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Why don't we start at the beginning just so we have a sketch, a background of your family's history. Who was the first of your family to come over from Italy?

That would be before my time. My father and my mother.

Your mother's from Italy?

Sure. They were immigrants. They wasn't even married then. They both came over from the old country, but they wasn't married. They got married here.

How old was your mother when she came over?

About 18, 19.

How old is she now?

84 or 85.

And she's still working?

Sure, once in a while.

Where's she live?

She lives on Frederick Road.

So she came over when she was 18 and your dad came over...

When he was about 20. My father was in business in New York at the time. And my mother came to Baltimore with her family. At the time they were tailors. And he came to Baltimore to try to make a living, I guess. My father.

And he went into the market?

He went into the market and has a small grocery store. But the grocery store didn't pay off to good at that time.

When would this be, about?

1920's, I guess. Maybe before that.
When were you born?

1916.

So it was before then. They started in grocery, when did they go into produce?

They went into produce like, 1920.

And that's when you lived on Hanover St?

That's the house I told you about.

With the marble floors. That was 1019. My mother's kitchen had the marble floor. I told you about my uncle's house up there. We put the floor down. We used to have the old summer kitchen back then with the shed. We didn't like the shed. The shed was just like an addition onto the house made out of wood frame. It was cold, so we decided to rebuild it. We rebuilt it all around. In fact we owned three houses then which was 1015, 17, and 19. We lived in 1019 then we owned 17 and 15. So we took 17 and 19 and we built those two together. The kitchen was nothing but a dirt floor. So rather than put another wood floor, where it would get rotten over the years, we decided to go down to Hilgarners Marble Co. and pick up all the scrap. They used to dump the scrap at that time, they don't do it any more. They charge you $15 and put your name on it. Why didn't they pick concrete or something? They liked the idea of that floor in the old country they had and they wanted one here. So my uncle and I, I was about 18 at the time, we went down there, piece by piece we got all them little squares. And he showed me how to cut the squares off. And we got together and we laid this pattern out outside. Then we put sand and poured cement and laid them in. Then we poured water on it and the cement got hard and the whole thing is one big solid mass.
It's in good shape, still.

Is it still in good shape? I haven't been there for years.

I'll take you over. My brother's renovating the house right now.

I'll tell you another thing about that house that you don't know. That heating system in there. That's a hot water oil heat. That was put in by Sherwood Bros. That house didn't have any heat. It has these old registeres, one in the living room and one in the dining room. We tore that thing out of there. And when we took that thing down the whole chimney came down in into the living room. Man, that blowed smoke all over the house.

What did you use the stables for in the back?

We converted the stable from the original stable to a garage. We were in business, we stored stuff in there.

You never had horses in there?

No. At that time horses went out. Trucks came in and horses went out.

This was trucks for delivering your produce?

Right.

Where'd you deliver it to?

To the Market, out on the waterfront, all around.

Where'd you buy it?

It came from Camden Street, Charles St. And the old original market where they have a sunday market now. It used to be a big shed right along side the fish market. That was the old market. That was back to the early '90's.

That market was the center of the town. From that center you could
I go to West Baltimore, North Baltimore, South Baltimore, East Baltimore; that was right at the hub of the market. From there people branched out all over the city.

Why did they move it to Jessup?

Why does Handel steel so much money? Does that answer your question? He was the instigator of going to Jessup. They had all that property down there, they wanted to move it out of the city. We were forced to go down there. Better working facilities, better handling of the merchandise,

Would you say it's better down there?

I wouldn't say it's better. It's farther to go.

Do you think the quality of the produce is getting better or worse?

That depends on which way you take it. I mean, packages is better. It's set up a different way. Years ago we had to handle it all by hand. Everything was put on a little two wheel hand truck and you had to put them all on your truck. When you got to the market, you had to put it back on this little two wheeled hand truck and roll it inside. See how much handling this is? Now it's more efficient handling. They use a fork lift. You don't have to touch it. I wish I could take it off like that. Everytime you pick up an article it costs you that much more to handle it. You take a load of stuff that comes in the market now. They used to have two or four spades out there to unload that. It used to take 4-5 hours. These men get $5 an hour. So four of them, that $80. One man with a fork lift gets it off in half hour. So the fork lift costs you $10-15,000. But in one year it pays for itself.
You don't have to touch it. I come along, 40-50 boxes.

