

# Fell's Point Out of Time



## Interview of Lori Guess, 12/19/03

**Interviewer: Kraig B. Greff**

**[Kraig]**

The first thing that I want to talk about is ... Jacquie gave me a bit of little background on you and said it was a neat thing that you're actually from the suburbs and your mom used to work at the Vagabond Theater ... give me a little insight about that and then how you actually came to be down here in Fells Point.

**[Lori]**

OK, let's see... So, Mom was at the Vags and that was on Broadway before Fells Point was much of anything that I know of. And I used to come over, go to the shows... we had openings Thursday nights so we'd go to Bertha's first for an Irish coffee. Then I would come down and go to Cat's Eye. So it was Cat's Eye, to hear music, jazz on Saturdays when they used to have that, and Bertha's. That was about it. But I loved it. There wasn't much here.

**[Kraig]**

What year?

**[Lori]**

I started coming here regularly in 87. And I started looking for a house here in about 88/89. And I was looking and looking off and on, and changing my mind and trying to decide whether I could give up my own 4 walls in the suburbs and that kind of thing. So I finally showed up here in 98. Officially. That's when I moved here.

**[Kraig]**

98? Oh, OK.

**[Lori]**

But I felt like a Fells Pointer somehow well before then.

**[Kraig]**

You seem to be very actively involved in all kind of things, which we'll get to in a moment. Give me a little background on yourself. You're an attorney....

**[Lori]**

I'm an attorney. I'm an oboist first.

**[Kraig]**

You know that's the instrument that will drive people crazy?

**[Lori]**

Yeah, yeah. The old one that no one blows good and it gives the pressure on the brain that causes people to go crazy. I don't think that it happens.... It gives you great stomach muscles is all I know.

**[Kraig]**

How long have you been playing the oboe?

**[Lori]**

Since I was in 7th grade. I went to Interlochen and learned it in the music camp in Michigan. Famous music camp.

**[Kraig]**

So what years were the Vagabond Theater... ?

**[Lori]**

I don't remember now. I was going to ask my mother when she actually came here. I believe it was in the mid 70's. I'm almost certain. I know that at that time, the only way you could get to Fells Point was Fayette Street. There was no President Street then that came to Downtown. So she used to go through the Projects to get here. I know that. It was sort of hairy sometimes. So I usually ... Way back then, I guess I only came to her productions. I might have.... I can't remember coming down here much at all, if at all, before the late 80's.

**[Kraig]**

So what attracted you to Fells Point besides the Cat's Eye and Berthas?

**[Lori]**

The people. I love it because iconoclastic people, unusual people, unconventional people, non-yuppies, came here. There's a real mix of people. And it was... It just had a real down-to-earth feel. You could be yourself.

**[Kraig]**

Do you see yourself as a non-yuppie?

**[Lori]**

Yeah.

**[Kraig]**

You definitely have some yuppie things about you...

**[Lori]**

Well, I'm non-materialistic. Even when I was young, I didn't think of myself as a yuppie. Upwardly mobile professional .... no, I never looked at myself that way. You might say externally it looks like that, but I never felt that way.

**[Kraig]**

Internally, you're a roots gal down deep?

**[Lori]**

[Laughs a little.] Internally, I'm a musician. My friends are musicians. That's what I love more than anything.

**[Kraig]**

I hate musicians.

**[Lori]**

[Laughs harder.]

**[Kraig]**

I'd never sleep with one.

**[Lori]**

[Continues laughing. Looks at camera.]

**[Kraig]**

I don't know where that came from.

[01:03:33:19]

OK, now, let's see. So bring us up a little bit to date... We talked to Steve Bunker and I can't remember the actual ... the name of it. He was a member of ... not the Homeowners ...

**[Lori]**

ORRA.

**[Kraig]**

That's it! Give me background on that and why you're not a member of the Homeowners Association.

**[Lori]**

All right. That's easy. Well, ORRA .... Owners, Residents and Renters Association, I think. They broke off from Homeowners, and I'm not sure if it was because of the issue over parking, because it might have been before that... I remember because John Horn had the "Park free or die...." He

didn't want permit parking. And I know that was part of it. I know a big part ... for me, the reason I started with FPCO, Fells Point Community Organization, is because I was a renter when I came down here and Homeowners did not allow me to be in their organization because they were Homeowners. And so, once I bought, I thought, well, the hell with them. I'll stick with FPCO because they struck me as a little more ...

