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The University of Baltimore is launching a two-year investigation called “Baltimore’68: Riots and Rebirth,” a project centered around the events that followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and their effects on the development of our city. UB administration and faculty members in the law school and in the undergraduate departments of history and community studies are planning a series of projects and events to commemorate the 40th anniversary of this pivotal event. We are currently working with the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History, The Jewish Museum of Maryland, Maryland Public Television and the Enoch Pratt Free Libraries to pursue funding for projects that may include conferences, a website and a library traveling exhibit.

Your potential participation in an oral history project would contribute to the very foundation of this project – the memories of Baltimoreans who lived through the riots and saw the changes that came about in response to them. Your life story can fill in the limited knowledge we learn from newspaper accounts and the television footage.

If you choose to participate in the project you would be interviewed by students from the University of Baltimore. They will ask you questions, but your memories will determine the direction of the interviews.

If you agree to serve as an oral history informant in this project, you will meet with a team of undergraduate students. The students will take a still photograph of you. In addition, if you have a photo of yourself in or around 1968, we would greatly appreciate it if we could borrow it, scan it, and return it. We would reserve the rights to reproduce those photos and use them on the website, conferences, exhibit or publications.

The students may conduct the interviews at a location of your choice, or you may meet them at the University of Baltimore Langsdale Library for your interviews. During the interviews, your recollections will be recorded in two forms: audio and video. The students will be responsible for operating the equipment. You can expect the interviews to last for a minimum of 30 minutes each.

Sometimes talking about events that occurred decades ago will unearth forgotten memories. Undoubtedly, some of those remembrances will be negative. We greatly appreciate your willingness to take the risk of exploring a potentially painful past so that your life experiences will be recorded.

After the interviews the students will transcribe your oral history. They will provide you with a copy of the transcription for your review before the transcription is published. The transcription, video and audio records will be archived in the Langsdale Library Special Collections and will be accessible to the public. Your name will be attached to these documents. The University of Baltimore may use your image and/or your words in any future documentaries, exhibits, conferences or publications. Participants in the oral history project agree to waive their confidentiality.

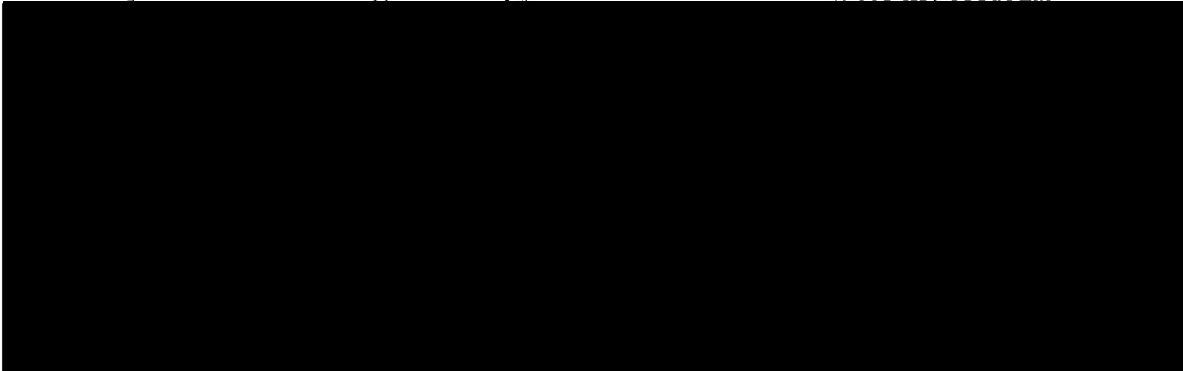
If at any time you are uncomfortable with participation in the study, you are free to drop out. Participation is strictly voluntary. While your participation is requested and highly valued, you are free to decide whether or not to continue participation at all times. You may decline to have your name published with your reminiscences

If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact me at 410-837-5296. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth M. Nix, Ph.D.
Visiting Assistant Professor
History and Community Studies
The University of Baltimore

I have read and understand the information provided above, and consent to participate in the study. I have also been given a copy of the informed consent for my records.



*Interview with Theodore A. Cavacos:
July 6, 2007; Hampden, Maryland
Interviewers: Nyasha Chikowore and Maria Paoletti
Transcribers: Duane Howard and Nora Feinstein*

Q: Can you state your full name for us?

Cavacos: Yeah. My name is Theodore A. Cavacos.

Q: And how old were you in 1968?

Cavacos: In 1968, I was 26 years old.

Q: And what was your situation?

Cavacos: I was a recent... I was a pharmacist. I was a graduate pharmacist who had just passed the boards in Maryland.

Q: And where did you live?

Cavacos: I lived at 1001 West 36th Street Baltimore, Maryland.

Q: Here?

Cavacos: Yeah, right here.

Q: So, do you remember where you used to shop or, you know, do groceries?

Cavacos: Well I shopped for my age... I was married then. I think I shopped in Hampden, in the Hampden area. Excuse me, you know... I must have lived... I'm sorry. I must've lived on Walther Boulevard then. In other words, I had been married, I was married and I lived on Walther Boulevard, which is the Hamilton or Parkville section of Baltimore. But I had a lot of

contacts at 1001 West 36th Street because that's where my parents lived.

Q: Oh, okay. Did you have any children?

Cavacos: I had one child at that time.

Q: How old?

Cavacos: In 1968, he was one-year-old.

