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.

[redacted]

*Interview with Stuart Silberg*
*Date of Interview: 15 June 2007; University of Baltimore*
*Interviewers: Nyasha Chikowore and Maria Paoletti*
*Transcriber: Duane Howard*

**Maria Paoletti:** For the record, please state your name…

**Stuart Silberg:** Stuart Silberg.

**Paoletti:** In the 1960s, the years surrounding and leading up to 1968, what was your life situation—how old were you; where did you work or live?

**Silberg:** 1968…I was already married for a year, almost two years. November would have been our second anniversary, so this is in the summer of >68, so married almost two years. I was going to the University of Baltimore, as a matter of fact—night school. I was working at—and that was three or four nights a week—I was working at Black & Decker as, at that time, I started as a file clerk because I needed a job in order to…my wife and I would work and we'd have a few bucks. I was getting forty-eight dollars a week in those days; she was getting fifty-eight, so she was my sugar mama.

**Nyasha Chikowore:** Where was it located?

**Silberg:** Black & Decker was in Joppa, in Towson. I lived in Baltimore County, just north in Baltimore County and I went to school here in the city, so I had a full reach of lots of different communities—suburban communities and city communities—and was very much exposed to the old University of Baltimore before it got fancy with all the beautiful buildings. The only place that you could get something to eat was across the street at the Little Tavern where I got thirteen hamburgers for a dollar and split them with a buddy of mine. They were called "death balls." Or I used to go to this little sub shop, which was in this alley here, which doesn't exist anymore. And that=s where we used to eat before going into class for three hours a night, three to four times a week. So we hadn't had any children yet; we got married in 1966, so we hadn't had any

children yet. We were still trying to figure out what this thing called marriage was all about. In 1968 I was twenty-three; I was born in 1945 so I was still twenty-two at the time. And I lived…like I said, I lived in Baltimore County.

**Paoletti:** Where did you grow up?

**Silberg:** I grew up…my first twelve and a half years were on Liberty Heights Avenue, across from the old Provident Hospital, right above Mondawmin, which at the time I was growing up was Brown's estate. It was pre-Mondawmin; old Alex Brown owned a huge estate on that property. My turf was Tioga Parkway, Burleith Avenue, Liberty Heights Avenue. I lived at 2605 Liberty Heights. Been back, by the way, since—say hello to the nice ladies that live there, and sat on the stoop and watched traffic go by and remembered the street cars that passed by on Liberty Heights Avenue in the old days. I did *not* walk up hill both ways with no shoes on, so don't let me leave you with that impression; my parents did put shoes on me. I went to school right there on Druid Park Drive. I used to go swimming at Carlin's Park—Gwynn Oak was special. So that=s where I grew up.

**Paoletti:** In your daily life in the 60's, where did you shop, like for clothes, groceries…?

**Silberg:** A lot of the shopping, I think, was already heading up north of Park Heights Avenue. There was a lot of shopping at Belvedere and Park Heights. That was the old Pimlico area; there were a lot of shops and we would shop there. Back in >68 there was a little strip center in Baltimore County that opened right on Smith Avenue, right near the apartments which my wife and I first moved into called the Pickwick Apartments. So there's a little convenience center that was open there. We still went down to Mondawmin when we needed something. We would go out to Route 40; Security Mall was opening, so basically that=s where I shopped. I did go downtown a little bit; we did shop downtown a little bit. I'm not sure if the four department stores, called "the four corners"—it was Stewart's, Hecht's, Hochschild's and…Hess Shoes, I think was down there as well. I don=t know if they had already closed on Howard Street or not—Howard and Saratoga, Howard and Lexington. But we'd still go downtown to shop a little

bit. It was still a lot of fun.

**Paoletti:** Before the riots—and I don't mean immediately before, I mean the in the years before—what sorts of interactions did you have with people of other races?

**Silberg:** I had as much interaction as I had all growing up. There were people of all races and persuasions that worked at Black & Decker; the people where I shopped would be black, yellow, red , white, green, purple. I mean, there was never…we were really colorblind. My dad…the reason for it is because my father owned a drug store down in Baltimore City, which I assume that we will be talking more about because that really was the effect of the >68 riots and what led up to it. I was…even in my life, I was raised by a Southern nanny, because both my parents worked. She came from Columbia, South Carolina, and she was like my mama. She *was* my mother; I saw more of her than I saw of anyone else in the whole wide world, so I was very colorblind. And to this day, color is not part of the equation to me; it's not part of the equation. So my interaction was normal. Whatever was, was; whatever roads I traveled on, I traveled on. It didn't matter to me; it was nothing that frightened me, it was nothing that upset me, it was nothing that angered me…until 1968.