It's very development-oriented, as is the Task Force. Much of the Fells Point associations are about development. And that's extremely important. I have absolutely no background in that. I have no sense of spatial relations, so I could not tell anything from blueprints. I cannot envision what a project's going to look like after it's done. So, I decided that's really not my issue. What I want to focus on is quality of life.

[01:05:07:20]

Now the Rec Pier I got involved with... That was sort of odd. I was looking for something to get involved with...

**[Kraig]**

That was going to be my next question.

**[Lori]**

OK, I'll get into that.

**[Kraig]**

I saw you over there manning the entire fucking thing... [Lori laughs.] Can we say that on camera?

**[Jacquie]**

You can say anything on camera. You just can't leave it on TV.

**[Lori]**

Let's see... My husband and I and my dog Spike swept out the whole Rec Pier...

**[Kraig]**

What kind of dog is that?

**[Lori]**

Oh, yes. A wonderful.... the best dog in the world, which is a Doberman.

**[Kraig]**

A Doberman, yes. It looks almost like Chompie.

**[Lori]**

That's right... What happened is this. I was searching for a way to get involved with the community. And actually, I started with Business Association because I had Fells Point Chamber Players, my trio.

But I really didn't have a physical location for it in Fells Point, so I decided saying I was in a business was a little stretching it.

So, then the Rec Pier came up, SECO, South East Community Organization, had a gigantic meeting in Upper Fells Point to discuss what would happen with the Rec Pier after Homicide left. And for some reason I decided, this is a good issue to get involved with. So I went to the big meeting and I sat at a table and it turned out that each table got to recommend one person from their table to be in a special committee that would talk about the Rec Pier at greater length. *Ad nauseum*, as it turned out... So, I said "OK, sure, I'll do this." And they said, "OK, fine, you can do this." Getting volunteers turned out to be dicey, of course, so I was willing to do this.

And we started meeting every week at SECO headquarters on Baltimore and Wolf. And then I became one of the .... we had 3 chairpersons, but the other two finally backed out and so I became the chairperson of this thing. And we met every week for months and months and years.... And I played a role that I normally don't play, which is facilitator. I'm a "cut to the chase, dammit, let's just get to point, let's resolve the issue". I'm a lawyer. I'm a contracts lawyer. That's what we do. But in this case, I was facilitating...

**[Kraig]**

I noticed your command of the group. When the bullshit started, you narrowed everybody back on the ... It was pretty good.

**[Lori]**

Yes, I do that. And my voice doesn't carry the way I wish it did. So actually after the meeting at the Rec Pier, which has horrendous acoustics, I was totally hoarse. I should have had a mic.

But so we were facilitating this meeting.... I was facilitating rather, and we created a wonderful group. We got through storming and norming ... but we never really got to performing. Because we really are facing the same dilemma we're facing today, which is -- what is the best and highest use for this community for that building? And that is the dilemma we're still facing. It is a gorgeous building. It's the only city building, I believe, on the entire waterfront, now. And we really want it to be used for something magical. Something that benefits the community. And yet we have..

**[Kraig]**

So you're not into the circus, the Cirque Du Soleil, the actual Ferris wheel inside ... This is a little bit more ....

**[Lori]**

Right. I think so. And this is also an issue that's interesting. That was focused on kids. Granted we want more kids in our community, but we really don't have them right now.

**[Kraig]**

I don't.

**[Lori]**

Well I .... Yes. And that's the politically correct thing to say, that we want more kids. I'll sort of back ... [looks at camera] I won't comment on that issue.

[01:08:52:24]

But, to capture Fells Point, to capture what it is and has been. Other people, Ed and others, Ed Kane, have talked about the idea of really creating a connection with the water. And that makes so much sense to me. The idea of just putting office buildings on because Jay Brody of the BDC says ... I read this in the paper, "If a company wants to have waterfront offices, then it is our job to make it happen." Now as Bob Keith might have told you, the Baltimore Development Corporation's charter was a lot more than giving offices what the heck they wanted. They were supposed to benefit the community.

**[Kraig]**

Anything that happens, your platform definitely is -- no matter what it is, it'd better benefit the community.