I Where do you store them? You don't store 40-50 boxes of apples in the Markt?

Why sure. We got refrigeration now. You've never been in back have ya? Where the two coolers are at now. We're more efficient in handling that stuff now.

How'd ya handle it before, Ben?

We'd put up just a few bags everyday and we'd have to run back and forth to the Market everyday. The basement - the bananas were put all in the basement. Didn't have no facilities for that stuff.

Did you have to process the bananas yourself?

Why, sure!!

How'd ya do it?

Why, they came up.mix loose like that. There were put on a wagon off the boat, so many bunches. These color fellas bring them up. Lanasa used to auction them, right?

Yeah. I bought down there myself. I was a young man at that time. I'm not that old.

The bananas were put under Captains Bar, next to Cross St. Poultry - Moonlight Bar. That was my cellar. Had big banana rooms down there. You could possible put 10 loads of bananas down there.

How much in a load?

50, 60, 75 -- according to the load.

Boxes?

No, they didn't come in boxes. Stalks.

How big was a stalk? How many bananas?
6 hands, 8 hands, 10 hands. Clusters, hands. Now you get them in boxes, which is only 40 lbs. They've changed all that.

How many boxes on a stalk? A couple? I'd say a couple. 80 lbs. It's in a different evolution, all that stuff now. It was all brought in on bulk weight. Different qualities - if the ship ran into trouble, they'd get ripe too fast. That would knock the price down.

How'd you rippen them? With gas, right? Gas furnace. The banana creates the moisture and as these bananas create this moisture to raise the temperature, we run it for like 48 to 50 hours.

At what temperature? 110? No, no, no. You cook 'um. Get up too high, they scar up, they get grown. The temperature had to be like, 75°, 80°. Consistently for a period of 40-50 hours. I don't know exactly. They have a different set up for that now a days, too. We buy them 3/4 ripe. They put them in a temperature room, the gages are already set.

Lanas'a said that their grandfather discovered the process of processing bananas. Before that they always ate them green. Never, never. How could people eat bananas green?

Fry them. Same way they do in Africa. Bananas only came in this last decade. Last 20 years. Why? because the banana business was dwindling. The stock market was going down in the banana business and that's why we got into bananas. Now it's a monopoly. I hope you don't record that, there.

He's recording everything. He is!!!!

Who's the monopoly?
The banana business is so scientific now, if they have 10,000 boxes of bananas, they've got them all sold.

Oh, that's like Cheeta bananas?

Cheeta bananas's a big outfit. Doyle, Amego.

Who do you buy from?

I buy from anybody. I can buy anywhere in the United States. That's how well I'm known. In the wholesale market I can go anywhere at all and don't have to pass out a cent. They see me and my face and they'll give me the whole market.

Have you been in the market with him?

We been friends a long time.

What's your name again?

I'm Ken Norvack. I'm a neighbor.

And you used to live in South Baltimore?

I used to work in a wholesale market in Providence. 2:00 in the morning to 9:00.

Don't tell us about Providence. We know a little bit about Providence. Providence is my second home. I was up there in the Navy. You better believe it.

I used to help unload rail-cars, load trucks, Not for the big chains, but for independent grocers.

I know, I know. We used to handle lettuce in a big crate. Like 50 heads, all in a wooden crate. It was a tremendous thing. Now you only got 24 heads in a nice, clean, compact, no ice, dry.

That's still pretty heavy.

But just imagine 48 heads like that, all packed in ice. You had ice that high on the floor and on top to keep it refrigerated.
We didn't have that when I worked produce. There's the contrast between the way things were handled and processed 25 years ago and how it's handled now. That's the evolution of handling food, that's all.

But the thing I liked when I worked at the market was the spirit. Something about working early in the morning. I remember they had a book maker where I worked. He'd come in at 2:30 and bring you coffee and a newspaper.

Why sure. When we were down there I used to leave home at 10:00. To go where?

I'm talking about in the wholesale business. W Down along side the fish market. That big parking lot was a big shed. Marsh Market. That was the original wholesale market. Everything was brought - all the farmers from all around the counties, again.

