

Fell's Point Out of Time



Interview of Rich Milovicz, January 29, 2004

Jacquie Greff, interviewer. Kraig Greff, camera

[Rich]

I'm Rich Milovicz. I'm 55 years old. I have a bachelors degree in pulp and paper science. I came to Baltimore in 1978. I went to work for Procter and Gamble across from Fell's Point. In fact, my office viewed the Broadway Pier directly.

[Jacquie]

Over there, right?

[Rich]

Yes, that was the other view of it. So, I worked for Procter and Gamble on Locust Point from 1978 until 1994 in various assignments, the last being the plant environment manager and the risk department manager and so I've had over 15 years of watching Fall's Point develop from being a not so popular neighborhood into becoming a real role for urban renewal in inner northeastern cities.

[01:01:22;28]

[Jacquie]

When you first started seeing Fell's Point, what was your impression of it and what was it like back then? And when was that, that was like 17 years ago, you say?

[Rich]

This was September of 1978. Fell's Point had a reputation of being a rather bawdy, blue-collar, manufacturing-based, bar on every corner neighborhood. The inner harbor...

[cut discussion regarding lighting; 01:01:46;06]

In September of '78, the move to renovate the Inner Harbor and the movement of affluent people into the Federal Hill area contrasted significantly with the Fell's Point neighborhood. Fell's Point was still very much like it was back in the '50's and '60's, a working class neighborhood that had yet been discovered. And although it had a very deep history in the Baltimore area, it had yet to be transformed. But over the next 15 years, the transformation was truly dramatic. The movement of poorer folks out of the neighborhood and more affluent people moving in, the increase in property values, the significance of being on water, changed dramatically from 1978 to the mid '90's when I stopped living in the area.

[Jacquie]

Did you view those changes as positive?

[Rich]

Absolutely!

[Jacquie]

And the movement of poor people out, why did that happen, do you think?

[Rich]

Well, it was clearly economics. Property values rose so significantly in a very short period of time. People could realize a very great windfall in selling their property. That almost ... the economics really changed the class structure in the Fell's Point area to young urban professionals moving in and families that have lived in the area for 1, 2 or maybe even 3 generations moving out to less expensive neighborhoods, and neighborhoods that they were probably more comfortable being in. It was a real change in character for the area.

[Jacquie]

And you were living down around here somewhere?

[Rich]

Of course I was working in Locust Point, but being always in the city, it was not at all uncommon to take business associates out for lunch, and as time went on, Fell's Point became a very attractive place to entertain. It was also a great place to go party, and very often we'd come to Fell's Point late in the evening on New Year's Eve, like 4 o'clock in the morning and it would be like being in New Orleans. So it had changed a great deal.

In the mid 70's it was a pretty rough neighborhood, the merchant sailors always came into Fell's Point, the bars were probably a little bit, were a little sleazy, all of them though were manned with good bar-maids. There were no male bartenders. And they catered to the working class and to the merchants that frequented the Baltimore area. It was certainly an area that had a great deal of character with some really spicy individuals. Bertha's Mussels was a mainstay for people here. Everybody wanted to go and eat Bertha's Mussels. So it was an interesting place to visit and its character has changed significantly in 15 years.

[01:05:30;02]

[Jacquie]

Is there any particular memories, like snapshots or anything that you can reconstruct?

[Rich]

Nothing that could be repeated on film.

[Jacquie]

Okay, so that is the kind of neighborhood that it was.

[Rich]

It was that kind of neighborhood. If you wanted to have an exciting time, you could go to Fell's Point and have a very exciting time.

[Jacquie]

Let me ask you this, as a non-historian, we've heard people say that the work "hooker" originated in Fell's Point, although there seems to be some controversy about that. What would be your guess?

[Rich]

I would think that the term "hooker" really originated around Baltimore Street, but, with Baltimore being very much like a seaport town, sailors were everywhere, and because sailors were coming into town, it was a great business opportunity for those people who were called "hookers", and Fell's Point had its share.

[01:06:30;24]

[Jacquie]

Alright. Talk about the environmental aspects of the plant where you worked and some of the other stuff that you knew that went around the harbor.

[Rich]

Well, when I first came to Baltimore in September of '78, Baltimore as a city had a reputation of being a sailors' place, the Inner Harbor area was just beginning to be viewed as an economic asset for the city, but it was very rundown, and that included all of the peninsular neighborhoods, Curtis Bay, Locust Point, Fell's Point, the Inner Harbor area. The harbor itself was filthy. The amount of waste that floated on the water, the pollution that was readily evident to the eye was pretty significant.

[Jacquie]

What kind of waste?