**[Lori]**

Absolutely. I've been trying to be practical all along and say, there is a couple of mil, maybe 4 million \$s we need to shore up the Pier. There's a lot of question because various developers have sort of disparate views of how much it would actually cost.

**[Kraig]**

From?

**[Lori]**

From a million to 7. Yeah. So, you gotta wonder what are they talking about.

**[Kraig]**

You don't get much for a million. You know it's going to be done nice for 7.

**[Lori]**

Yeah, that's true. I think part of it is 7 would be in perpetuity, practically. And a million would be maybe for the next 10 years. I don't know.

So we understand that we have to come up with the money. The question always is -- Does the City have it? Does the State have it? Do the Feds have it? Do we really have to go private? Now, I read in the paper every day, and I keep cutting out articles, about other projects that are being subsidized by the government. Various levels of government. And I wonder, well, OK, why not ours? And that's what a lot of people say in the community. I don't understand. Why can they get the money and we can't.

But, assuming that we can not get the money and we do need some private funds, the question has been -- what can we put in there that's not going to harm the community that hopefully would be some benefit but is still going to be an economic anchor.

**[Kraig]**

So the thing could be a money-maker. Something that actually could be a money-maker to help build itself.

**[Lori]**

Yes. Exactly. Now, curiously, one thing that several of us have talked about and that has been nixed by developers ... Bill Struever dismissed it out of hand years ago ... was a Harbor Place kind of a setting. Now, when I say Harbor Place, I don't mean just any retail, but retail related to other arts or maritime or something or Baltimore. Well, I guess a lot of Harbor Place does do that with their various shops. But the idea of having a place where say the Water Taxi docks at the South end of the Rec Pier and then you have people go through and, low and behold, there you have all kinds of retail things that are beneficial, something they'd want, maybe coffee ... Well, not coffee. We can't compete with the Daily Grind.

**[Kraig]**

[Tapping on table.] Ed Kane memorial coffee klatsch here.

**[Lori]**

That's right. And Ed was talking about it. It's sort of the entry way to Baltimore, to Fells Point from the water. It would be perfect because it's right on the water. But you would think ... I would think, and I'm curious to know what business men think ... that there would be a market for retail in that building as you come in. And so we could benefit small businesses, local businesses hopefully. And then, once you get in, then you have something cultural ... heritage, tourism ...

[Break]

So, because right now, the best we've come up with, or the developers have come up with, is office space.

**[Kraig]**

Why? Why office space? And why haven't they thought more along the lines of your retail space? Retail space makes sense to me.

**[Lori]**

I don't know. They talk about the money and the return on investment. They talk about the fact that it's not economically feasible. And of course we nixed residence, both condos, town houses, also apartments, because we said ... now this is part of the contrarian Fells Point feel. We didn't want a bunch of rich people taking up our view. Here's a City-owned building, a public-owned building. The idea that only people who can afford million \$ condos or town houses would be there really

irked us in our spirit ... And it might sound *schadenfreude* that we're just jealous of them. We want not to see them benefit ... That's not really it.

**[Kraig]**

I'm very jealous of Bill Gates.

**[Lori]**

Anyway, we did succeed in getting those proposals off the table. And what we're left with is a hotel...

**[Kraig]**

So you have, so there's no...

**[Lori]**

That is true. Yes. They're gone. And that was a success of the community. But now, now that I see all the other developments that are going on around the Harbor, and so many of them ... if you read in the paper ... hotels, hotels, office, office ... and I say "OK. Enough already. Is the entire waterfront going to be hotels, office and residences?" It's just out of control. Don't we want some public building here?

[01:14:09:10]

The City has said over and over, "We don't have the money. We're not interested. We're not keeping it. We're not going to support you. Period." I understand the City is hurting for money. How about the State? How about the Feds? It is a historic building.

**[Kraig]**

Why wouldn't the City support something that externally somewhere down the line could provide them with a source of revenue?

**[Lori]**

If they had a long-term view of things, you're absolutely right.

**[Kraig]**

Who's the person that is so short-sighted. Does it go all the way to the Mayor's Office? ...

**[Lori]**

It's a hard thing to say because I really, I think the Mayor has a lot of good visions, I really do. And the people I work with in the Housing Department are very good. But their role is to deal with the assets and to do what they can financially with them. I don't know how much is impetus, meaning that they were planning on getting rid of this building years ago, so they just go on with it... Not one person in the entire Administration has suggested the possibility of maintaining it as a city building. Not one. That hasn't been on the table for years.