All the stuff was brought to that market. Ann Arundel country was the biggest one of all.

Well, you know why it was called Marsh. Originally it that whole area was a marsh land.

So tell me about your schedule. You used to go there at 10:00 - at night.

That was the old market. I don't go there no more. We'd bring the Produce in there to be sold. By 12:00 the market actually opened. You'd
I was the go between. I'd say to the buyer, well, what are you after? Corn. Well, Bill's got some corn and 100 baskets of nice tomatoes, and whatever.

why didn't the buyer deal directly with the farmers?
Well, the farmers didn't know the first thing. It was a commission business. I could do better for them than they could do themselves. You had to get the two together. That's where I came in. A man came in from out of town, he says I got 1000 watermelons out there. He could possibly stand there all that time waiting for someone. I'd have buyers waiting for him. By the time 2 hours go by, that man's done sold everything, we got a record of it in the office, the farmer goes home, the buyer goes to his market, and everything is done.

What kind of commission did you get?
Oh, we used to get 6-8%. Now they get like 15%. Sometimes I'd say to myself, look Bill's got a nice load of watermelons out there. I'm going to buy them myself. How much you want for them, Bill. I'll give you 30¢. Ken comes in, he says, Benny, you got any watermelons? I say, sure I got watermelons. They'll cost you 60¢. See how the money's made? This is all done in transactions of over the hours.

What did you do, drink a lot of coffee?
What coffee? Didn't have time to get no coffee! We didn't have the time to full with no coffee. Before you know it, it was 6:00 in the morning. You had to get rid of the stuff. This is all done bing-bang. There's five buyers around you bidding. It's like the stock market - the stock exchange. You see a loan of stuff, you say you want it. Mike comes in, he wants it. Ken comes in and
he wants it. Now what are we going to do? I say, All right buddies, how much do you want to give? You want to give 40¢. Mike says 50¢. Ken says 65¢. Who do you thing we're going to give it to? Ken, you got it. Here's the ticket, give it to the farmer. And you roll. And you get it out. That's the way its done.

Did you play the numbers there? Didn't you have a bookie?

Why no. You didn't have time for that stuff.

Everybody played when I worked in Providence. You're busy. One night I left home at 10:00. I got home at 2-3:00 in the evening. I was so tired I went right to bed. She called me - Ain't ya gonna eat? I said no. So I went up in my room I shut the door, I pulled the covers up over my head. It was 10:00. And the dammed phone is ringing. So I picked it up. They said, Benny, you gotta get down here. We got 10 trailers of watermelons setting out here for you. They gotta be sold. Now, I'm talking about 10-15 thousand watermelons. This is the g truth. She's giving me hell, she says, your just got home and you're leaving again. I'm about to lose my wife, my family, my health, and everything else. I get in my car and go down there. I no sooner get there and this guy comes up to me and says, Benny, you got a load of watermelon out there and I want it. In fact, he says, I'm from Pennsylvania, Anderson or something. He says I want the whole thing. So, I says, All right. I'll start with you. I got 10 loads out there. I sold him three trailers of watermelons. By 2:00 I had placed all the stuff all over the town. I didn't get home till 2-3:00 that afternoon. It's still done that way now.

I was always in the Cross Street Market. Friday
and Saturday I never went to bed. Never went to bed.

So start Thursday night, 10:00 go down to the wholesale Market, worked all night, into Friday morning. Come down Friday morning, work all day at Cross St. Market work all day, Friday nite at 10:00 I went in, I went in at 12:00 on Friday nite. Work up to 4-5:00 Saturday morning, then back to the market all day Saturday. Then, Saturday nite at 6:00 I'd go home and be with my wife all night long.

And slept on Sunday.

Well, sometimes. I like to go fishing. I like to enjoy myself some. Do something. Then Sunday nite at 10:00 you had to be down there again.

So Sunday was the only day of rest.

More or less. Very seldom you get a holiday.

How many days off a year do you think you took off a year? Never had a vacation for more than 1 or 2 days. It's different now. You don't have to work so hard. It's only 12 hrs. a day.

Did you like working at the Marsh Market or Cross Street Market best?

