx and the system –

EH: Was designed to fit the old.

DD: Exactly, that's what it was.

EH: And 100 was where – with the goal.

RS: Prevailing rationales were that we were downsizing the Bronx and that the epitome of that was Charlotte Gardens. Even as much, as well as Charlotte—

EH: But that Charlotte Gardens went too far.

DD: That's right.

EH: And Burns took a clue from that too with our conversations because the, where you used to live.

DD: Over on Boston Road.

EH: Yes, with the courthouse, the courthouse area.

DD: The courthouse area, right.

EH: Whats his name, the borough president gave it to that lady.

DD: Jimmy Brooks?

EH: No. The Hispanic Lady.

RS: No, you're talking about the Nos Quedamos

EH: Nos Quedamos

DD: That's later, we're starting out here. This is starting out with the plan and we're talking about the population and the infrastructure, that really is the starting point.

EH: They stuck some of the plan in.

DD: No doubt, no doubt.

RS: But the point is, and that's why I think it's one of the few that's actually worked but the point is that we had a couple of things going on. You had HPD who had the juggernaut, I used to remember that word from Floyd Lapp that they had, for the 3.5 billion dollar housing program, in District 3 alone, ok I did enough [inaudible] to account for about 15 thousand units of housing, ok, new and rehabilitated. That's the HPD money, the 3.5 Billion dollars Koch housing program that lasted from '84 to about '93, '94. That money, ok, that's the surcharge we put on Wall Street, that he was able to take that money, now of course the Bronx got the lion's share of it because of all the devastation bill 0404...

DD: [inaudible] Fordham Road.

RS: ...but Brooklyn got a good piece of change of that, Manhattan got a piece of change of that. And but of course, then if you look at all three of the boards, Board 3 had the most devastation. Ok, Board 3 had the most devastation of all the districts, ok. And also, when you think about it some of the more beautiful buildings...

DD: Were there.

RS: ...you know, on Boston Road.

EH: That you can renovate.

RS: If you just look at the McKinley Square area alone. You had the Library where you had the hospital where you had the, you know, these smaller walk able streets, the architecture of the buildings. Well the HPD Housing money went to the rehabilitation component of that and then all the vacant spaces we could infill with came with lower density housing of a family nature. Of, you know, of an ownership nature, right so you had –

EH: You had a lot of 6 family – 6 story buildings, multiple dwellings in –

DD: On Boston Road, on the drag so to speak. But a lot of the other stuff was like the one and two family homes. Like you say the Charlotte Gardens and --

EH: No high-rise, no Clermont Village.

RS: So really the plan, you know, for higher density housing did work. I mean, you know, in that once the HPD, the Koch housing money ran out we still had spaces for higher-density development and that's when Melrose started to take off. When the urban renewal plan started to fall into place for Melrose and then the community activism over Nos Quedamos was actually, you know, if you go through the original plan and you go down 163rd street, everything that they wanted to save there has been taken out, ok, everything that, I mean but its higher density, its higher density.

EH: You know that her husband was a sanitation man.

RS: I didn't know that.

DD: Who's that?

EH: Her husband, the lady –

DD: Oh boy.

EH: I'd like to know what happened to her.

DD: Her name will come back. I know she passed away.

EH: She passed away?

DD: Her daughter is now the director of her organization.

RS: I heard from Peter Strand that the organization is not doing well. But the point here is that the 197A plan, not to toot our horns.

DD: No, you could toot your horn a little bit, you deserve a little bit of tooting.

EH: Do I?

DD: Yes, I think so, yes.

RS: I just – the important part of it for me was that 1) there were policy goals that were being set from the Bronx office, actually the Bronx office was doing planning. You know, where city planning.

EH: They were fighting you guys.

DD: Right, not exactly what you wanted, they had their own agenda.

RS: But there was for this area a set of policy goals that looked at the individual neighborhoods. We called them Bathgate, we called them Clermont Park, we called them Crotona Park East, we called them Central Maurisania, we called them Melrose.

EH: What did you call Washington Avenue?

DD: Disposition studies.

EH: Yes.