**[Kraig]**

And that's something that you've suggested.

**[Lori]**

Yes. And John Cain had said he's going to float a bond bill to try to get public moneys into it to maintain it as a public building. But that was a few minutes before he told us all that he was not going to run for office for the next term. So, I don't think his heart's in it any more, since he's a lame duck. So I don't think that's going to happen.

So the question now is.... There's two questions. Are we stuck with the conclusion that it has to be privately owned? Or at least long term leased to a private company, or is there still a possibility that it could still be government-owned? And, #2, if it has to be privately owned, then what do we do with it? Can we find a use that really benefits the public, that really has some sparkle to it?

[01:16:11:06]

There is an architect who was on the review panel for the Rec Pier, he is a private architect. And he was saying he really thought it would be wonderful idea if you could really put something important and magical in that spot. It's fascinating to me that for all the time we've spent thinking about this and all the time we've opened it up to developers, we've come up with so little in the way of exciting ideas.

**[Kraig]**

I've got a whole theory on creativity and how it's just ... we're so caught up in everything else that we ... when we need a creative idea ... as a musician ... I see so many people, they're caught up in the electronics of it all and the bullshit, but when we really need to think beyond the box, it's very hard to do any more. We're losing a lot of that. And it seems to translate right into... Right into this.

**[Lori]**

Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely.

**[Kraig]**

We can build great buildings. We can design anything that will float, even during a hurricane, or an earthquake. But what is it? What are we going to do? That's exactly what you're saying. Folks, can you come up with some idea?

**[Lori]**

There's been talk, and Geoffrey Footner was talking about putting a Torpedo Factory like situation there....

**[Kraig]**

Like in Arlington?

**[Lori]**

Yeah, uh, Alexandria, right. Old Town. And it's wonderful. However, there's some questions about the size of the building and the fact that artists .... that's not really the history of Fells Point. It's a wonderful thing, and I'm all for it, as compared to offices, clearly, I'd much rather have it than offices. But I don't know if that captures it. It's a good idea and I'm glad somebody put it on the table.

**[Kraig]**

Explain The Torpedo Factory, what that is.

**[Lori]**

The Torpedo Factory, which was a torpedo factory, I guess, during World War II, had been transformed into artist's studios that are also retail. So it's wonderful. The public comes in and actually watches the artist create, and can look at their stuff, buy their stuff. So it's a wonderful thing for those artists who are willing to be exposed to view when they're in the process of creating.

We've talked about it. Actually, our Mayor, O'Malley, has said he's going to put a Torpedo Factory in the old Bromo-Seltzer tower. I said, how can that be? It's tiny. I think they're putting artists' studios in, but I don't think they're gonna have the retail aspect of it.

So, again, getting back to the idea of putting retail in the Rec Pier, one idea would be that you'll actually have artists' retail areas. You might not have the full-blown studio, but you actually have them showing their wares, but it's local. So it's sort of a mix of the local artists, the local trades people, and, of course, maritime influence.

[01:19:00:14]

But it is fascinating ... We do have the idea of immigration, and that's good. And we need that. Pride of Baltimore, of course, and keeping the tugboats, which I hope will happen. I mean, we surely want them.

**[Kraig]**

Is the tugboat contract with who, Moran...

**[Lori]**

That's with the City. It's a lease with the city.

**[Kraig]**

It's a lease with the City in a building that doesn't want to be touched by the City.

**[Lori]**

Exactly. Isn't that interesting? Yeah. Of course, it's not a lucrative lease for the City. None of us object to that, by the way, because we really want the tugs to stay.

**[Kraig]**

The tugs are part of .... If you see them, that's the thing.

**[Lori]**

It's interesting because at Silo Point, which they're building, and they're putting in offices, I believe, or hotels or whatever, and he's standing there in a picture in the Baltimore Sun, and he's looking out, and he's saying, "It's so wonderful to see the commercial ships and tugs. It's like moving art." And I felt like saying, "You bozo. What you're trying to do by getting rid of all industry on the waterfront is get rid of the tugs and the other moving art. It's not gonna be there any more." They're all saying, "Isn't it wonderful to be living on a working port," but the working port's gonna be gone.