**Paoletti:** Did you go to an integrated high school?

**Silberg:** I did, I went to City College. I went to elementary school…I went to School 18, which is Franklin Delano Roosevelt School, which is on Druid Park Drive. Then I went to Pimlico Junior High, which I believe was the first or second year of Pimlico Junior High at that time. I believe it was in the city. Then I had a choice; I guess my parents could have sent me to a private school, but I didn't want that. I used to hitch—in those days you could hitch without getting killed—we used to hitch right down Park Heights Avenue or down Cross Country Boulevard down to Park Circle and cross Park Circle to City College. I went to City for my high school years. And it was integrated. If you wanted to see a girl you had to wait until she came across from Eastern High School which was down there; that was the girls' school and the boys' school was City. But that was great. Played ball, swam, ate…black, white, yellow, red.

**Paoletti:** Outside of your life, how would you describe the racial mood in Baltimore before the riots?

**Silberg:** I think it was tense. I believe it was tense. From my experience, viewing it through my father=s eyes and the concerns that he had in the early to mid 60's, it was already beginning to…there was a groundswell of discontent, of anger, of frustration. And I can't purely define a neighborhood or section that it was in; it was beginning. You should remember, or have it historically captured, that back in the 60's we had the realtors who were "breaking blocks," they used to call it. Liberty Heights Avenue, where we lived, was all white, pretty much I guess. I remember that there was a company—I'll leave the name out because it could have an effect on somebody, generationally speaking—but they came in and they found a black family that wanted to move into our block. And I said great; matter of fact, the young lad that was going to move in, the son of the family, became my best friend. His name was Joe Murray. Joe and I would play wire ball in the back alleys by throwing a Pinky Ball up against the telephone wires. We played all day together, we fought with each other—we fought *against* other people who were beginning to sense this tension. So that started, and it started in that time. Actually it started…that started really in the 50's, quite honestly. I moved out of Liberty Heights Avenue in 1958 and moved up into Baltimore County where my parents eventually lived, so I only lived in Liberty Heights from 1945 to 1958. So that started in the 50's, in the mid 50's—the breaking of the block and the groundswell of anger and distrust, and so on and so forth. And it started to peak even before the unfortunate incident of Martin Luther; it started then, I think.

**Paoletti:** What do you remember about Dr. King=s assassination? How did you hear about it?

**Silberg:** Well, I can=t exactly remember if I listened to it on the radio. I probably was in my office…I don=t remember the time of day it was but I know it was day time. I know it was incredibly tragic. And I believe I got a phone call from my father, who owned a business on the corner of Rutland and Monument Street, which was where the old Sinai Hospital was, across from Hopkins. It was a rather large drugstore. It wasn't just an apothecary; it was a full

restaurant and full service—it was like a huge Rite Aid, but with a huge restaurant inside of it. It was a state of the art place, really it was, called the Manhattan Drugstore. I don't know if my father called me or I heard it on the radio, but I heard pretty fast.

I must tell you that before the riots, the year before—sometime in that 1967 – 68 period—there was already so much anger in the streets of Wolfe and Rutland and Chester and all the streets down there in that area, Broadway…that there were already incidences that my father was exposed to. Life threatening incidences that were occurring, even prior to the assassination of Martin Luther King. I believe it was the absolute spark that blew the roof off of what already was a serious forest fire that had never been put out.

But that's how I heard. I think my dad may have called me, I might have listened to it on the radio. All I know is that I do remember relatively well that after I found out about that, I immediately got in touch with my father. So I don=t know if he called me first, or I called him, because I was quite worried about him.