Q: So before the riots, what kind of interactions did you have with people of other races?

Cavacos: In Baltimore, none. At my age I had no black friends, there was only one Hispanic I knew in Baltimore at that time who was a friend of my father's. I mean, there wasn't any kind of Hispanic presence then. There were a few immigrants from Guatemala, but I had grown up in a completely segregated town: Baltimore, Maryland, in my childhood. In college at George Washington [University] in D.C., I mean, I had African American friends and I had Arab friends. You know, because it was a multicultural group there. But on a...but in Baltimore, I mean, there was no interaction, or very little anyway.

Q: Did you grow up in Hampden?

Cavacos: I grew up in Hampden, especially yeah. Hampden especially was an all-white enclave within the city of Baltimore.

Q: You said you were a pharmacist?

Cavacos: Yes, I graduated in 1967, in June of 1967 from a medical college in Virginia and I returned to Baltimore with my wife and child and we lived at...on Walther Avenue, I'm sure of that now, in an apartment.

Q: Did you have any fellow pharmacists who were of different races?

Cavacos: No. Oddly enough, in Baltimore in 1967 the vast majority of pharmacists were Jewish, the vast majority I would say. In fact anytime anybody ever saw me they were wondering about me, because being a Greek then was as exotic as you got in Baltimore. Very few East Indians or anything at that time, people were wondering about your ethnicity when they asked what you did for a living. If you told them you were a pharmacist, they figured you were Jewish. So certainly I had a lot of Jewish friends 'cause all the pharmacists that I worked for were Jewish.

Q: Now, were you the only Greek family in Hampden?

Cavacos: No. Well, Hampden was unique. Hampden was all WASP, not even that many Catholics in Hampden. It was white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants [WASPs], a lot of people who had been here for generations with ancient English names like Lancaster or Blalock. You know, it was kind of interesting. You know, [last names like] King and so forth. A number of merchants in Hampden in Greek and a few of them lived in the neighborhood. And we had a Greek family that lived across the street. So there were...there was a big Greek presence because most...a lot of the merchants were Greeks in Hampden.

Q: So how would you describe the racial mood in Baltimore before the riots?

Cavacos: The racial mood before the riot was getting worse. In fact, the best evidence I give you is not from Hampden because Hampden was unique. Hampden wasn't really affected by the riots. Stores never closed, business was good in Hampden during the riots. And merchants in Hampden benefited from, let's say merchants in Poplar Grove Street coming to Hampden to sell their inventory to merchants in Hampden. But my best experience, and the most...the... I guess the deepest experience that I had was I was working as a pharmacist at Old York Road & East 41st Street and Old York Road & East 41st Street was a good example of what was happening in Baltimore. Old York Road & East 41st Street was not known as Old York [Road] & East 41st

Street. It was known as Blessed Sacrament Parish, that's the way Baltimore knew it. And Blessed Sacrament Parish was a good neighborhood, a lot of... It was... In a few months prior to the riots it had been predominately white. Things got...started getting bad unrelated to the King assassination prior to that, and whites started to move out. And things were complicated on Old York Road & East 41st Street because radical groups moved in. A New York radical group called "Making A Nation," moved right into that area and caused a lot of contention. They were funded somehow because they had a staff and they stirred up the local residents, the black local residents.

By the time the King riots happened white people were not coming out anymore and the crowds in the street were 100% black, 100%. There were no white people around. I mean, there were probably still some white people living in that neighborhood, but they were not going on the streets, that's for sure. So that's my observation of what was happening in Baltimore, things got worse prior to the King assassination. And a lot of that, I think, was attributed to those groups that were agitators. I mean, from my point of view they were agitators.

Q: So what do you remember about the assassination?

Cavacos: Well I was in D.C. with some friends. Must've been...if you say the assassination occurred on a Friday night...

Q: Thursday.

Cavacos: Okay, well Thursday night I was in D.C. with a buddy of mine, Bill Cooper and his wife, Patricia and my wife, Florence. And we were there and of course we were shocked by the news that King had been assassinated. I mean we weren't happy about it, we were shocked by it— it was a sad thing. And I think we also believed that it could've...it could happen. I mean, that was the nature of the way things were going at that time. So we heard over the radio that...not on TV but over the radio, we must have been listening to music or something. And it broke in and said that Dr. King had been assassinated.

Q: And how did you hear about the riots starting?

Cavacos: Well, now here's where I must admit I don't know. It's either that immediate Friday and Saturday, or the next week. And I don't know. I can't remember, but it would be that close to the assassination. I and my wife were in the movies in Irvington. Now, now to show you how Baltimore has changed, Irvington was completely white at that time, a white neighborhood. That's the way Baltimore was, you know, there were completely white neighborhoods. I mean, when I say completely white you didn't see any number of black people. We went to the Irvington movie. It would have been either that Friday or that Saturday after Dr. King's assassination or the following week and I don't know if there was a lapse. Were the riots immediate? Well then, after Thursday night we came back to Baltimore obviously, I lived in Baltimore and then that Friday or that Saturday we were at the Irvington movie. And we were watching some... Irvington was a "B" movie then, meaning that it wasn't a first run theater; it had a movie of some sort that interested us. And during the course of the movie the screen went red. Now, I guess it goes red 'cause of the light. And the manager of the Irvington Theater came out. In those days people still went to the movies, I guess because there were about 50 people in that theater. And he came out and said that Mayor D'Alesandro had ordered all businesses to close. And nobody asked for a refund either, we knew, you know, there was tension. I know we didn't stop by the box office to get a refund. We watched some of the movie, anyway. But we weren't interested in the...in the movie or a refund. And we drove from Irvington to Catonsville, I was knowledgeable enough about the geography. Now that whole area from Irvington to Catonsville was completely white at that time. Now that's all changed now. Irvington's all black now, I think. And even going towards Catonsville it's...turning black—African American. So anyway, we drove to the Beltway. And when we got to the Beltway there was a military man with a mounted machine gun at the entrance to the expressway. So then we went north on the expressway towards [Catonsville] and we got home okay.