Well, I like the money I made in the commission business better than I like the retail business. You can't have it any better than you got it now at the Cross St. Market. We got air now. Going to get heat. We never had heat. You walk through, freezing to death. We're standing there 10 hours a day. It was cold.

It kept your fruit from spoiling, didn't it?

The hell with the fruit!! *sigh*

How do you think business is in there now? Do you think it's as good as it ever was or worse?
It's as good as it ever was. Our business is good. You know that. But we're paying more for everything else, too. You got to keep that consideration. We didn't have to run two big ice boxes years ago. We didn't have to have all that space we have now. We're paying more now for our taxes then we ever paid in the history of the market. Rent. That's a tax to the city. That's revenue. I don't know how they classify it. We pay more now then we've ever paid in our life. Everything else costs more.

I'm hoping that more and more people will open on Monday. Get the place really rolling.

Sure. You don't have that much room for anybody else to put in there.

But, you come in the market on Monday, it looks kinda dead.

Except for your place, a couple fish stalls.

Sure.

What do you think is going to happen to the market in the future.

Do you think the kids are going to...

Don't ever forget that there will always be Cross St. Market. The community needs the Cross St. Market. The stores of Light St. and the Cross St. Market. Them stores need the market. People come to the market to do their shopping.

Why do they come to the market?

They like the atmosphere. Your - Spirit. Got people coming from west Baltimore to the Market. They like the family treatment. They like the spirit. The markets in the old days were places where people converged. It was like a social gathering. Just like the corner grocery store. That was a social function. And the market is a whole lot better than the stores. Whole lot cheater and better.
Quality-wise, price-wise. No comparison price-wise. We beat them on everything.

How can you do that?
Because we're *sharp* sharper buyers. We don't have the upkeep they have. The overhead. *Give me a place along side of Giant or A & P or anyone of them. I bet you I can sell cheaper then they sell. Better.*

you can tell a better apple from somebody else?

Why, I can tell an apple from - better than anybody else. I *can* tell you any kind of apple you want. Put 10 apples up there and I'll make a bet I can name 9 of the 10.

How come right in the middle of the apple season or just at the beginning of apple season all you can get is red delicious?

That's the first apple that comes out. Red delicious.

There used to be a lot more different kinds of apples.

Why? Because you don't know the other kinds of apples. *What kinds of apples do you know.*

Macintosh.

We got Mackintosh on the stall. Right now. You know winesape. How many people want to buy a mackintosh.

They're real popular, aren't they?

Real popular from up in providence. towards New York. But not in Baltimore.

What do they eat in Baltimore?

Winesape and red delicious. Red delicious is most popular. Now you go out west a little farther and you get the green apple, yellow apple. Golden delicious, New Town Piflin. Stuff like that. They don't want
the red delicious. Too soft. Too mealy. Have you heard of York Imperial? See what I mean,

Can you still get York Imperial?

Sure can. But you can't sell em. You can sell maybe 1 bushel to 15 bushels of Red delicious. So what are you going to buy if you're in business? Red delicious. You go with the trend of the times. You go with what the people want.

You know the thing I'm impressed with this man. I learned so much from him. He knows his product. From A to z. He can sit here for hours and talk about any fruit or vegetable.

Did you learn it from your dad?

I learned it from the old-timers. Years ago we used to have a fruit auction here. About 25 years ago. At the Baltimore & Ohio Station. See if you can get in there. You know where the Baltimore & Ohio Station is? That used to be filled with apples, cars of fruit, citrus fruit from California, Washington State. All these tracks, there was 5-6 tracks. Railroad tracks. From Camden Street all the way to Lee Street bridge. Along side of where the Otterbein Church is now. The fruit auction was right in that big building right along side there. They used to unload some of that stuff right onto that shed. Upstairs in there was a big auction and a big panoramic seating room there. Like up at Johns Hopkins Medical School. Up on a slant. And way down in one corner down there is a big towering table. Round table. The auctioneer stood on the center and he could look all out all over these people. There's a picture around. all these buyers used to come in there. Chain stores and independent stores from Philadelphia, New York, Rochester. Up
as far as Rochester. All them places. They used to come to Baltimore for this auction. You'd have 100-200 cars of fruit. 10 cars of oranges, CARS. 5-600 boxes in each car. They were taken all off one at a time. No fork lifts or anything. All on hand trucks. Before we got there they'd have a page - booklet - and everything was listed. A car of cherries could have 3,000 boxes of cherries. Each one was listed and who sent them from California. They had a number to identify. You go around and look at everything and see what's good and what's fair and figure how much you want to pay for it. Then you sit down and the auctioneer starts off selling. That man, his name was Nick Hockenback, German feller. He could sell 50 cars of fruit in an hour. 50 cars in an hour. You know what that is?