**Chikowore:** Let=s go back to the business. So you=re saying there were threats on the business before?

**Silberg:** There were threats on my father=s life prior to that. The area had already moved away from what I'll call peaceful, and neighborhood and community. It already started to—whether it was drug related , whether it was just dishonesty, whether it was anger—I don=t know what sociologically pathetic situation existed during that time. I wasn't smart enough, nor wise enough, nor schooled enough to know, but I know that there was a groundswell. Yes, he had been threatened by gun, he had been held up several times, his narcotics section of his apothecary had been robbed several times. As a matter of fact, prior to the riots of 1968—and again I think it=s during that period because of the instances that occurred—my father had hired a company that had dogs and they used to patrol the inside of the store. These were the huge German Shepherd Dogs, and so if anyone broke in they'd eat them. I mean, the dogs would eat the people. There was a situation; one night, I got a call from my father. He said, "I think something happened at our store." He said, "the alarm went off, the police called me. He thinks there was a disturbance inside the store." I said, "well, okay, maybe there was someone who

broke in and the dogs bit them and whatever, I'll pick you up."

We drove down there, it was very late at night, very early in the morning—could've been anywhere from 11 p.m. to 2 a.m.—it was really a frightening time to drive down into that area. Somebody had broken into through the roof, through the air conditioning ducts—broken into through the roof and shot the dogs. The dogs were dead, and they had stolen all the narcotics they could steal before the alarms sent them back through the roof and out the store. So the dogs were just lying there dead. And that incident occurred before Martin Luther King's assassination so stuff was happening, things were happening. I don=t know who the mayor was; maybe it was Grady—I have no idea who the mayor was, but that mayor was not taking care of what needed to be taken care of. He was more involved with the development of the Harbor, I guess or whatever it is they were developing at the time. They were not paying attention to that.

**Paoletti:** How long did your father own the store?

**Silberg:** I believe—he's passed away; it's now seventeen years—but I believe sometime in the 50's he bought that store; it could have been late 50's. And shortly after the assassination of Martin Luther King he was forced to close up.

**Paoletti:** What business was he in before he bought this store?

**Silberg:** He was a pharmacist, so he probably worked for other pharmacies. He did not own another business; he worked as a pharmacist for other businesses.

**Chikowore:** Prior to the riots, do you know to what extent that he was insured against fire and theft from looting?

**Silberg:** I couldn't give you an absolute honest response to that. I know that my father taught me a lot of things about business and the one thing that he taught me was to always do your due diligence. So he was a believer in dotting the I's and crossing the T's. So I know that, as a matter of fact, that the people who he dealt with for insurance…one of his trainees is now my insurance man. And has been since I went into business, since I needed homeowner=s or mortgage

insurance or whatever I needed. And the person that he got his insurance from would have provided him with the insurance coverages that were available. I=m not sure that they were totally available at the time as far as because of the area in which his business was established and the concerns that were beginning to swell down there. And the feeling of animosity and ill will, just like today where it=s difficult to get flood insurance or wind insurance. Because insurance companies are saying, well, it's too much risk. They might have to stop giving him insurance. I don=t know what his coverages were. I know that he lost a great deal when he was forced to close up his business.

**Paoletti:** When Martin Luther King was assassinated on April 4th, but before the riots started, right after you heard about the assassination, did you have any sort of clue that this was going to happen?

**Silberg:** No, I don=t think anybody had a clue. I can't speak for anybody, I'll speak for myself. I felt in my heart of hearts that an incident was going to spark something. You can=t keep a society…force a society to behave in a respectful and communal way. They have to feel the right to do that. It was being imposed on everyone. There was a Ayou've got to do this or this is the consequence,@ Ayou've got to behave this way or this is the consequence@ and so I really think that was the final match in the fire. I believe that the fire was already there, I think there were a lot of people who were blind and refused to accept the societal problems that we had in the late 50's, early 60's. And were very much like today, building a new building doesn't make the problem go away. Putting a band aid on an infection doesn't let the infection go away. And it's infected. And it was infected then. It was at an very unfortunate time, I did not know that this was going to happen but I sensed that something would be the trigger. Something would force that top to blow off .

**Paoletti:** How did you hear about the riots?

**Silberg:** Well, I believe my father called me and told me that there was murder in the streets, there were guns going off, there were fires in the buildings and glass were blown...he had huge glass panels in the storefront—*[pauses to turn off his cell phone]*

Can you repeat that question?

**Paoletti:** How did you hear about the riots?

**Silberg:** I guess my father called me. I don=t remember exactly. I know it was all over television. At the time I think we only had 3 channels in those days. So I was probably watching WJZ because that was the station of choice in those days.