Now, as a pharmacist I was able to work and I wasn't subject to any curfew. All I had to do was I had some kind of... I mean, I was stopped and questioned by police when I was in my car and they told me that...well, I just I told them I was a pharmacist. And I guess they asked me a couple of questions [about] where I was going and I never had any trouble going hither and

yon. Now I came Saturday and I worked at my father's store downstairs [in Hampden] 'cause I wasn't working at Old York Road on that day 'cause I worked two places. So I worked for my father on that Saturday. Well that Saturday we did a booming business because we had the National Guard all around the place and it was an all white neighborhood. Now, we did have a couple of black customers that day, but very few. A couple had just come from across the park, I guess to buy aspirin or stuff like that. That was Saturday.

Q: What kind of store was it?

Cavacos: [It was] a pharmacy and we had a liquor license. Of course, we couldn't sell liquor. And the National Guard posted two men right at the liquor counter because they were afraid that the locals might, or anybody might break in to try to get liquor. So they posted two National Guardsmen, which was fine for us. It was nice having National Guardsmen in the store, you know, military men. I think that they were National Guard. And we had a normal day in Hampden. I mean, Hampden... There was no...no nothing that occurred in Hampden that day.

Q: So were you... When you first heard about the riots were you surprised, or... How did you feel?

Cavacos: I was a little surprised, but, you know, the areas that were starting to burn...I mean, they were bad areas anyway. I mean, I never hung out at North Avenue and Greenmount [Avenue], for example. I would've never gone to North Avenue and Greenmount [Avenue] because it was a tough area and I wouldn't have been welcomed and... I mean; they were just tough areas. I mean, so, I wasn't surprised because of the nature of the people that were rioting; you know, looters and stuff like that, I expected that. I mean, I expected that was going to happen. And I thought there was going to be...certainly some anger at the assassination of an icon like Dr. King. I don't think I was thinking of it exactly like that but I wasn't surprised that the areas that got burned down got burned down. Poplar Grove [Street], Edmondson Avenue, those were tough areas, real tough.

Q: During the riots what information did you get and where did it come from?

Cavacos: All the information came through the radio and it wasn't perfect. And then of course family members would call you. The worst day that I encountered was the Sunday... Now, I had gotten... Friday night we got home safe. And we didn't think that you know...and then, again, Hamilton then was completely white. I mean, you were... So it was unlikely that you would were going to have trouble there. So we got home and I don't think we thought twice about that. We got home, I'm sure we chit-chatted about it and I think we were both...amazed by seeing a machine gun. You know, that was kind of scary. So that didn't affect us. So Saturday was a reasonable day. Sunday I opened the store at Old York Road & East 41st Street. And as indicated, Old York Road & East 41st Street was starting to show problems. People tried... Because I was a pharmacist, people tried to sell me houses on Cator Avenue. Cator Avenue was a decent neighborhood at that time just when I first started working there a few months earlier. Then that fast, that neighborhood got really rough. People were trying to sell their homes on Cator Avenue for \$1,600. They would come to me as a pharmacist figuring I might have the money, trying to sell their houses. They were getting out. And a lot of people had left the neighborhood even if they hadn't sold their homes 'cause they felt threatened there.

That Sunday...about...everything was going fine, except around one o'clock there was no more purchases in the store. No more purchases were made. People were just coming in looking at stuff. Going, "Hey look at that. Look at that." Roller skates, you know, we sold everything in that store, didn't have a liquor license. They said, "Look at this. Look at that." The sleds, we had sleds and bicycles, and all kinds of [things]. [It was] a small store, we had all kinds of stuff in it. So no, so there were no more purchases being made. And about 2 o'clock in the afternoon we were notified—and I'm sure I was listening to the radio. I was notified on the radio that again, [Mayor] Tommy D'Alesandro, that would be the younger Tommy, had ordered that all stores would have to close. And I'm sure...I'm...I'm sure that I was still... I mean, you still can't believe that you're going to be injured; I mean I didn't believe that I was going to be injured. And I didn't want to get in trouble with my boss and it was his store. So I didn't know what to do but I'm sure that someone in authority, probably a policeman, came by and said, "You gotta close the store." Now that was... Then I started getting nervous and... 'cause there

was a giant crowd outside on Old York Road & East 41st Street. And I had two old ladies with... And I always say they used to wear starched handkerchiefs. You know, 'cause that was part... You know, they used to do that as accoutrements. Two old ladies and I had four boys [working]. Part of the problem, again, was that you had six white people, truth be told, in an all-black neighborhood. And they're the employees even though they were low-end jobs—certainly the six people that I was responsible for were. The people saw that, I'm sure. Saw there were six people. And I had trouble, as I've always said, when I got to the door to address the crowd because I was going to try and get out of there. I heard from Making a Nation group, "Jew," you know, "Jew bastard." And I had to say to the crowd, you know, "I'm not Jewish." I mean, you know it was getting out of hand. I'm going to be killed for being a Jew, to boot, and I'm not even Jewish, you know. 'Cause we had had a lot of trouble with that Making a Nation [group] and I think Making a Nation had Jewish members, too. They just were atrocious. They were from New York, bad crowd.