DD: A series of reports, right.

RS: Yes, these little neighborhood studies that we did.

EH: What about Washington Avenue?

RS: Washington Avenue is part of Clermont Village. Clermont Village area.

EH: They tried to put another industrial park on Washington Avenue.

RS: Yes, I remember. You and I went back and forth on the industrial park because the Public Development Corporation –

EH: Well that really wasn't HPD though, that was –

RS: No that was the Public Development Corporation, PDC, ok. We had PDC, we had HPD, we had all the 100 soups, literally and then with all the public land that was there, you see, and the fact that it was codified, the fact that we could do 197A because it was already codified and then made more bureaucratic as far as I'm concerned in '89 when they put that in place. It made it harder, I think to do what we did, because the truth of the matter is that we did what we did

because Burns, outside of Melrose Commons, he didn't care about what was going on with the rest of Board 3.

EH: Why was he so interested in Melrose Commons though?

RS: Because it was a comprehensive effort.

DD: He was into big, you know and he was into really major redevelopment as opposed to working around whats there.

EH: What about [inaudible]

DD: Well they came up in reaction to his plan, he had a plan that was basically was lets clear out this whole area and start a new development, they were saying no, you have to be more selective, this building. But if you leave this one building then you're blocking the path of my overall new development, and that really was the back and forth.

EH: Did Burns start on that while he was still a city planner?

RS: As city planner.

DD: While he was a city planner right.

RS: That started, it started in '84. I did the land use survey for Melrose, ok. Me and Alejandro Rodriguez did the land use survey.

EH: Was he for us or against us?

RS: I don't know about for and against, I think the was –

DD: He had a different vision for Melrose Commons, let's put it that way. He had a different vision. What is your, why don't we talk again about for example, the industrial re-zoning, the sites on 3rd avenue, right below the expressway.

RS: Yes, that's Bathgate.

DD: Bathgate industrial park.

EH: Yes, well I had a, my problem with – they had removed 5,000 people from the Pathmark.

RS: Oh no, that's mid-Bronx.

EH: Yes, mid-Bronx.

DD: Ok, that's over on 174th off of Boston Road.

[Crosstalk]

DD: Let's talk about that one, let me just run – talk about mid-Bronx, talk about Maurisania, talk about Bathgate and then last we'll talk about Melrose Commons.

RS: That's fine, yes that's great.

EH: Well I had a problem with that because the housing they destroyed replaced 5,000 people, or 5,000 families and they intended to put a Pathmark or something.

RS: No, that came later, much later. What it was, it was part of the Ed Logue strategy, ok, for trying to supposedly bring, and Koch administration to bring back economic development into the borough and they put the Bathgate industrial park where it is because of accessibility to the Cross-Bronx, ok. That was the planning logic behind it. Ok, now Bathgate, they had torn down

the El, but the Bathgate section of town right above Clermont village where I was raised was devastated. It was a devastated neighborhood by and large. I mean, it was probably the oldest, older of the old housing stock which actually used to be the Jewish ghetto on Bathgate if you recall.

DD: Right, Clermont Parkway.

RS: I remember – that's right, Clermont Parkway, it was the Jewish ghetto of that area. I of course, between -- I of course remember buying my mother's first Mothers Day gift, there with my father. It was a set of like glass, glass plates and things of that nature, neither here nor there, but the point being I remember that community and I remember how devastated the housing was, ok. It was really, really, really run down housing.

EH: It was.

RS: That went for this partnership with the Port Authority of New York, the Public Development Corporation and the local, around your time, when you're in – '77 time period that agreed to go industrial because of access to major roadways –

DD: Well ok, but the point of that was that, you know, they saw the focus of the community as the Maurisania, Clermont Village a little further south so it was really more of a matter of indifference. That wasn't our neighborhood, that wasn't our main area so, you wanted to clear it out, if you wanted to build, you know, fine, we didn't have a problem with it. And that was –

EH: I really didn't have a problem with it.

DD: How did you have to interact – what was the reaction of the community board members when you guys said, “We want to do this plan for the neighborhood,” were they supportive, were they skeptical, how do you recall?