**[Kraig]**

There's an old thing, I think Steve Bunker brought it up. It was fact that there's Baltimore and there's Fells Point. And this sounds like a classic issue of... Believe me, if you talk to people throughout the United States, one of the only reasons they would ever come to Baltimore is because of Fells Point.

**[Lori]**

[Nods.] Absolutely.

**[Kraig]**

Nobody comes to Baltimore and discovers Fells Point. So the fact that it's not even a tourist area, Federal government tourist area is one thing, but don't these people see that the reason Baltimore has any hope whatsoever, forget the Ravens and all that, that's just icing ... The solidity of Fells Point and what goes on there provides all the soul for what else happens.

**[Lori]**

Isn't that amazing. It really is.

**[Kraig]**

And they don't even really want to support that. Is that feud still going on, do you think -- Baltimore / Fells Point? He said it dated back to the shipping era, to the early 1700's. There was Baltimore, and problems with water and how deep the pier, and Fells Point. There was always that contest. Do you still think that contest exists?

**[Lori]**

I guess so.

[01:21:24;03]

Well, what upsets me is they're Inner Harborizing Fells Point. I mean, they're pushing Inner Harbor to Inner Harbor East, and then they come down to Fells Point.

**[Kraig]**

It is kind of growing around that line, isn't it?

**[Lori]**

And then you look at Bond Street Wharf. Now, some of the things look good. And they maintain the warehouse feel. And that's all good. And there have been times when I said early on that the most important thing for me was the facade of the Rec Pier. But I've gone beyond that. It's no longer just the facade. It's the substance. It's the heart.

**[Kraig]**

Or, as the hillbilly says, the fakade.

**[Lori]**

[Laughs]

[Cut]

And, when I talk about "Inner Harborizing" Fells Point I mean it's just more offices and more buildings that happen to be on the water, but there is no connection with the water. And in Fells Point, there always was a true connection.

**[Kraig]**

You can get the big price tag.

**[Lori]**

Exactly. It's because people like it and, by the way, the interesting thing about that is that even in Fells Point, there are places that you can sit, Duda's I think is one, which is a nice little bar here, And sometimes you don't even see the water. All you see is the Domino Sugar plant, which is fine with me -- I want it to be there. But it sort of looks like a building and you have to look closely to see the ripples on the surface of the water.

These days, not 12, 13 years ago when they couldn't give away our waterfront condos like Belt's Landing and Henderson's Wharf, today, yes, water view. It's amazing how much money people will pay for that.

**[Kraig]**

What do you think has caused all this to happen? At one point, nobody twice about it. Now, Fells Point is going to be like Beacon Hill or Nob Hill. I don't think it's ever going to be that high, but now, Fells Point is the place to be. Fells Point is it. What do you see... ?

[01:23:25;26]

**[Lori]**

That's interesting because a friend of mine, who I call "Miss Middle America" ... I love her but she goes to every Hard Rock Cafe in the world and that's her idea of a vacation. She loved Canton when it was starting up. She said "Why would you want to live in Fells Point when you can live in Canton?" And I said, thinking to myself, "You like it because it reminds you of the suburbs." I never understood the charm of Canton. I lived there for six months once, and that was fine for me. I didn't want to go back.

Fells Point for me ... I guess for her she was worried about Fells Point because of all the bars and the homeless people ... by the way, I don't want to get rid of them, so I'll be a contrarian on that. I've gotten to know them by name, and when you talk to them by name, they're not so bad. To me, they add to the flavor of it.

**[Kraig]**

There's a big difference between the homeless person and the drug addict.

**[Lori]**

Absolutely. And we have some homeless people who we know by name, and we know how to take care of them. And that's fine with me. It just adds to the feel.

**[Kraig]**

They are, add to what it is.

**[Lori]**

Yeah. It's a seaport town. It is funny because somebody referred to not wanting a Ferris wheel here because it would affect the dignity of Fells Point. I fell out of my chair. The "dignity" of Fells Point. That's not our history. Whorehouses are our history. Tongue in cheek, I said, that's what we should put in the Rec Pier.

**[Kraig]**

You're looking for a creative idea...

**[Lori]**

Here, here! And a money-maker, too. That'd be a great idea.

**[Kraig]**

Revenues through the roof. I can see it now.

**[Lori]**

Absolutely. So, those are the thoughts we've had.