So I addressed the crowd and told them first off, "Hey man, I'm not Jewish. I'm Greek." But I said, "Here's the situation: I got two old ladies and four kids in here. And I want to drive them out of here; we're closing the store. But I won't pull down the riot shield." We had a riot shield. I said, "How's that, deal?" And everybody said, "Deal." So I put the six people in my little Plymouth whatever it was... Plymouth Valiant. It could seat...probably sit six people but I had seven people in that car. And we drove out of the neighborhood. And they broke the window, you know, got in the store. Then of course I didn't go back to work there because there was no store to work at. And Dr. Feldman who owned that store went to Las Vegas... I mean, where his brother had a store. He didn't try to rebuild or anything. And the store remained there until two ladies took it over as like a convenience store and now the store is gone. It's been torn down. I think they lasted for a while.

Q: What was his name? Dr. ...?

Cavacos: Dr. Feldman. Harold Feldman.

Q: F-E-L-D?

Cavacos: ...M-A-N. I tell you the truth I've never been able to find Dr. Feldman. Because for a while I worked as a speaker and I was located in...my main office was in Las Vegas, Nevada. And I know he said that he went to Las Vegas and I could never find Dr. Feldman. And he would be about 15 years older than me so he would be 81-years-old now.

Q: Did he suffer a great financial loss?

Cavacos: Yeah. He tried to sell. What happened was... It happened so fast because I was...I entered... I was able to stay in the store by myself on January the second of 1968. And the riots happened in April, right? Early April. So, in three months that whole area changed that fast. That Blessed Sacrament Parish, that's the way they knew it, it went from being overwhelmingly white... And here's another thing which, of course, has occurred. There were a lot of...there were some, when I say some, there were only a few black families. All those black families were nice. And they were victimized by the new black people that had come in. And all...Every...Everyone of the private schoolchildren who was African American, they all disappeared from that neighborhood because I knew them. Those kids were, well...I mean, they were rambunctious, too, occasionally but they all left, the nicer blacks... And the blacks were victimized.

One time a guy came to me and he didn't know what to do. You know, he's seven-foot tall, a big black guy, nice guy. They're stealing his milk, they're stealing his newspaper, they're vandalizing his property, they're playing loud music. What can he do? I said, "You can't do anything. You got to call the cops." And he left. I mean he asked my advice, I said, "You can't... What can you do? They're just going to make it worse." And that neighborhood now is very tough, very tough. Old York Road, East 41st Street, Cator Avenue, maybe it's improved 'cause there's been some gentrification in Baltimore recently. But for a long time that Old York Road which was a great place, Old York Road. The 3900 block was real dangerous, got real dangerous. So those are my recollections of it.

Q: And the "Make the Nation" group were...

Cavacos: Making a Nation, M-A-N, they called it M-A-N. It was... The kind of stuff they would do is that a girl, a neighborhood girl would buy—and I'm being truthful with you, these were the things they really would do—would buy a box of Kotex [sanitary napkins], pay 49 cents. Making a Nation would see her, say hi, you know, and talk to her— an African American child. Then they'd come in with her and say...Reed's, Reed's was the competitor then, which became Rite Aid. They'd say "You know, Reed's sells this for 36 cents, you goddamned Jew." That would say that to you in the store. Well what could you do? You got a bad crowd. They were fomenting problems. And...and the Catholic priest in that parish was no friend in the neighborhood because he cooperated in a way with MAN. Now he didn't...and if I said to the priest, "Hey father, you know... they keep on calling me a goddamned Jew, you know, that's not Christian." You know, and it...it was a bad time. And a lot of the priests, I think, the priest at that parish at that time, and I don't... I didn't have that much interplay with him, but I thought he saw himself as a radical. They were gonna make everybody equal and everything was going to be perfect. And you know, like...none of that happened.

And, of course, I had discussions with Greek merchants. My father never spoke to a number of Greeks who had stores right across the street from Sears. You know, Sears on North Avenue, of course...Then again, you see, there were things that were causing a lot of contention. The black neighborhoods weren't being protected at all. But Sears was protected at North [Avenue] and Harford [Road]. I mean they...they protected that store of course 'cause they alleged that Sears I think still had hunting rifles in it, so they could have [protection]. But right across the street from Sears they didn't... They didn't protect the Greek merchants. The Greek merchants had...there were...there was a restaurant and a bar there. The restaurant was owned by a family named Frankos; the [other] restaurant was named by a Greek family named Kimos, K-I-M-O-S, F-R-A-N-K-O-S. And my father never spoke to one of the Frankoses because he sent his children down there. [He sent] his boys to protect the store. My father thought that was insane and he thought it was money grubbing. You know, for goodness sakes, you send your kids? When Nicky and Jimmy Frankos got there—now this is second-hand but I know it happened 'cause I saw them right it 'cause they came to Hampden to relax afterwards. When they were trying to put the door up, although they were two white guys and Jimmy Frankos...or

Billy Frankos was very blond, especially for a Greek kid. When they put the door up, the crowd was applauding them because they thought they were taking the door out. So they were equal opportunity there. They didn't care whether they were whites or blacks cause they thought they were taking the door off but they were actually putting the door up. Then for a while after that the Frankoses did...and the Kimoses did some good business 'cause they were able to protect the places. Think they had guns and stuff; they protected the places. And they sold bread and milk and eggs and all kinds of stuff and they made some money.