EH: You remember?

RS: I remember.

EH: Ok, let me hear it from you.

RS: They were initially skeptical but because I had worked with the board to do the individual policy goals for each one of the neighborhoods, I mean the letter of recommendation that I got from Genevieve Brooks to law school says, “I have worked with many planners over many years but Rick Soto-Lopez is the first planner that actually worked with us.” Because I came out of the Davidoff school of urban planning so the individualized policy goals and I know you got that document somewhere in your papers wherever they are, ok, because nobody was supposed to see that. The only people that were supposed to see that was, we were supposed to use that in house. But I gave it to Mr. Hill, ok, I gave it to him.

EH: [Inaudible] show me. I was looking at some papers yesterday.

RS: Because what I had done was work with the board on the neighborhoods, so that provided some buy in, some buy in.

DD: Some credibility to go along with that.

RS: Right, that’s right. The other part was that Jeanine Fleightow came on the scene somehow.

EH: Yes, but she, you though she was impeding the situation.

RS: No, I didn't –

DD: She facilitated, she helped out the situation.

RS: That's what I thought, because of the funding.

EH: Because she told me. She said, you know, she had some cash to burn.

DD: Some cash available. And how did you approach the Consumer Farmer Foundation.

RS: That Consumer Farmer which was the predecessor of Parodnick, the Parodnick Foundation and Harry DiRienzo had gone over to work. Harry DiRienzo had gone from [inaudible] and gone over to work at the Parodnick and Jeanine was enthusiastic about trying to use this because they were trying to use it in Manhattan, they were trying to use, and she lived in the –

EH: They needed a foothold, they needed to really hit – do something.

DD: Sort of a demonstration project, right.

RS: Right, because they were trying to do it in the Morningside heights area, relevant to Columbia University ok, if you recall. They were trying to use 197A but it wasn't taking hold, ok. But the plan took hold for various reasons, because of the work that we did at city planning initially, with the board, with the Community Board, right, to identify the policy issues and goals for the neighborhoods. We had a basis to do that. We had a basis, and then the individual, you know, analyses of the neighborhoods and then the board was comfortable, plus I was with the board all the time, you know what I'm saying?

EH: Yes, they were comfortable.

RS: I was with the board all the time.

EH: That's why I said they said nothing.

DD: They were agreeable.

RS: And I'm from Clermont Village, that's the other thing.

DD: And that helped also.

RS: I grew up in Clermont Village, you understand? I was a son of the community, you know what I'm saying? So that helped, I think that that helped.

DD: And I think that helped also because when I was living in 165th I probably wouldn't have been hired if I didn't have the roots in the community.

EH: Yes, you know we didn't because, I mentioned at the beginning of the plan that the president wasn't against us. What was his name, Reid!

RS: Oh, yes, Mr. Reid, yes, Mr. Reid was great.

EH: He was in on the planning too, and that did it, you know. I guess there was no conflict between director and president so the board just, you know.

RS: And also, Vera-Lynn had gone over, Vera-Lynn had gone to the borough presidents office under Freddy Ferrer, ok and another -- I think that doing it, we had support to do it. It's after we got it done that the backlash came. The backlash came for a number of reasons. The backlash came 1) that got thrown at me a lot was, the guy's a Republican, the guy's a Republican.

DD: This guy?

EH: They told you that?

RS: Yes! And I said, like, he's the district manager, so what, you know what I'm saying? What, well to say so what to the borough president before the change in 1989 charter.

DD: But all of the board members who approved it, they weren't Republicans.

RS: They were not.

EH: Is that what he had against me?

RS: Yes, well that and the other thing –

EH: No, that makes sense to me.

RS: That and the other thing was that the 197A plan took – people were excited about it.

DD: That's right.

RS: The progressive movement in the city, the progressive planners...

EH: Within the city, yes.

RS:...were excited about, so it started to take some momentum about, now what, how do we get it approved because, remember, it came out before the '89 charter change. There was no way to review this damn thing. It said you can do it but it didn't say –

DD: What do you do after?