That's a lot of fruit, I guess.

Sure is. He's selling up there. You bid on um. He's got it. Don't worry. My name is Bongivani, right. They couldn't right it fast enough. So we made an agreement. They couldn't right the names fast enough. So they got a system, they used to call me TB. My father's name was Tom. That's how I got to get the name TB. It was faster than righting Bongivanni all the time. Try to get up there to see that room. I think it's still there. Unless they tore it all out. It's no good for storage. It's all on a slant.

How many people would be there?

Couple 100. every morning.

What time in the morning?

8:00 it started. And then when you got em, you 'take your tickets to the office it 'all billed out. They had these crews. They'd pack your truck. By 2 - 3:00 in the afternoon everything was gone.
Everybody was gone. What else you want to know?

When did your father get out of the business?

My father died when I was about 13-14 years old.

How'd he die?

Cancer.

And you took over right then?

Well, my mother had the place at the time. I went to school. I wanted to quit school, she wouldn't let me quit school.

Where'd you go to school?

Southern.

So your mother ran it by herself?

For a couple years. When I got to be 15 I went out and bought my own. Before I went to school I went downtown bought the stuff. Every morning I went down. Made sure that she was all set up for the day.

What time did you start in the morning?

5, 6:00. Whatever the trend. If I needed something real bad, I'd have to get up earlier. 2:00.

Did you have brothers to help you?

No, I only got one sister.

Did she help?

No. She never done much. She was about 9, 10.

So your mother took over when your father died, then you took over when you got out of school.

When I was in school, and came out, I used to... the teacher used to try to keep me after school lot a the time. After all, I wasn't the best in the world, either you know. I'd say, look, I can't stay. I remember one time Miss White come down and got me out.
She was the vocational counselor. So, the teacher said you'd have to stay after school for whatever reason. I'd say I can't stay, my mother's in the market and I gotta go down there. At the time....

Your son came right in.

All the children did. 2 girls and 2 boys. Nancy's 38, that's the olde st. Tommy is 33. He helps me on firdays and saturdays. Steve Donna worked there before she got married. & Stevie is 22. He's there all th' time. I'm trying to teach him all that I can. He's really involved in there now. You see him there.

What did you do, pay them by the hour?

No, they just did it. It was family.

You oughta say something about Patty.

Who's Patty?

That's my step father. When my father died sometime in the '20s...

So your mother met him at the market.

Yeah, he had a place where Steve Lanasa's at right now. Outside.

How'd you meet?

At high school. We were both at Southern. Her father had a grocery store on Fort Avenue between Cross and--at Fort Ave and Hanover.

When you were working at the market so much as a kid, what did you do for a good time.

He went out with me.

I'd walk through the market everyday on my way home from Southern.

And you'd be in there working?

He'd stop work and look at me walking by.

I'd see this beautiful girl walking by.

He took me to his prom.
We went dancing. We dance now. We used to have a big ball rooms where we'd go. We'd go to the McHenry for movies. The McHenry Theater where Gino's is now.

Well, we're trying to get a grant to open the McHenry up again. We'd go there. There were lots of theaters here back then.

The Mayor thinks they're the greatest things in the world. Sure. They're a community meeting place. Like a forum. The old Greek forums. Just like that Rouse, thing. So people can mingle and buy.

Are you for Harborplace? Do you think it's a good idea?

I personally didn't care for it. If it had been handled differently, the education procedure was very very poorly handled. If it had been presented, and explained very carefully in the beginning, but now it's a controversial issue. It needn't have been.

I told Rouse the same thing. I met in on a trip in Germany. I told him he blew it. Everybody thought they were trying to pull something over they're eyes by not showing any renderings or plans.