I know that my father=s windows were busted out, I know that, I don't think they called them Molotov cocktails in those days, but flames with burning rags went into my father=s store and were extinguished. It didn't burn him out completely, but it burned up quite a bit of his store, and stuff like that. I think the area was relatively well-protected because it was across from Sinai and Hopkins at the time. I think Sinai had already moved out and moved uptown to Northern Parkway. And I think Hopkins at the time was already rebuilding that section.

**Paoletti:** Did you hear about any of the other cities before the riots started in Baltimore?

**Silberg:** No…well, I don=t remember. I really don=t remember. Back in the 60's—we all have to take a step back and realize, there wasn=t CNN, there wasn=t MSNBC, there wasn=t Fox News. Your news was local, local news was what you got and a little bit of international and national news you got at six o=clock at night. So things were different and the framework from which we learned what=s happening today is so far different than what it was then. So I don=t think I knew really what was going on anywhere else, maybe I was very parochial in my—I only knew what was going on in Baltimore, Baltimore City.

**Chikowore:** Was your father physically there when there was looting?

**Silberg:** Yes, yes he was. He was in the store, and his life was threatened. Several men came into the store with a gun held it to his head, told him he would die if he didn't follow directions and allow them to take whatever they wanted. The gun stayed at my father=s temple until my father just let them take whatever they wanted to take. And that was basically it. There was

destruction, there was anger, there was a lot of stuff, a lot of stuff went on and it=s the old saying: You can do anything to me, but when you hurt my family, whether it be above me or beneath me, I take no prisoners.

And when they hurt my father, and as a result emotionally causing my mother a great deal of stress and distress, it made me so angry that I probably did not, after the situation, calm down. I don=t think that I went back into Baltimore City for twenty-five years, except coming to the University of Baltimore. I don=t even think that the Jones Falls Expressway was in at that time. I don=t remember how I used to come down here but I come in, take my classes and get out. I took some classes on Howard Street. UB used to have an old building there. I don't know if it=s still there or not, but I used to take some classes down there. Go to Howard Street, park in front, get in, *get out*. That was it. I discarded the city and everything about it for a long time.

**Chikowore:** Do you know of any help that he had, were there police around?

**Silberg:** Yes, I=m sure there were police around. Again, it was across from Hopkins Hospital. It was a very protected area. I think more destruction could have been caused if he had not been where he was. If he had been down on *Madison* and Rutland instead of Monument and Rutland, I think he could have been completely devastated. This tape and this history needs to understand that I grew up as a little boy going down to my father's store, taking the bus down there by myself, and the trolley, getting off maybe four or five blocks away. Seeing my dad at the store because he worked six days a week until they allowed him to open on Sundays because of the blue laws, which at one time you couldn't open on Sundays, and I stopped in the holy roller church. I would be the only white boy in this beautiful church and I would be rolling around with everybody and praising the Lord—and I'm Jewish! It didn't matter to me, I was so much part of the fabric.

I felt violated when this happened. They say that only the people that understood Martin Luther King or believed in his cause by *color* felt violated. I was white and *I* felt violated. This was a great man, and this was a great time, and we had a great opportunity to seize the moment and make a community—continue to enlarge the community. And we lost it. And we lost it, and from that day forward, the anger and the distrust and the lack of respect and the hate has grown.

And it has not changed in forty years; I don=t care what they say, how they spell it out, how the politicians say what they want to say—it's all poppycock. It hasn't changed, it=s still bad out there, and it could happen again tomorrow.

**Paoletti:** Your father was there during the riots; when was he able to leave?

**Silberg:** That I don=t remember, maybe right away, maybe the police took him home, I don=t remember that. We were it=s kind of like we were in shock with what was going on. I wish I could answer that, I wish I could remember that part, but it=s kind of like when something tragic happens, you almost block out some of the stuff, because your mind wants to and not remember it. All I know is that it was really, really frightening. When you=re twenty-two, and you have a brother, twenty-five, and you have a wife, and you=re beginning your family and everything seemed okay. And we weren't upper class; we were middle class, working hard family, and my father=s life was threatened—I don=t care if it was a black man, yellow man, red man, white man, woman it doesn't matter—when the gun was held to my father=s head, it was like holding that gun to my head. And I can=t tell you all the—I don=t remember the details. I remember what my mind and my body and my emotions will allow me to remember, but beyond that I can=t really remember.