But we don't want to lose the Whistling Oyster feel. I'd hate to lose that feel. Which is a bunch of old schooner bums ... and it's fantastic. And I don't want that to go away. The other issue is this...

**[Kraig]**

There aren't very many places you can go to anywhere, outside of maybe Amsterdam and some seaport towns where you really can still see that.

**[Lori]**

And, Kraig, you're right about Fells Point versus Baltimore. When I lived in DC and my friends were DC locals and they'd say, god they loved Fells Point. There's nothing like it in Washington. And that's extremely important to consider.

**[Kraig]**

Some of friends of mine from Discovery come here just to go to Fells Point.

[01:25:44:17]

**[Lori]**

And I think well look at Old Town, and look at Georgetown. They're both sort of on the water. But they've been so gentrified, there is no feel left, as Fells Point.

**[Kraig]**

Restaurant, shop, restaurant, shop, but nothing really to...

**[Lori]**

Yeah, that's right. And that's the fear.

**[Kraig]**

That's a great analogy, though, look at Georgetown. There's what happens with over-gentrification. That's what it becomes.

**[Lori]**

I agree. Gentrification is something we've been saying we don't want. Now Martin O'Malley said this, he said "You love it in Fells Point. Do you really feel it's fair to say now OK we are here and we're closing the door and no one else can come in?" And we said, "No, of course not. We don't want to say that. But we don't want so many people that we destroy the feel by having apartment after condo after apartment. But, we're just saying that we don't want to warehouse people here just so they can say they live in Fells Point. And we want to, so importantly, maintain the row house feel. And so we don't want a lot of big buildings and we don't want a lot of modern things that are parading as traditional.

Something just came up. Somebody wants to tear down an old warehouse on Fleet Street. And he said, "But don't worry, because the new town houses we put in will look like the old stuff." And we said, "Thanks very much. We appreciate the effort. But that is not what we mean by historical preservation."

[01:27:16:00]

And so, with the Rec Pier, getting back to that, we know we're going to maintain the facade. And so it's a different situation. We cannot be arguing, "Don't tear it down" because nobody's talking about tearing it down. We're saying, "OK, not only keep the facade, but keep the soul ... and maintain that, and put something creative in, and come one, come all. "

**[Kraig]**

You're the first person that's used that term, too. Maybe it's a music thing, that you have to know about, but that's right. Keep the soul of the place. It has one.

[Cut]

**[Lori]**

Well, I'm again talking about that that feel of people that are here and they come to the coffee shop, and they talk about everything in the world. They talk about politics and religion and philosophy. And they sit in the Whistling Oyster... And these people have just been on the water all day, on the water taxi and schooners doing the same thing. Talking about philosophy. Talking about the art movies they've just seen. The most unlikely-looking people are talking about this stuff. And it's great.

And I'll say something else that's real important. Being of that age now I can say it. I am afraid that people of my era, the baby boomers or the people who were born in the 50's and such are being lost in this process. Because the young kids are coming in, and the wealthy are coming in, so there's wealthy baby boomers who can afford it, but the people who have been unconventional most of their lives and now have their ... later in life, they don't have kids or they're empty nesters, but they're not of the type that can afford the really rich condos. And they have all gathered here because they find kindred spirits. And this gentrification is just going to move us out ... even if we can still afford it. Because that soul, that feeling of people who come together and don't talk about their Mercedes ... I guess I'm really out of date to talk about Mercedes ... don't talk about their Lexuses ...

**[Kraig]**

Their Beemers.

**[Lori]**

Don't talk about their Beemers. Don't talk about all their toys. They talk about how do we fix the world. What's going on. All those wonderful things that we talk about in Fells Point.

And so that's what I say about the soul. And I want to encourage people to come here, and the Rec Pier would be nice as a signature building, that really come here for that. Not to make it into a family destination with Ferris wheels and miniature golf courses....

**[Kraig]**

The world doesn't need another Disneyland.

**[Lori]**

No, absolutely not. That's not what we're trying to do.

When I talk about tourists, I'm talking about maintaining Fells Point and its funky feel and ... the kind of tourists we get here are also unconventional. They're the ones in Washington that are tired of the plastic nature of Washington, and everywhere else. Because they just want that feel. What we don't have for them is something other than bars right now.

[01:30:06;01]

But as I say, I'm at a loss. I feel bad because I'm not creative in that respect enough to say, after looking at this since 99, what we should do with the Rec Pier.