But still, you've been up to Boston in they're mall.

No, but I've heard lots about it. It's supposed to be real nice. Very nice. I think it's a good thing. I don't like how there putting restaurants in it. You got a lot of established resident restaurants in Little Italy and around. It's gonna kill their business and you're going to have a deteriorated section once more. Right?

Well, I don't know.

It's going to help us. It'll bring more people here. People from here can't go up there to the Rouse project to buy a dress or coat or something. They can't go there to buy a fruit
basket. People can't afford them.

The display you have in your shop is really something else.
The time that must go into setting that up.
Sure. We even look out for the color. Have you ever noticed the color on there? Look at the color on that picture. You don't see two yellows together. You don't see oranges together.
It's the same way with my fruit baskets. Take a look at that.
You notice all around the stall. You don't find two colors conflicting with one another. Like yellow pears with yellow apples.
Keep that under your hat. Don't tell that to the competition.
But the other fruit stalls don't do that. Notice it. We put our greens up.

xxxxxx
Do we get to read this article before you print it up?

Sure. I won't say anything about the colors.

Our children have it too. Stevie is very artistic in his displays.

Come by tomorrow!!

(talking about rents)
The time before that when it come up before the Board of Estimates— we were all supposed to go up there. Guess who went up there to fight them. I go up there, everybody was supposed to go up there. The whole market. I says, Where's Cross St. Market? It was me, Eron Chrisikos, & Muhly. Ya got 85 merchants, 47 merchants; only 3 up there to fight the Board of Estimates to fight the increase in stall rents.

(ken--)
That's what ya have to watch now. Aii The next thing is going to be taxes. You have to gear up for it now. Don't wait until they come at you, but have your ducks in a row. Get
those people together.

(Ben) You had a couple more people from Broadway Market. A total of 9 people to fight rent increases.

That's the problem. People are always fighting each other. That's right. They're fighting each other. Everybody thinks that everybody is trying to take something out of them. I don't talk to my neighbors! I don't talk to them! They're afraid I'm doing more business than they're doing! Who ya got in that market? Frances. Frances goin' a go up and fight the board of Estimates for... That's ridiculous.

She'd be a good fighter. She's got a hell of a voice. She can holler like hell, but she don't wanna holler. I mean, that's the trouble with that market.

(Ken) I think the angle here is that the people are going to pay for it.

If they raise those rents...

(Ben) Why certainly. We pass it right on, I pass it right on down to the customers.

I was secretary for the Cross St. Market Association 15 years ago. We had a pretty good, strong organization. That was before Dick Freeze. When we said something we got ahold of the politician from the South Stonewall Democratic Club, McGuirk, and the other one before McGuirk - Bella, the old man Della. We were strong, therefore we could do something about it. But now what do we got! They don't have anybody who wants to go along with um. I went up there and made -- Christ, I thought I was going to get mobbed one day. I saw them take the dam cars off the street. The Jews over there are parking, they got a car, and a truck. Steve Lanasa's got two-three trucks and his car in front of his door. I says, and over this side
they got cars and trucks. You can't even pull in there with your truck. I says why don't you guys get your cars off the street, let the people come in here. That's why I pay $200-$400 to park up on the Merchants Lot. Up on the parking lot up on West Street. I pay $218 for a truck, $250 for a car. That's $468 a year. Them others don't even want to take them off the street. They parking along side the market. I got up and walked out. I don't need none of you guys. I can do my business without you.

What did you do when the Market burned down?

I went out to an old man's farm out in Rosedale. He had two stands. Road side stands. I says I want to borrow them. I took the truck and went out there and he let me use them. And I was in business the next day, right in front of where Steve Lanasa's is now. That used to be

So you opened the next day?

I was open the next day. The next week. It burnt down on a Friday night, Sat. m morning early. We were opened on that corner. Then it so go I xx didn't have enough storage space, So I went over to Angelia Agro Motors over on Russell Street at that time, they moved now because they put the beltway there. They had an old Baltimore Transit bus over there which was torn seats all over it. I said, dam, If I had that up along side the market site, I could store all that stuff in there. And we drove that buss that hadn't been driven, christ. It must have been since 1930 and put that thing up on the market site right along side there. And we stored the stuff in that bus. When we needed a box of something we xx went right over there and pulled it out of there. We used xx that for a whole year, year and a half.