**Paoletti:** Do you remember seeing him for the first time after he came back home?

**Silberg:** I remember crying. I still get emotional about that, Maria. I remember crying, I remember the fear in his…AI'll never go back." "Dad, we gotta go back; we gotta go back and claim whatever is left. Maybe you can reopen." And I really can=t tell you if he stayed open a week or a month later. I don=t remember. It's blocked out.

**Paoletti:** Did you go back?

**Silberg:** Yes, we went back. Sure, we went back. It=s like going back to your house when it

burns down; you still want to pick up the photos. There were memories there. His store was the first flagstone store in the city of Baltimore; it was a special operation, it had the most magnificent dining room in it that served oysters Rockefeller, and you could sit up at the old fountain base and get a hot dog and a cheeseburger or grilled cheese. It was a great, great store. When I was a little boy I used to deliver stuff to the patients at Hopkins and Sinai and get a fifty cent tip. I did that all the time, because that's where I worked and learned how to be in business. So I don=t know how long he stayed but we did go back. And we tried to reclaim whatever memories, whatever things we could, whatever financially we could maintain and again I just don=t remember if we stayed open or stayed close, for how long I just don=t know. But I know that we went back.

**Paoletti:** What was it like?

**Silberg:** It was tragic, it was horrible, it looked like a war zone. Now, I=m lucky—I took a Dan Quayle approach to being in the Army; I went in the National Guard. I can spell tomato or potato, that's one thing he couldn't. That=s why he didn't get elected, I guess. But I avoided Vietnam; I was very lucky, but I went down to Fort Jackson, South Carolina and was with people who went to =Nam and came back and we stayed in touch. And they described the war zones and as we watched it on TV and movies, *Platoon* and so on and so forth and what was going on in the streets of Hanoi was happening in the streets of Baltimore. And no one cared! I mean, no one seemed to care. There was howling and people AMy God, my child just got shot and this was happening and don=t burn that building@ but, yes, it was a terrible, terrible time.

**Paoletti:** Do you remember the National Guard in Baltimore?

**Silberg:** Absolutely.

**Paoletti:** What do you remember?

**Silberg:** I remember them patrolling the streets. I remember them doing as much as they could do. I think they did as much as they could do, I=m not quite certain that they were managed well.

And maybe it=s because of the experience curve and the fact they, fortunately or unfortunately, didn't have a whole lot of training for this in Maryland. But I do remember them going up and down the streets, and protecting some of the storefronts and the looting that was going on in downtown Baltimore and near Broadway. I remember there was even looting going out Park Heights Avenue. There used to be a couple of stores called Luskin's and Himmelfarb's that were out in that area, and they were looted.

I think wherever there was an opportunity, I think what happened is there was so much anger that the first wave—I hate to sound like Bush—but the first *wave* of anger was real anger and really tragedy. And I believe the second, third and fourth were opportunists. And that exists in anything that happens, I think that=s happening right now in the Middle East. I think the first wave was those people who were emotionally embracing that situation and really understood it. And the second, third and fourth and whatever waves, periods of time are caused by people who are opportunists to take advantage of other people and not necessarily have embraced the real tragic issue. So that's why I say here we are four or five generations beyond this and the people that are in the cities still feel as angry as do today but I still believe many of them are opportunists taking advantage of the situation.

**Paoletti:** How many people did your father employ at the store?

**Silberg:** Probably fifteen, I would say. He had a lot of kitchen help, he had counter help. He had fine perfumes. I mean, he had a very fine store.

**Paoletti:** Were a lot of employees there at the time?

**Silberg:** I don=t remember, he might have sent them home. They may not have come in because even though it happened later in the afternoon it was something that was still simmering and it was a lot of…I don=t remember that . I=m sure—he always believed in security and safety and he was just a good man. So I would say that he probably sent everybody home.

**Chikowore:** Could you say what kind of impact it had on employees and customers when the store was damaged?

**Silberg:** The people that lived in the neighborhood that shopped and took advantage of the business that my father established there were very upset, very shocked and very unhappy. The employees lost their job! The ripple effect of these riots was tremendous, the trickle down effect of losing jobs and losing opportunities was tremendous. I believe that the riots of 1968 also was a moving time in the movement of entrepreneurship. And I believe that, although we did not yet have that word in Webster=s dictionary—I believe it's a word that was established well into the late 90's—the small business owners that opened up their businesses took a step back after 1968 in Baltimore City and said, "You know what? I don=t want to be here anymore. I=m afraid. I=m not putting my life, my family and my assets at risk."