Q: What...How long did it take for things to get back to normal for you?

Cavacos: You know, for me because I didn't work at Old York Road & East 41st Street, they were normalized immediately because Hampden was normal. There was a lot of discussion about the riots afterwards. You know, discussion but I never was affected after that.

Q: Now you said that you listened to the radio most of the time?

Cavacos: Yeah, we always listened to the radio then. We wouldn't have had cell phones or anything. I would've had regular landlines. And I'm sure that I had my radio on all the time anyway listening to... probably at that age I might've been listening to music. But if you were listening to WCAO they broke in or they had newscasts every 30 minutes or something.

Q: Did you have a TV?

Cavacos: No, not at the store. That would have been unusual in those days.

Q: [Did you have a TV] at your home?

Cavacos: At my home I had a TV, three channels, four channels.

Q: Did you watch any coverage of the riots on your TV?

Cavacos: No, you know, I don't think I watched too much coverage. It made my wife... I'm divorced from her... My wife was nervous about it and we had a small child and that made her nervous so I didn't do it. And as a pharmacist, I drove into the neighborhoods during the daytime 'cause I could go anywhere. And that was kind of a plus. You know, you could go anywhere. I never felt threatened 'cause there were plenty of National Guardsmen. And I used to drive through the neighborhoods; I drove through North [Avenue] and Harford [Road]. I went down and probably visited the Kimoses, probably visited the Frankos people. And I... And I drove up North Avenue to Edmondson [Avenue]. I went to Poplar Grove Street and I... A pharmacist who had been burnt out there sold me some merchandise out of his store. And I went... I went to him. He didn't come to me. And I filled the stuff up in my car, and I didn't... You know, there was so much of a presence of military and police. Everything that was good, I mean, that they really wanted had been stolen. Stuff I bought was prophylactics, small stuff that people wouldn't see. You know, like, a bottle of liquor or something like that or an appliance.

Q: So you did see the National Guard, they were in the store...

Cavacos: They were everywhere.

Q: They were everywhere.

Cavacos: They were everywhere. The National Guard made me feel secure at North Avenue and Harford Road. I felt secure. All... All along I drove along. In fact, I had my windows down, probably. You know, 'cause I didn't have automatic locks or anything, and I didn't have air conditioning. It was probably warmish and I saw... There was still smoke billowing in it from here and there and everything like that.

Q: So what was your impression of the neighborhoods that were affected?

Cavacos: Well, the ones that I saw were all completely black neighborhoods. I saw one unique thing. There were great stores on Lombard Street. Now, Lombard Street was referred to as "Jew

Town,” but not in a bad way if you can believe that.

Q: You mean East Lombard Street?

Cavacos: East Lombard Street was referred to as Jew Town, but nobody took offense to that because that's where you got your corned beef. And there were a couple of really, really nice pharmacies there, old-style pharmacies. In fact one of 'em which was... I would have loved to do with my own pharmacy when I was interested in pharmacies; they had they circular arches as an entrance, first of all. And I think he kept two of 'em closed, but you could see it was three. And you went through one arch, and his store, which was a smallish store, he had three arches. He had this tiny soda fountain, full-service soda fountain—made snowballs, ice creams sundaes and all. Then he had a circular thing with a pharmacy, which was like, the back. And the side was, I think, his liquor license or maybe even perfume and stuff like that. You know, he sold stuff like that. This was a gorgeous store. Well they not only burned East Lombard Street down, they returned to burn East Lombard Street down. And likewise the pharmacy, which was at North Avenue...North Avenue...was it, no it couldn't be...Harford... North Avenue and Greenmount [Avenue], there was a pharmacy at North Avenue and Greenmount [Avenue]. That pharmacy was burnt down or was burned. And that pharmacist returned, filling prescriptions for people, even though there was substantial damage. 'Cause nobody was going to raid...I'm sure that's illegal for the health department. You can't do that kind of stuff, but he did it. I mean, he did it as a courtesy. He returned and...and filled prescriptions and the next night they came and burned him out again—completely that time. He might have lived above the store, too. I don't know. But they burned that. He wasn't killed. And Little Italy, which was adjacent to Jew Town—again, I'm not using “Jew Town” derogatorily, that's what it was called— that wasn't affected at all. And there are a lot of reasons for that, most of it being, I think, the fellows on the roofs with... with rifles. That's what they say, I don't know. But I mean, how Little Italy wasn't affected, I mean if you go there, they're indistinguishable. They're right there together. I don't think Little Italy was affected at all either...

Q: Do you remember any violence or arrests that occurred?