[Rich]

Primarily solid waste, plastics, paper, wood... It was not uncommon to see a tree trunk floating in the middle of the harbor. And there was very little pleasure boat traffic. Most of the boat traffic was commercial in its nature. The harbor lent itself to being a great benefit to business. We would frequently bring barge traffic into our soap manufacturing facility. We would bring barges in from the Philippines loaded with fatty acids that we would process. Domino Sugar, which was adjacent to us on Locust Point, absolutely required boat traffic to remain competitive. Fell's Point, with its manufacturing facilities, also depended upon the harbor as both a source for boat traffic, barge traffic and the water itself was a significant benefit to the manufacturing facilities. We use harbor water in our manufacturing processes, to condense steam, to provide cooling water for various manufacturing needs and most of the facilities that existed on the Inner Harbor, both in Locust Point and on Fell's Point, really were established because of the harbor itself.

So, because of the nature of manufacturing, and in those days before there was a significant environmental movement in the United States, the quality of the aquatic environment in the Inner Harbor was pretty desperate. There was little or no evidence of aquatic life, no crabs, no fish, birds were limited solely to seagulls. And over 15 years that changed dramatically. By the mid '80's, the city had undertaken a great deal of effort to get rid of the solid waste out of the Inner Harbor area, water quality visibly improved in that about 7 year period. And the clarity of the water improved, the evidence of fish and crab living in the water in and about Locust Point and Fell's Point was evident. So there was a marked improvement in environmental quality, not only water quality, but air quality as well.

[01:10:26;22]

[Jacquie]

What caused this?

[Rich]

Predominantly, it was derived from the environmental laws that were enacted in the early '70's to late 70's – The Clean Water Act, The Clean Air Act, the water quality requirements for anybody who's discharging into estuaries such as the Bay and the harbor. Those environmental statutes and their regulations dramatically changed how manufacturing existed on the Inner Harbor. It caused manufacturing to make an effort to reduce their use of the water in the harbor, to improve their air quality discharges, and it was a very noticeable change in that timeframe from 1978 to 1985.

And, it also was a detriment to the manufacturing base that existing along the peninsular organizations. The cost of trying to meet environmental quality requirements became significant. The way that manufacturing tried to deal with that was through pretty intensive and significant capital investment to try to meet the water and air quality standards that were required. The community associations, both in Locust Point and Fell's Point, became particularly interested in knowing the impact of manufacturing on their environment. The Maryland Department of the Environment, along with the Environment Protection Agency, started to require very stringent reporting of information from the manufacturing facilities.

[01:12:29;13]

[Jacquie]

Let me ask several questions. First of all, what kind of manufacturing was there in Fell's Point?

[Rich]

I think that the most significant that stood out, besides the maritime traffic that existing in Fell's Point, was American Can.

[Jacquie]

Were they a cannery or a can manufacturing?

[Rich]

I don't know. But it was a large manufacturing facility. And the Allied Chemical Facility, which had closed down by the late '70's I believe, had been a chromium processor and certainly had significant impact on the area. It was an abandoned site that had significant environmental issues associated with it. Several of the manufacturing sites that existed prior to the influx of 1970's environmental regulation and law used but abused the land and the water that they utilized in their manufacturing operations. We had, across from Fell's Point, the Beth Steel ship yard, which was a significant employer. They did ship building and ship repair, employed in excess of 2000 employees, it was a 7 day...

[Jacquie]

Across from Fell's Point?

[Rich]

Across from Fell's Point.

[Jacquie]

Where?

[Rich]

Along the area that now houses the three large towers that were built near Federal Hill. It extended from the tip where, what's the name of the restaurant, I can't think of it ... from the Rusty Scupper. It extended from there south to Lawrence Street on Locust Point, which was a pretty significant large area. Then, of course, on the Locust Point side right adjacent to the ship yard was Domino Sugar, adjacent to Domino Sugar was Procter and Gamble manufacturing, and then there was a large grain elevator and storage tank facility just south of there, then south of that heading towards and adjacent to Fort McHenry was the Naval Reserve site and the unloading facilities for container ships. So it was a highly labor-intensive manufacturing, shipbuilding area that, for Fell's Point, may well have been considered to be unsightly in its nature during the time, with all the emissions that came from the various operations that took place on Locust Point. Looking out your window from Fell's Point might have made one feel like they were sitting in the middle of a large factory that was spewing things that were unpleasant, both smell, and soap manufacturing was a rather unpleasant smelling operation.

[Jacquie]

We've only interviewed a few people that were here during that time, and nobody has mentioned that at all.

[Rich]

Odor was the most significant negative environmental impact that existed from the, certainly from, well, the Baltimore soap plant was built in 1930, and soap manufacturing, as it became more sophisticated, still required that some very smelly raw materials were used in its processing. And depending upon what time of year the manufacturing was taking place, in the summer time the prevailing wind was out of the southwest and blew it away from Fell's Point, but in the fall and the

winter time, the wind would typically come out of the northwest and blow all of the odors from Dominos Sugar manufacturing and the Procter and Gamble soap plant right straight into Fell's point. [01:16:49;18]

[Jacquie]

So in your interactions with these community groups, you said that they got more and more interested in what was going on. Is that because information was available or was it 'cause of things happening or PR?