In business there=s a very simple thing called *risk/reward*. And you evaluate that every day of your life, whether you deal with money or emotional things. I believe that many city small business owners said that=s it, I=m finished, I=m out of here. Some went back, some went into safer neighborhoods, some into pocket neighborhoods like a Polish area or the Italian area where they protected Little Italy or all the way down Monument Street; there was a protected area there. Where they knew that it was almost like a ghetto kind of thing, but many of them left and never came back to Baltimore City. Started moving out to the counties, out Liberty Road, out Park Heights Avenue, out where it was retail up to Northern Parkway I guess. Out Reisterstown Road which was big retail, and then Towson. Of course Jewish people weren't allowed on that side of Towson, we stopped on Falls Road because they didn't let Jewish people over on the other side. Of course it=s better now, obviously. So that=s what happened.

**Paoletti:** So what did your father do...

**Silberg:** Well, he went to work as a pharmacist for other pharmacies. And then he opened up a store, a small little apothecary in Pikesville. But his life as he knew it was damaged and he hated it. He hated…he hated anybody and everybody at that time. He was a really good guy, he was ... In the days that used to charge to cash checks, payroll checks—he'd cash them free. He never charged anybody any money. He just was a good guy and it was Doc Harvey, Doc Harv, they called him "Hawkeye,"…he was just a great guy. The doctor and nurses, the patients, the

attendants, the maintenance crew from the hospitals loved him. And there were three Jewish pharmacists on Monument Street: there was one on Broadway and Monument, there was one at Rutland and Monument—that was my dad—and there was one at Wolfe and Monument. And the three Jewish pharmacists all played fair together, all helped each other. Because it was enough business for all of them to do well, to raise their families, to be entrepreneurial, to take advantage of opportunities in terms of providing things at lower costs and getting greater margins, the whole thing. This is not new business; this is old business. …I ramble on sometimes, but—

**Paoletti:** You were saying that he was jaded afterwards—

**Silberg:** Yes, he was very much jaded and didn't trust...he had a very difficult time with race and color. He was very bitter. I remember when we were first blessed with our children. Our daughter was born in 1971. My dad was already out of the store, obviously. It was >72, '73, '74, the other kids came along and my son especially was always upset with my father because he said some really nasty things about African Americans. He was very upset and he was angry. And my son couldn't understand. I felt that it would be disrespectful to try to explain to my son my father=s feelings. I felt that it was out of my place and I asked my dad many times to explain to my son what was the grounds for…what was the background of why he felt the way he felt. And quite honestly, he couldn't describe it. It was so painful that he couldn't describe it but the pain and the anger was there. And he eventually as he grew older and perhaps sick and wiser, because we learn everyday no matter how old we are, and mellow a little bit, he began to be able to explain to the kids, to my children why he felt the way he felt. And I truly believe they understood it by the time he died in 1990, but it took a long time to recover. A *long* time.

**Chikowore:** Was there anything going on where you lived in the county during the riots?

**Silberg:** No, because I stayed out of the city. I think the only thing that brought me back to Baltimore City quite frankly was Rouse=s project in the Inner Harbor, which is like twenty-five years old now. I stayed out of the city for so long. I built myself a wall. I believe just like in anything, if you have an argument with someone, put some distance between the two of you, get

some time to cool down, think about what it is you *really* are angry about and when you are both of civil and respectful minds, come back to the table and talk about it. It took me a long time to come to that point. I was a little stinker when I was younger. I didn't behave that way; that was rational.

**Chikowore:** At the time of the riots, do you remember any fear of neighbors that the riots would come?

**Silberg:** I think there was conversation, it was always concern. Like I say, and truly believe, the riots started when the white blocks got broken by the African Americans and the white people felt that they didn't want that to happen or they were…it was explained to them or however, that this should not or was supposed to be. And they got angry, and I believe this got started in the late 50's and early 60's. Like I say, I believe that the riots of 1968 and the tragic death of a wonderful man was the match that blew the top off. It was the final ignition, but the groundswell, the hate, the anger was there and it had been there for decades. And no one paid any attention to it, no one seemed to care! They all gave it lip service, all the mayors and all the—who I call the CEOs of the city, although they don't claim themselves as the CEOs; they claim themselves as mayors, therefore they don't have to do anything—they all just kind of pretended this would fix itself. Wounds don=t fix themselves most often, sometimes air will fix a wound but sometimes you need medicine. And the medicine that was needed was sociological and psychological intervention, and it didn't happen.