Cavacos: Actually we had two fellows, white fellows arrested in the store when one guy came in... It was... It was touchy. When the Saturday after the... Friday night when I was working at the drugstore, at the downstairs [Hampden] drugstore, a black fellow came in and that was unique. And of course people were a little...you know...you didn't know what to say to anybody. You know, you didn't know what to say. So the guy said, "Give me a tin of aspirin." And then he said to me, "We need some aspirin. You know, headaches." And I said, "Yeah." And you know, he was a nice guy and as he was going out, two punks shoved into him. And my father pointed the punks out—these are white punks shoving a black guy. He pointed them out to the cops and the cops arrested those two fellows. Or they took them into custody. Whatever they did with them I don't know, they moved them out of the store. So that was one thing that I saw. The Greek lawyers that I knew at that time, they all were asked to come downtown to represent or, you know, give some legal representation to all the detainees. And that would be George Cocoros, I think. If you... That might be an interesting sideline on that. George C-O-C-O-R-[O]-S. He's...Paul Cocoros is his older brother. George I know went downtown. I'm sure he participated with the detainees. That might be another aspect of that.

The thing that made the riots... I don't think it could happen as easily again, maybe not, because there's not as much segregation as there was. When I grew up I didn't have a single black friend. I mean, just didn't run into black people. Though, to let you know, white kids as a group would go to the... This is way before the riots, when I was a kid, when I was sixteen. We would go to...what was the name of it? Not the arcade or... They use a word like...not a stadium, but a center, like a center. There was a center on Monroe Street—that was a tough area—but we went there as a group, white kids with white chaperones. We had a good time watching the Rock and Roll stars there, all black Rock and Roll stars. Screaming Jay Hawkins and guys like that, Little Richard. Yeah, in fact, one thing that was unique... although we were very segregated and of course a very prejudiced city, both blacks against whites and whites against blacks, because nobody knew each other when I was growing up. I always alleged that no white kid that I knew, and I went to Loyola High School, ever preferred Pat Boone's cover of Little Richard's songs. No we didn't, I mean, I never bought a Pat Boone records, a cover of a Little Richard song. We bought Little Richard [albums], you know, that sort of thing. And one

other thing that was unique, although I wouldn't hang at Howard [Street] & North Avenue, I bought all my clothes on Pennsylvania Avenue 'cause they were the most stylish clothes and shoes. Man, and now there's a not a single pair of hard shoes on Pennsylvania Avenue. Ain't that wild? But I did all my shopping on Pennsylvania Avenue for clothes, 'cause you couldn't top it. Get really nice stuff, I mean really sharp, if you wanted to be sharp. 'Cause I was considered a drape when I was a kid, not a square. You know, squares were the button-down [shirt] guys, I was kind of a drape which used to wear long hair and...

Q: A drape?

Cavacos: Drape, they called it. There was only two groups. I consider myself a scrape, which was a semi-square. 'Cause I used to buy one-button rolls, which is a... A zoot suit. I couldn't buy a zoot suit at Hecht's, but you could buy it at Papa Kelly's on Pennsylvania Avenue. And I mean that was really great stuff, good quality and wild...wild stuff.

Q: When... At your home neighborhood and when you were living in Hamilton...

Cavacos: Yes.

Q: Did you...did you notice any change in the mood in your neighborhood during the riots?

Cavacos: No, see we were so insulated...and now that I think about it... 'cause my wife was nervous about the whole thing. We were so insulated from black people. I have...I mean, truthfully, we just didn't feel... We felt that we would be protected. And I guess that we felt that we were on the right side of the riots. We didn't feel that the rioters were correct. I mean, I'm sure I didn't feel that way, I'm sure that the rioters were rioters, you know? And we just felt and I saw...I thought that calmer heads would prevail. I mean, there were a lot of black leaders that...of course, they were having trouble. I think [Spiro T.] Agnew was governor then. They were having trouble and I watched that stuff on TV. They were having a lot of trouble with Agnew. But you know, Agnew, again, if you thought that you were on the right side of the thing,

I mean, Agnew gave...didn't leave any...he left a message that it [the rioting] wasn't going to be tolerated. I mean, you know, he gave you the impression that Hamilton wasn't going to burn down. And sure enough, Hamilton didn't burn down and Hampden didn't burn down. And Ashburton, I guess, didn't burn down, nice black neighborhood. Didn't burn down either.

Q: How do you think...how do you think Baltimore has changed after the riots?

Cavacos: Well, I think as far as race relations now, it's much better. Because when I worked for the city at age 19, I remember there was a contact that I had with a black guy. And I kind of liked him, he was a nice guy. When we would go to eat, let's say at the Double T Diner on Route 40, if we went to get lunch together, you know... People would kid...sometimes they were kidding; but sometimes they would say, "Freedom Riders." You know. I mean, not that they felt we were freedom riders, they would just make fun of you, you know. And even... I'm... It's a long story, I practiced law for 22 years. I've done a lot of different things in my life. The first time they sent me a temporary, who was a black female, I felt nervous about it. And that would have been in nineteen...well, 1977, let's say. Ten years later. In 1977 it was bad, it was not good business-wise for me to have a black secretary—though I certainly wouldn't... Because of my nature, I wouldn't dismiss her and she turned out to be a great secretary. And once people got to know her—she wasn't there that long—in a couple weeks they loved her. And she was good looking, which also helped. You know, she was real good looking. Doesn't that help? I mean, that helps everything in life. But even in that time in 1977, somebody called me and said, "There's a black female in your office." I mean, it would be that unusual, imagine such a thing. They said, "There's a black female in your office." And I said, you know, "Well that must be the temp. You know, I mean... My mother...my mother probably let her in. You know, my mother, she identified herself, my mother left her in the office. But somebody took the time, I mean, not in a mean way but in a concerned way, to let me know that there was a black female in the office. So you know, so to show you—that's kind of wild, that's really weird. And that would have been '77 so that's...things had progressed somewhat in 1977 to that point.