Did you have a stall outside the market before the War?
We were outside till the last stalls were out there. Before World War II. Just before WW II I believe everybody pulled in the market.

Why do you think it was, that everybody came inside.

Why? We couldn't take care of the outside stalls. Lot of the fellows left. Couldn't set up outside no more. Then the biggest thing was that stuff got rationed. Don't forget that, during the War. We couldn't get all the oranges we wanted. You couldn't get as much butter as you wanted to get.

Why didn't they ever start back up being outside of the Market after the War?

They wouldn't let you out there no more. They took all the stalls off the street. The traffic got heavier. We found out we could do just as much business inside. The inside of the Market was practically empty. All that was in there was a few butchers. Everybody was out on the street. It rained, you got wet. In the summer you got scorched. It snowed, you were out in the snow.

How about taking a shovel with you Saturday morning 3-4:00 and shovel all the damn snow off so you could put the stall up.

Would you go outside if you had the chance again?

Now? Never. No sir. You had to put up the awning, put up the lights. The traffic.

What if they close the street and made a Mall out of the whole thing.

They done pulled half of it out now. I was against all that. Take all that parking. Now what the hell good is that now. Cost a quarter of a million dollars. That quarter of a million dollars could have put up a second tier on the market for parking overtop the market.
(KEN) One of the things they don’t think about is that the Market needs a -- you have to bring your food in. It has to be delivered. How you going to get all that stuff in. You can’t fly it in. They made it impossible. All I see now is people lounging around, taking a lot of undesirables. Beer cans, liquor bottles. You come from the parking lot over, I’ve never seen such delapidation and such trash. This is supposed to be a sanitary market. Look at the trash that accumulates over 1 week.

So you’ll never go back out again.

(Ben) You can’t sell on the sidewalk anymore.

My stands were right on the corner - where the parking lot is at Patapsco Street now. We used to have stands on that corner there. In the street, now. Then we were up against the market. That was the end of the market. Before that big stone building. Used to have the hall up stairs and under neath the xil hall was the fish market. Where Nickols was.

(Ken) Back to his question, the reason, too, that you had those stands parked against the curb was because, didn’t you own some of those homes where you stored at night. You could go down in those basements and get your supplies.

(Ben) We used to rent the cellar of that there Moonlight Bar.

What did you do during the depression?

We suffered.

People stop buying produce then?

No. People have to eat. We didn’t take in as much as we’re supposed to take in, but we were still in business. Went on just the same.

(Ken) You know, the women ought to get some credit here. They did a wonderful job then. The hard years.
Lot of them worked in the Market.

Sure. Chrisikos. When they first got married, Evon Chrisiko's parents, they lived a couple doors up from us. On Hanover St.

Where'd you go to Church?
Holy Cross. St. Joseph's up on Lee Street. My father played fiddle at the Italian church. So every Sunday my father played up in the back in the balcony. That was on Montgomery Street.

How'd you get along with the Black people?
Fine. We had black people right in back, on Olive Street.

That's where my house is. You know where the funeral parlor used to be, Right behind there. That carriage house.

Sure. Sure. Mimi Krouse used to own some of those.

That's who I bought it from.

Sure. I know her very well. Next door was the bakery.

I don't remember as a youngster growing up in South Baltimore having any racial tension.

No. They kept to them selves pretty much.

Across the street from where you're working now, 1019 Hanover, there's an alley. On the corner of Race & Hanover there was a big wagon works. Two german guys built wagons, truck bodies.

They made everything. They cut their own Oak and made their own forgings and rivits, bolts, nuts. So my father, we had a couple trucks. He wanted to make a body for his truck. Which was unheard of. You got a truck with a body already put on it with a top on it. So he says to these two german guys, I want a body on this. The guys say about $300. All made out of oak and cast iron, handmade. Even the tail gate on the back - the
chain -- weighed more than the hole truck body out there now. The whole body is an aluminum body. And they made it all by hand. I mean, nuts and bolts and all. So we got that truck