**Paoletti:** You already stated that you think Baltimore hasn't changed much, but how do you think it did change after the riots?

**Silberg:** Well I think everybody took their turf, I think it was a turf war. And many of the white people moved out of Baltimore City and moved to the county or as north as they could go. I think what was left was tragic, it was like post World War II in Baltimore and nothing got rebuilt, not properly.

**Paoletti:** What is the neighborhood where your dad=s store like now?

**Silberg:** It=s great now because it=s all Hopkins. If you put Hopkins money and endowments into any neighborhood, you=re going to fix it. It=s phenomenal, it=s great and I think Hopkins owns I think it=s a drug store. It=s not called what my dad's store was called but I still think there is an apothecary there and it services Hopkins Hospital. I go down there now to visit . Two of my grandchildren were born at Hopkins. I go see doctors there. I don=t have a problem with that, but answer me this: Why is there so much valet parking in Baltimore City and not in Baltimore County? Why do people feel like they have to get right to the front of a business and not walk the streets? Why do they fear it so much? They fear it because things have not changed. And fear unlike, "there=s nothing to fear but fear itself"—the fact it that the fear itself is still a part of Baltimore.

And what has changed are the buildings that have been built, the landscape, the commercialization, the entrepreneur spirit…but walk five blocks in from that spirit. Walk to the city police station and see the neighborhoods that are on either side of Fallsway, see the homeless that are still under the bridge and tell me that things have improved. Excuse the phrase: *bullshit.* Print it. It hasn't changed. And it won=t change until we take ownership of the problem. And I=m not talking about getting a black mayor, a female mayor, a white mayor, a green mayor—that's not what=s going to be. It=s going to be when people believe that they can begin to fix the problem. And I don=t believe anybody is doing anything to fix the problem, I think they are all band aiding it and will continue to do so, until we have another riot. See the next riot is not going to be driven by color, the next riot obviously will be driven by class. There will be such a class distinction between the haves and the have-nots, that will economically cause the whole city to implode again. In my opinion, just my opinion.

**Paoletti:** What might trigger that?

**Silberg:** What might trigger that? Well, we are starting to feel that right now. How much money does a CEO need to make, and how much money does a company need to give out in dividends before Constellation Energy and Baltimore Gas and Electric understand that you just can=t

charge that much money for energy. And maybe it=s right , maybe it=s wrong, maybe they did something wrong eleven years ago in passing legislation - but you know what? I=m tired of the lip service. You are already seeing it , how much gasoline can you buy at $2.75 a gallon, how do you get to your jobs? We are feeding into it and the stockholders feel great. My Exxon stocks keep going up, so I think there=s going to be class war fare. And I think it=s going to happen, I don=t know what=s going to be the igniter there—maybe a stock market crash at 50%, maybe that will be the igniter—I don=t know what will be the igniter. But I got to tell you if they don=t start fixing the problem, there=s going to be a match just like >68 and I don=t know where it=s going to come from but it=s going to make the lid blow off and it=s not going to be just Baltimore City. It will be Baltimore County, Howard County, it=s going to be all of Carroll County - it=s going to be all of the area the state of Maryland—the whole country. Let=s face guys, you travel, you go to cities, you go to areas…it=s a bad situation out there. And the economy says that we are doing well, there=s no inflation and Bernanke says we don=t have to increase rates and all that, well it=s fine. That=s what the numbers say, but that=s not the societal situation; that=s not the emotional situation. There=s a difference between a heart and a pocketbook, and I think the pocketbook is going to make the heart disband. I really do.

**Chikowore:** Do you remember hearing that some businesses suing the city, arguing that they were responsible for what happened, like not protecting the businesses well enough?