**[Kraig]**

An oboe factory!

**[Lori]**

Yeah, absolutely. A friend of mine made oboes. But he moved to Atlanta. Oh, well...

But what I've been trying to do for all these years, for now what is it ... 4 years, almost 5 ... is say, "Come one, come all, people with creative ideas."

We had a big meeting at the Rec Pier for the community to talk about the various developer ideas. And on the survey form that I handed out, at the end I said, "OK, if none of these ideas suit you, tell me what you want to see." And again, there were some ideas about immigration, heritage tourism, but not specifics, really. So, I'm still at a loss.

**[Kraig]**

You know, when all else fails, have a contest. Offer a prize. The best idea wins ... trip to Disneyland.

**[Lori]**

Trip to Amsterdam, maybe.

But, I think what we are saying is, while we're waiting for that light bulb to go off, we don't want it to be developed into something pedestrian. We want it to be used for something wonderful. And if that means we're going to sit on it for a while... There are some things the city could do, for not much money ... Make sure the windows are closed so the pigeons don't get in... Maybe sweep it on occasion. There are some things they could do. In fact, we found out from them that for something like \$300,000 they can actually fix part of the eastern side of the pier so that more ships can dock here. And that would be a money-maker for them as well. And more cars could park underneath the Rec Pier, which is desperately needed in our community. So essentially they've said ...

**[Kraig]**

Why can't they park there now? Is it a hazard?

**[Lori]**

Yeah, it's a hazard. They're afraid they're going to fall into the water. But unfortunately, the City has said, "We're not doing anything with this because we're going to get rid of it. Why spend more money on it?" But unfortunately, they could actually spend a small amount of money and make it more viable today. And then we could have a little more time to wait... We don't want to wait for long. And I agree with Mayor O'Malley when he says, "If you wait long enough, it is going to fall into the Patapsco River." So we don't want that to happen. But that doesn't mean we rush into something stupid.

[Brief cut - 01:32:41;17]

**[Kraig]**

Quirks, stories, things you like about it, the fact that our dogs look very similar.

**[Lori]**

That's right. Dogs.

**[Kraig]**

Talk about the dogs of Fells Point.

**[Lori]**

Yes, the dogs in Fells Point... It's interesting that I find having a dog here is so much more fun than having a dog in the suburb because you're constantly meeting other people with dogs. And there's always a fight about dogs. I could say this about everything in life... People are complaining because dogs run loose in the Thames Street Park. And they say as a result it's a mess because of all the dog 'feces' ... Well, that's not the dog's issue. And that's not because they're off leash. That's because the people are not taking care of their dogs. That's true of everything, actually, of course. It's the way people take care of their community.

[01:33:31;12]

Fells Point is a village. I love it because it is a village. It's not a city. Everybody knows people. I have never lived anywhere ... I came from northwest Baltimore County ... very unfriendly place when I was growing up. Extremely unfriendly. I never wanted to come back to Baltimore. In Fells Point, you see people all the time you know on the street. You say hello. You say more than hello. You actually become friends with these people. And, it's just such a warm, wonderful feeling. You know they're going to help each other out.

And, in fact, I'll say something very controversial. I don't mind having the homeless guys or the semi-homeless guys sitting in Thames Street Park because when I go out late at night and walk my dog, they take care of me. They say hello to me. I know they're not going to let anything happen to

me. I mean, they'll yell and scream or something. And I feel safer because they're there. Not unsafer.

Now there are the usual suspects, the same guys. I see them and they say hello. So again, it's just this feel that there's eyes and ears at all times day and night, watching out for you.

**[Kraig]**

You feel very comfortable walking around ... So do I. Of course, I'm 6'5" and 280 pounds. I could pretty much crush you if...

**[Lori]**

And I have a Doberman on the leash. And I have to say, having the bars, although I don't like the urination and the noise at 2 am, there is something about having the night life that makes the community safer. So it's nice to have a mix of that. As I would say, I would encourage anything that would keep the 40 and 50 something and the 60 something people here too, and not just the 20 and 30 somethings. So, that's part of the attraction is that there's all ages here. Not as many kids, but there are some kids. Some intrepid parents who stay here and send their kids to private schools.

**[Kraig]**

The kids I've met here seem to be pretty damn happy.

**[Lori]**

Yeah, they seem happy, and they're wonderful interesting.