[Rich]

It was all of those things. It was PR, information being more available, more affluent people moving in the neighborhood who found that the manufacturing that was near their neighborhood was impacting negatively on them and their quality of life. Odor complaints became more and more frequent, citizens complaining to the Department of the Environment, the Department of the Environment interacting with manufacturing to try to reduce both visible emissions and odor. And the impact on soap manufacturing for us at Procter and Gamble was that we made over 3 million dollar investment to contain the odor emitting operations to try to improve community quality and our relationships with the community associations.

[Jacquie]

And this was above and beyond the environmental requirements.

[Rich]

This was above and beyond, but it truly was a requirement for any company that felt responsible for existing in the neighborhoods that they did. And clearly we impacted on Fell's Point as significantly as we impacted on Locust Point. It's a very small body of water, probably limited to maybe 500 yards in distance from Fell's Point. So, Fell's Point was as much our neighbor as was Locust Point. [01:18:32;04]

[Jacquie]

Now, when you talk about these community groups, did they all pretty much behave similarly, or did they have some different interests or different because of the individuals involved, did they act differently?

[Rich]

They certainly had different interests. Locust Point was certainly interested in keeping the businesses that existed on the point, on Locust Point. The manufacturing and shipbuilding provided thousands of jobs to the people in south Baltimore and Locust Point. And many who also resided in Fell's Point would transverse over to the Locust Point area for work. So, within Locust Point, the community association was supportive of business, but was certainly proactive in trying to work issues that were important to them: odor, noise, environmental discharge.

The Fell's Point area, because of its change in economic status, because of the influx of folks moving back into the inner city, because of the improvement in property values, became very active, with

both the Department of the Environment and the businesses that operated in Locust Point and Fell's Point. They probably were 5 years advanced to the other community associations, Curtis Bay, Locust Point... Fell's Point was a pioneer in many ways. And was probably the strongest community in the grouping of peninsular community associations.

[Jacquie]

Do you know which community association it was in Fell's Point? There's apparently a lot of them here.

[Rich]

I don't. I don't know the particular name. The Locust Point community association was a single community association.

[Jacquie]

Was it the homeowners association or the ...

[Rich]

It was not the homeowners association. And all the community associations in and about the Inner Harbor and Curtis Bay area banded together into a coalition and worked very actively with the Department of Environment and they worked very actively with the businesses in these peninsular organizations, peninsular neighborhoods.

[01:21:09;06]

[Jacquie]

I know, I was looking at the map ... I think I told you this the other day ... and along Caroline Street, but I think also kind of to the north of Fell's Point a little bit, there's an awful lot of area that's classified as brownfield or former brownfields. Talk about what a brownfield is, and what's your understanding, your knowledge of these spaces and how they got that way.

[Rich]

Brownfields are areas that have been impacted by various pollutants from various operations, manufacturing is the primary one. The most significant probably environment site in the Inner Harbor adjacent to Fell's Point was the Allied Chemical site. The Allied Chemical site was involved in chromium processing, and prior to Allied Chemical owning and operating that site, it was previously owned and was involved in chromium manufacturing. Probably started, I think, around 1860. By September of '78 when I came here, I believe that the operations had ceased and the Allied site had been declared a Superfund site.

[Jacquie]

Now, why would the operations have ceased?

[Rich]

I believe that Allied found that being in the Inner Harbor area and doing the manufacturing they were doing, that this was not economically viable any longer, and they had abandoned the site. The site had been up for sale and was unable to be sold.

[Jacquie]

Why was it unable to be sold?

[Rich]

It just wasn't viable. There were no businesses that wanted ...

[Jacquie]

Would the new owners have been liable for some cleanup then if it had been sold?

[Rich]

Absolutely. Both past and future owners would be accountable for the environmental condition of the site. The site was abandoned.

[cut for mic adjustments, 01:23:34;12]

[Rich]

The Allied site was abandoned and had been classified as a Superfund site. It was classified as a Superfund site because of the chromium contamination in the ground and chromium contamination of the building and the structures associated with the chromium manufacturing.

[Jacquie]

And what is a Superfund site?

[Rich]

Superfund site is a site that's been identified by the Environmental Protection Agency as having exceeded particular contamination levels and becomes a site where the government mandates cleanup. And responsibility for cleanup falls to the polluters of site or the users of the site, both past and future.

[Jacquie]

Is it the same thing as a brownfield.

[Rich]

No. A Superfund site is more contaminated, is unable to be used until it can be reclassified. Cleanup of a Superfund site may well yield itself to being a brownfield. Brownfields are considered to be developable. Superfund sites are not.