Now, I've said the thing that's brought the races together in Hampden is crack [cocaine]. That's what brought them. I mean...they still hated blacks...In fact, you know, I have to say—

being a Greek in Hampden wasn't the easiest thing, either. I told the young lady that I talked to that in nineteen—to show you how race relations were in Hampden—in 1965, that's when I was still a student at George Washington [University], a Lumbee [Native American] Indian moved onto Hickory Avenue. Lumbees can be any color. They can look...they can look like a real American Indian, they can be coal black, they can look like a Swede. Lumbees are like that. Well she...she looked like I mean, what I consider Puerto Rican, Hispanic a little bit. The movers were black guys. There was a crowd that was so big when you're leaving here—The Avenue [36th Street] is one street down this way, a long street, you know, like Roland Avenue, you can look down this way. That entire street was covered with people from the bottom, you know, five or six abreast all the way up. And she said... two little kids at the screen door with her...and I was there with my buddy, Bill Cooper, oddly enough he was my best friend and we were watching this and the crowd was really ugly. Well the lady came out and said, "These are movers." Well the crowd wasn't real interested in this so she told the movers to put her stuff back and she went back in with the kids. Well then after that somebody, "It's that goddamned Greek, Cavacos rented this house to them niggers," you know, that's typical talk. So the only thing that saved us that night, now that's '65 from being victimized as Greeks was the fact that as the crowd was coming up there was another Greek guy, thank the Lord, named Jimmy Floris. And Jimmy was a racetrack guy and they liked him because they saw him at the track. They never saw my father at the track but they saw Jimmy Floris at the track. And Jimmy Floris always had the racing form in his paper. And he raised his racing form and said, "That," he was a real estate guy, he said, "That house ain't owned by Cavacos." And that's what saved us from having all of our windows broken. Now we wouldn't have been killed or nothing but we would have had every window in the store broken that night. So Hampden was a rough place. And we had a liquor license and when they got drunk they let their feelings known about Greeks and Jews and niggers, and not spics because there were no Spaniards... There were no Spanish people around.

Q: So you definitely felt...you did feel like for a long time that the Greek community were...they were victims of discrimination?

Cavacos: In some... I think so, yeah. There was always that thing. Of course there were regular... But most of the Greeks were kind of regular guys like Michael Vanis going to the racetrack a lot, too. He owned a restaurant; he was well liked. He wasn't that smart; he wasn't college educated. 'Cause Hampden... Hampdenites never put a premium on education. I mean—there was never a premium on education in this neighborhood. But they always learned to do some trade or something. Poolis was the cleaners...so that's, you know, you clean your dirty clothes. And the El Paso was a restaurant, St. Louis Grill was a restaurant, so they saw them sweating in there and working so they didn't see them as any kind of fancy people. But if they didn't like you they let you know about it. And they let you know they didn't like you 'cause you were Greek or... like my uncle had a very thick accent and they would make fun of his accent. Well that's minimal stuff. The Chinese that...that... I saw the little Chinese kids—and little Chinese kids—beat up a couple of times when they were coming up crying and all bloodied and all. The kids would be yelling, you know, “Ching Chong, Chinaman,” and that kind of stuff. So I saw plenty of stuff in my life, you know. So there's plenty... I saw... Now here's an interesting thing: now think about this. Although it seemed to be color that caused the most problems, my father always had East Indians who were attempting to become pharmacists or their sisters who just needed a job—minimum wage jobs working at the [soda] fountain, who were dark, who were brown. You're... certainly your color, right? They were East Indians. No one ever objected to the East Indians, they just never did. They never raised the issue. You know, nobody ever called and said, “Hey, there's a dark person...you know, working in your store,” or anything like that. That was unique. I thought that was... Even with the...you know, the dot, the saris and all that kind of stuff, they never seemed to... I guess they didn't understand where they were coming from.

Q: Is that it? I think we've covered a lot of ground here.

Cavacos: Well, I grew up during a... You know, a long, long period, you know. But... Baltimore's a really segregated city. It really was. And one thing...one improvement I've seen ... just, in my own observation. I worked for a while, recently, as a pharmacist again. And I saw that black and white kids and Hispanic kids, I guess when they were... They really are much

more easy-going with each other. I mean, in the old days you wouldn't think of... I would never, I just couldn't go to the movies with a black kid. I'd get in trouble, or maybe the black kid would get in trouble. You know? I think that's the case. And I've seen it from both sides. I had a couple... I've been divorced a lot and I've had a couple black, African American female friends—girlfriends, even. And we got into as much hassle from the black people as we ever got from white people. In fact, I think we got much, much more from black people than from white people. I would say that without a doubt. And I didn't feel... I mean, I never even thought about it because I liked... I mean we were friendly and we were "that" friendly and we had a lot in common. And I never even thought of the racial thing but it was often brought up to us, most likely by black people...brought the issue up. Which of course, we had just avoided it. But anyway, but so that's...that's a way it's kind of changed and now in Hampden you see a lot of interracial dating, you see a lot of interracial kids. You see a lot of interracial interplay— a lot of it is drug related.

Q: Is there any thing else about the riots that you remember?