**Silberg:** Yes, there=s always conversation to pin blame on anybody for anything at anytime. It is my unprofessional opinion, purely as an emotional victim, that there was so much wrong going on that instead of trying to pin blame and have people take ownership of what they didn't understand, what we needed—and I=m not saying that I would vote for him for President—but what we needed was a quick action mayor like Giuliani to say, we need to take command of the situation and fix what=s broken. And even if it hurts people=s feelings , we=re going to fix what=s broken. We=re going to take charge. And if I don=t get reelected, then I don=t get reelected. I=m not here to get reelected, I=m here to fix the problem. So sure there was blame: you didn=t insure yourself well, you charged too much prices, you were gouging the people, you were doing this, you were doing that—this was all part of those things that were happening prior

to 1968, that could have been fixed if they had been addressed. But nobody wanted to address them because like most things, they thought they would just go away. You hear a leak in your wall, you open up your wall and realize that it=s an unnatural sound and it=s probably water and if you don=t fix it you will flood out. Well that=s what was happening, the leak was occurring. You could hear the leak but no one opened up the wall. And when they finally opened up the wall…it was a riot! That=s all, that=s all that happened.

**Paoletti:** Do you remember any other businesses that stand out in your mind that were heavily affected?

**Silberg:** There were some men=s stores in downtown Baltimore. No, none specifically by name. I remember the looting that was going on. Again, sometimes even in the 60's the reporters don=t always report the news, they report what=s sensational about the news so they can get more people to watch the news. So I=m not sure how much was skewed to show things were worse or better. But there were businesses that were burned out, you saw it on television. You drove down to the war zone a day or two or three later and you saw things happening. You saw people still injured on the street, you saw the aftermath of an internal war, like a civil war down there. That=s the difference between the riots and the Civil War, it just didn't last for years.

**Paoletti:** You mentioned how deeply your father was affected in terms of his attitude, do you think that you were personally affected and do you think that your relationships with people of other races changed?

**Silberg:** It did then. It=s mellowed since. Because I have learned—I'm 62 years old—I have learned that it=s not a group of people that cause a problem, there are insurgents. There are people within that group that cause a problem. You can=t hate a people, a race, an ethnic organization blindly. So I=ve learned. Maybe through the readings of what happened at the Holocaust and what happened in World War II and the tragedy of listening to the Holocaust survivors in my 40's and 50's. I became more in tune with my internal feeling of hate and anger, that it=s not right to do that. It=s not fair, it=s not fair to today's Germans to hate them for what

happened in 1941, 2, 3, 4 and 5. It=s not right but I don=t think you can completely erase that. It=s still there, you bring this up and I=ll probably have a couple of days—this isn't easy for me, this is very painful for me. I=m doing it because this is UB, I=m doing it because it is a great project and it needs just like what we do with the Holocaust, we need to *never forget*. We need to know what happened, and learn from the past so we don=t let the past—the terrible past—reoccur. We do, so that=s why I=m here. Sure, so everyone once in awhile I think of my dad and I think of the stress that it caused the family and the hurt and the pain and I get angry. I let that anger dissipate, sometimes I need distance, sometimes I don=t come into the city for a week or two when I get that pain and I=m thinking about it.

When a parent dies if anything good comes from that it=s the good memories that you can take from their life and you can let all the bad stuff go. So I was able, after my dad died in 1990, to let go over time his anger and hate. But every once in awhile it comes back because it=s part of my life and it never really changed. But I got to tell you, we've got to fix this problem. And it=s your age group that is going to fix it, us old people are still angry. A little, a lot , whatever, and we are going to give you a lot of lip service and throw some money against the problem. And all we are doing is buying Band-Aids. God bless you guys for trying to do this, you've *got* to fix this problem, you've *got* to fix this city, you got to fix the county, you got to fix every area. You can=t legalize things and say it=s going to make them better. We got to get into the homes, we got to help educate and train and teach people that there is a bright future, that there is a tomorrow, that there is something to live for, there=s something to value, there's goodness in the world and there=s trust.

I think part of the problem that we all are experiencing and will continue to do so is very much like—and I give lousy analogies—is spousal trust. If one spouse does something wrong and breaks the trust of the other spouse, it may never ever be able to be repaired. I believe that the trust between black and white, between yellow and red, between Jewish and Christian is so ingrained in those groups that there is no trust. And until we can sit everybody down and say, okay: the past is the past, but we must begin to trust each other and truly come to the table with *fixes* and not talk…then there will be a better way to live in those cities and counties. But right now I=m scared to death, I=m scared when I come into the city. I really am. You turn on the news…my God, this morning it was four more killings in Baltimore. *Hello*, how many

unreported killings are there? How many people died that we don=t even know died? It=s terrible, it=s terrible. And…what can I tell you? It=s a bad situation. Any other questions?