**[Kraig]**

That's one thing about Fells Point -- it's real. It's not plastic made for what we would expect it to be like. It's a real place. There's real people... It's the real thing.

**[Lori]**

Exactly. That's right and that community feel... In my suburb, the only time that we saw our neighbors was when the fire engine showed up for something.

**[Kraig]**

Or the hearse.

**[Lori]**

... and I've lived in San Francisco, DC, Providence, Rochester, Nashville ... And I have never seen anything like Fells Point.

**[Kraig]**

You prefer this to all the places?

**[Lori]**

Yeah. And when I left Baltimore after high school, I swore I'd never come back to this cruddy city. I hated it.

**[Kraig]**

You came back to Fells Point.

**[Lori]**

Yeah. I came back to Fells Point. And it's just a joy. And I'd hate to see it... Now, again, it's hard because people say "You don't want it to change, you're an old folk... You want it to be the way it was." And I say, "No, not necessarily. There's some great young blood coming in. Because they're maintaining the same feel."

[01:36:24;27]

I was saying one of my mottos for Rec Pier was "Keep the suits out." And the argument of some of the developers is that even some of those office-workers that we do get are not going to be typical suits. Because they wouldn't come here if they were. I wish that were true. I hope that's true. I think it's the water view that's gonna get them. And the cache of Fells Point. And unfortunately, I don't want it to have a ... I want it to have a cache of "Oh, my god, there's too many drunks and homeless people" in a way. I'm talking sort of tongue in cheek, but I want to have that character. We are a bunch of characters, and I don't want that to change.

[01:37:06;01]

**[Lori]**

We got together... We have a task force which is the umbrella organization for all the associations in Fells Point. And I was so proud of the fact that we all came together with certain ideas on the Rec Pier. The ideas were pretty much to say, we really want to maintain its feel. We don't really want to build anything on the deck, which is a big thing most developers wanted. They didn't care about the Rec Pier. They were willing to give it to the community. "Yeah, whatever you want. As long as you give us this choice piece of property that we can build on."

And the community came together and said "Absolutely not." We got Mayor O'Malley to come and talk with us. He agreed to allow us to prevent that from happening. So that was a real victory. And we had the Business Association, Homeowners, Fells Point Community Organization, Mid-Point, the various smaller organizations we have ... and they all came together and signed a letter that went to the Housing Commissioner, Graziano, saying this is what we want ... and please don't do anything to destroy this wonderful profile, wonderful envelope, that we have here at the Rec Pier.

So that it really worked. And it can work. And I think we're getting better at that all the time. We really are talking. I mean, again, the wonderful feel of Fells Point is one of the reasons we have such contention, because there's so many individualists here. And in a way, I don't want that to change. In other words, when everybody in Fells Point agrees on everything, you know the soul is gone.

**[Kraig]**

This is a town of constant bickering and constant battling.

**[Lori]**

That's right.

**[Kraig]**

Controversy causes ideas. If there's not competition and controversy, you're pretty much done.

**[Lori]**

That's right. So as long as we listen to each other, not just talk at each other, then we really develop something wonderful because all these different groups come together and talk. My group, the one thing we'd like to see is get some of the younger blood in, because if you look at the organizations right now, they're all about 40, 50 and 60 something, those who are active in community activism.

**[Kraig]**

Don't you think you have to almost be that old sometimes to finally realize what you have. I think at 25 years old, you don't realize what this is. Unless you've lived a lot of different places, unless you've experienced a little bit of life...

**[Lori]**

Well, that's true.... Well, you're right. And you're not exactly committed to it, either.

[01:39:33;04]

**[Jacquie]**

Tell me about this table...

**[Lori]**

Ed Kane was the owner of the water taxi, our wonderful curmudgeon, a very good, dear friend of mine, and we developed a coffee klatsch at the Daily Grind here. Little by little, we have amassed a fantastic group of people. Ed was really the foundation of that, the cornerstone in that... That's the nature of Fells Point. People come together at a god-awful early hour on Saturday morning and they meet to talk about all the issues of the world, especially Baltimore and Maryland. And Ed Kane was instrumental in that. But now we get people ... journalists and politicians ... and they come to talk. And it was because of Ed Kane. So we're very grateful to him for having that spirit and soul of Fells Point. [Last syllable cut off -- end of tape.]