Cavacos: There... See, I...now, see I had the... I mean, I was in the depths of the riot but I really wasn't afraid during the riots 'cause I was living in two areas where I was involved...mostly in two areas where there was no problem. But I did, I mean, I was frightened. And I'm sure that that was the only time in my life when I said, "Look, I've got a wife and child." That's the only time I've used that phrase when I was addressing a crowd. See, I always felt the crowd could be talked to. I mean...I always thought. 'Cause I had a lot of trouble in the store...and I learned...and I had had no interaction... Look how things have changed: I had had no interaction with black people in my whole life when I went to work at Old York Road and East 41st Street. And that really wasn't an issue because... I mean, over sixty...before that, '68 and earlier it had been mostly a white community. But I had had no interaction with black people. I mean...maybe a few downstairs. There used to be a rag factory where a lot of black people worked and they bought stuff. Friday was a big day downstairs in the store. But...I mean, it was very nominal, the contact. When I went to work at Dolfield Avenue, my boss asked me—he was a white guy, I went to work at a pharmacy and that was nine years ago. So as recently as

nine years ago he said, “Do you get along with black people?” I said, “I get along with everybody.” And I do, I mean, I do. You know, I don’t have any axe to grind.

But to show you, at Old York Road and East 41st Street how I’d learned to cope, I went...one time one of the ladies with the starch, she was scared to death, she came back [to me] and I came out. And there was this seven-foot, eight-foot guy there; big, rippling muscles, you know, body shirt on—black guy. And he said, “She tells me that I can’t get a refund for this,” What was the instant camera? Polaroid film. And it was true, you know, if you made a mistake with Polaroid, you had to send it back to Kodak or whoever made it and if they determined that it was their mistake, it was a defective...they sent you a check to cover your cost. But if it was your mistake, ‘cause it was easy to make them—I mean, that was complex, you know? They sent you an explanation.

So, he was going to tear the whole place apart. And he said, “What would you as a man do?” Now here his is, I mean, he’s a man’s man, right? And here I am: five [foot] six [inches]. You know, then I weighed probably 129 pounds. I said, “Do you know what I would do as a man? I’d send it back to Polaroid and see what they say.” And you know...that was...that satisfied him. But then I told my boss, “I’m getting refunds for the Polaroid film,” I’m not going to... You know things, because you see, things were tense. Although that night, I mean...I started to learn to...I mean, you know...I understood what his concept was. He thought he wasn’t acting as a man. And I know that I acted as a man, even though I was kind of scared, you know. I mean, but he was unsure of whether... But when I convinced him that he was acting as a man— that was good enough for him.

My biggest problem was with the white New Yorkers in Making a Nation. You might be able to find some information on them. I’m sure they were incorporated and they functioned there a long time.

Q: So were they all white?

Cavacos: They...yeah, see... And I’ll tell you, that’s the thing... Boy, one night I was...this one female. They were all... I think they were all white. Now, the people that they agitated were all black. One night, she said something about Jews and you know, white people, and son of a

bitches, and thieves. And I said, “You know something,” because I...I saw a couple friendly faces in the crowd that knew me. ‘Cause I had done, I tell you, I think I had done...we had kind of connected one time. This was right after that. I said, “You know something? She thinks she’s Sheena, Queen of the Jungle [1955 movie heroine].” I mean... I mean I just blew up. That’s what she thought she was. She was Sheena. She was Queen of these people. Arr!

But let me tell you how I connected one time. One big style—now, I always wore a suit ‘cause I’m... Oh, and I’ll tell you why I wore a suit with how things are changing. I’m... I was so young looking, everybody always used to ask for the pharmacist.

Q: Uh huh.

Cavacos: So I start wearing a suit. Not even the... ‘Cause the kids in the store, they wore like those lab jackets, too. So I always wore a nice suit. People figured I must be either the owner or the pharmacist. So I always wore a suit. And I liked that. And I did that through my whole life. But anyway, the style then was... The kids used to wear Tenors. They were low-cuts and they would have thick laces and they never tied the laces. Okay? That was the style. So one day I came in with my suit, but I had...I had bought a pair of tennis shoes and I had those thick laces. I was wearing them. And they were all pointing at my shoes and they... We kind of connected. You know, ‘cause I was teasing them. You know? But they connected and it was after that that I had that incident with “Sheena,” and after that I think they kind of let me go. And they kind of looked at her. You know, in a way she was kind of leading them all by the nose, you know? [She was] causing trouble and they weren’t benefiting from any of it; they were just causing me grief. Now that was all before Dr. King died. Well obviously I didn’t have experience after he was assassinated. I don’t know how it was after that.

Q: And after the riots you came to work here [in Hampden]?

Cavacos: After that I probably worked here, yeah. And there’s always been a shortage of pharmacists, so I probably worked on Bel Air Road then, other places... ‘Cause there was not enough work for me at that time, with my father, ‘cause my father was still working in those

days. So, now I've talked your ears off. I have a lot of remembrances.

Q: All right. Great. Well thanks!

Cavacos: And one other...one other thing that you might want to do. George is a wild guy, and you'd probably find him... I mean if you're interested, George Cocoros. Tell him that you talked to me and tell him that I think that he was a—C-O-C-O-R-O-S—first name, George. He may be retired. George's about five years older than me. But if you talk to George, tell him that you talked to me and you're doing these interviews and that Teddy thinks that you may have gone down to interview detainees during the riots. He might have some good stories there. You know, really. You know?

Q: Yeah. That'd be great. Well thanks!