RS: -- What do you do after. So when they did the charter changes they put in language to give a review process for it. They also made it more bureaucratic in that doing the next ones had a lot more formality to them and a lot more review.

DD: The form and content and so forth and so on.

RS: The form and content and those things.

DD: So you guys did yours before there was regulations in place.

RS: 1985 and –

EH: Whats his name thought we had to go before the borough board, so he thought he could tell the borough board thumbs down.

RS: You said, what's his name, Freddy.

EH: Freddy, but we were supposed to go first to the board of estimate but then there was a change [inaudible]

DD: They eliminated the board of estimate.

RS: So that's why and then who's sitting on – at the city planning commission when, you know, Ron Schiffman, you know, the African-American woman who's been a city planner, what was her name.

DD: Oh boy, Maxine Griffith.

RS: Maxine Griffith, you know, other progressives are sitting on the City Planning Commission Board.

DD: And then it was the Dinkins appointees to the board.

RS: That was the Dinkins administration. Right, I left city planning in '91 to go to Law School if you recall.

DD: And that's when – Dinkins started in '90 I think it was.

RS: It started in, that's right, it started in '90.

DD: You're right, the election was in '89, I think he started in '90.

RS: That's right and then the charter change had all come into play and they created a special hearing for the 197A.

DD: To rush it through before the change of administrations.

RS: No, we went to –

DD: I'm thinking of Nos Qaedamos .

RS: No, we went through '89, we went through '89, '90, '91, we went through that, ok. But then in '92, the summer of '92 and after I spent the first year of Law School at Rutgers, ok. That's when we went to the public hearing when I had to – I presented about how we got it accomplished, ok. You had left service, '91 you decided to move on. You retired, you know, period, you retired.

EH: Oh, yes.

RS: Eldred retired in '91.

EH: Your girl, what's his name?

RS: Who's that? He always says when he's [inaudible] he always, like, connects me with these villains, some of these villains [inaudible].

EH: Who was president?

RS: Who's that?

DD: Of the planning commission you mean?

EH: Yes, the planning board.

RS: Oh, Sylvia Deutch.

EH: No, no I'm talking about –

DD: The local board.

RS: The local community board?

EH: Yes.

RS: Who was that, what are you talking about? After you left, Dudley took over.

EH: Who?

RS: Dudley took over.

EH: Dudley, yes, but who put him in.

DD: Who was head of the board at that point?

RS: Who was head of the board?

EH: The female.

RS: Oh, what was her name? I went to school with her son. I went to school with her son. And yes, and I pushed her, I kept pushing her to get this in front of the borough president during the time period when we were between the two – the charter change.

DD: She was in the borough president's pocket.

RS: Yes, definitely.

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

[Begin Tape 2, Side 2]

RS: That woman, I forget her name, because her son worked for him too.

DD: I remember him, she was –

RS: She was a short woman, she had a son, hang on, Dean was his name. He was at the borough president's office. God, I could --

DD: Dean was his first name, or?

RS: Dean was his first name. He was big, loud, you know, but he was a great, he was a great guy.

EH: He was a good guy.

RS: Yes, he was funny, he was funny, he really had a great sense of humor.

EH: I'm picturing him.

RS: Me too. But the point is that, you see, so the plan lay dormant between '92 and the point that Nos – that Melrose starts to come online and then its flagged, it is flagged when Melrose comes on, when Melrose starts to come online that there is a 197A for this district, ok. In fact the first 197A.

DD: So it was sort of the Melrose commons plan kind of forced the 197A plan, sort of on the page.

EH: Brought it out in the open.

DD: Because we need that as a context in which to look at Melrose Commons.

RS: That's correct. And high density along the corridors, ok, high density along the corridors instead of looking and then the infill blocks, the middle – what did we call it? The infill block, the infill should be at the density consistent with the context of the surrounding neighborhood.

So that's where had really the implementation of our – of the plan. The initial precept of the plan was, don't keep under – don't keep downsizing the borough because the infrastructure's there and you should be at a higher density so to afford more affordable housing. To afford more affordable housing, to provide more affordable housing.

EH: Where would the schools come from?

RS: The schools were already in place. They were to be rehabilitated, because – also, the district schools had declined in population, District 9 schools and district, there was 9 and another district –

DD: 12.

EH: 12.

DD: It was to the west, district 9 was –

EH: What I'm thinking of, on Washington Avenue from 167th street coming up –

RS: Now if you go back to Dana's original point about the industrial parks, ok. Later, the industrial parks of Maurisania starts becoming a priority, there's housing infill along Washington Avenue.

EH: After we fought that.

RS: That's right. You know, actually, if you think about it the plan also worked because they said you shouldn't do this as industrial. You should do it mostly as housing. Some of these blocks should be re-zoned completely for housing, ok. Some of the sections of in Bathgate should be re-zoned for housing and then mid-Bronx, desperadoes, mid-Bronx Housing Corporation, under the leader of the tall African-American heavysset gentleman who came up after, who came after Jenny.

DD: Porter.

EH: Oh, Ralph Porter.

RS: Ralph Porter got Lisk involved in placing a Pathmark just the way they did in Harlem, just the way Abyssinian Baptist Church did the Pathmark on 125th Street.

DD: Lexington Avenue.

RS: To put a Pathmark in the industrial park. And actually Lisk, I remember talking to [inaudible] about that in Florida at a national conference and they called that project "the supermarket from hell" because by that time MBD had started to fall apart as an organization and didn't have the...

DD: The backup in the community.

RS: ...the organizational and I don't know about the backup in the community, but it definitely it didn't have the organizational wherewithal to carry a project like that. And you know it's a loss because –

EH: What else is there besides the Pathmark now?

RS: No, there's an IHOP – we should at some point in the spring –

DD: try to roll by there.

RS: Go up that way. I actually went and paid my cable for the first time up there because I just wanted to go through the neighborhood. But there's a bunch of stores and it's a mall. It's a small mall. But I remember when that was full of housing, high density housing. Really nice apartment housing. Ok, then you know suddenly it was cut off from the portion north because of the Cross-Bronx and that is a change because the Cross-Bronx and the, what is it? The Bronx River Drive?

EH: Yes.

RS: Is that Sheridan?

RS: Sheridan or, yes.

DD: Sheridan Expressway.

EH: Sheridan Expressway.

DD: They're still talking about closing off the El now.

RS: So, that – those three parks, really of all of them that really came to fruition, was the Bathgate one because that was done in partnership with the powerhouse of the Port Authority of New York, New Jersey. I don't know what happens there now.

EH: No, somebody told us. Who's it said something, one of the blocks. When was the last time we were together?

RS: Well I –

DD: I think what we need to do is to try to get some of the information about those 4. I think those are really the, kind of the, 4 nodes that we really need to talk about, the Pathmark, the MBD, the Industrial Park, the Melrose Commons and McKinley Square. I think those are maybe the 4, we need to try to get some background material those.

RS: Yes, we can follow this up.

DD: Yes, we can have a second round, maybe in January, when you come back.

RS: I can do some research on that.

DD: And I think that, that would be a good way to kind of, have some written material and that would kind of bring back the recollection of some of the incidents or anecdotes or what have you. Because I think that those are really the 4 corners of the neighborhood and I think that would be a good way to try to follow up.

RS: And I do have stuff at home in Florida.

DD: I'll tell everyone something, and that is –

RS: Did you bring that to leave?

EH: No, I didn't bring it to leave!

RS: I wouldn't leave it then.

EH: I see, from Ricardo Soto-Lopez.

DD: Uh, ho.

EH: [inaudible]

RS: Oh that's my email to you recently. Oh, I just sent that to you.

EH: Yes, this is Edwin Gould. This is, I took all the, this is Forrest House.

RS: I got to dig up my color version of the plans.

EH: And this is a little piece on me. And I read them to try and remember. Ok, because I stuck a resume in here.

RS: Ok, maybe we want to say, to be continued... and put a hold on this?

DD: Ok, oh wait a minute, volume, we're going to –

EH: What about the other one, you got two of them there you know.

DD: I don't think that one is on.

[End Tape 2, Side 2]

[End of Interview]