[Jacquie]

So a Superfund site can get cleaned up and become a brownfield?

[Rich]

It can.

[Jacquie]

Is that what happened with Allied?

[Rich]

The Allied site was classified as a Superfund site. The cleanup of the site was negotiated with Allied Chemical. Allied Chemical agreed to cleanup the contamination, to dismantle the structures, and to try to render the site developable for some future client. The site was encapsulated in plastic and cleanup exceeded 3 years, and many of millions of dollars. And was ultimately dismantled and then reclassified by the Maryland Department of the Environment and the Environmental Protection Agency and taken off the Superfund list.

[01:25:54;04]

[Jacquie]

To your understanding, what's the problem with the chromium that was on the site? What should people be worried about, or what were they worried about, or what happened with the chromium?

[Rich]

Well, there were several concerns. First, chromium is known to be a cancer-causing material by route of inhalation. Once chromium was listed as a cancer-causing agent, then any discharge of chromium, whether it be into the air, into the water, or into the ground, was considered to be carcinogenic. And the levels of chromium, or hexavalent chromium, which is the pollutant, had to be reduced to certain levels, such that there would not be an increased cancer rate. So, the cleanup of the Allied site took on 3 vectors: the first one being airborne, and that's why the buildings and structures were dismantled, in order to contain the pollutant hexavalent chromium dust that existed within the structures. All the buildings were encapsulated, and were dismantled from the inside out.

[Jacquie]

How long did you say there were encapsulated? Did they put tents around them and guys in moon suits, or how is that done?

[Rich]

There were men in moon suits, men and women in moon suits. The buildings were truly encapsulated in plastic to contain all of the dust that remained on the site. All of that was cleaned up, hauled away, disposed of as hazardous waste at very significant price and effort. That was the airborne contaminants. Then the land-based, the chromium that had been discharged onto the land within that area was... the soil was scraped up to a certain level and new fill was brought back in. A containment wall was installed to keep the contamination from leaching from the ground into the harbor water. And that was the cleanup that Allied performed for over a 3-year period in the '80's.

[Jacquie]

Were you here then?

[Rich]

I was.

[01:28:23;14]

[Jacquie]

Could you see the, I guess this was the closest example of an environmental problem to the people in Fell's Point. Did you observe how they reacted? The thing that was amazing to me was that nobody ever talked about it, and nobody talked about the smells, and finally we asked somebody and ... they talked about Fell's Point having this really high cancer rate, but then, it sounded like by the time anybody found out why, then the cleanup was in process and Allied was talking to the neighborhood. What's your observation?

[Rich]

During the cleanup process it was, first off, very evident to all those who lived in and about the Fell's Point area. Of course, the Inner Harbor had already been renovated and rejuvenated. The Allied site was visible to both from the Inner Harbor, from Fell's Point, and from Locust Point. The progress that went on over the 3 or 4 years that it took to clean the site up was very evident to the neighborhood, or to the neighborhoods. As the buildings were dismantled it was unavoidable to see that the site was ultimately being taken away and was being rendered more useful to the community. It was frequently a subject in the Baltimore Sun. There were frequent updates on the progress of cleaning the site up, and what might be done with the site in the future. It was considered early on that site would be no longer useful as real estate property on the waterfront. But, as time progressed that view changed. The value of the property was significant. The cleanup was considered to be adequate for future development. And I think, if anything, if it's not well remembered now, it was certainly well remembered while it was going on.

The issues of visible air emissions, odors in the '80's was significant. But with the loss of manufacturing facilities along the Inner Harbor the problem went away. And with the problem going away, the memories of the unsightliness, the really terrible smelling operations that took place are forgotten now.

[01:31:08;25]

[Jacquie]

You mentioned that the more wealthy people moving in seemed to complain a lot more. Did you notice any difference in the reactions of different socio-economic or racial ... any kind of differences in the way people reacted to some of these problems or complained or took action?

[Rich]

Absolutely! The Fell's Point Community Association, community in general, was very active early on in trying to improve the quality of the air and the water in Fell's Point area.

[Jacquie]

Now who was that, I mean, the community organization as a whole ... but who seemed to be the prime mover, what kind of people were they?

[Rich]

Although I didn't know them directly, I believe that the influx of young urban professionals significantly changed the outlook of the community. They were more proactive in trying to improve the quality of the air and water in the neighborhood. As compared to the families that lived in the community for years, that had worked in these manufacturing sites, the influx of young professionals also resulted in a more proactive and questioning community.

[Jacquie]

So the people that lived here before were vested in the industries...

[Rich]

Very much so, and had grown used to the environment in which they lived. It was not objectionable... Some people would smell the soap plant and think that it smelled like money. Even though it was very offensive, it also put paychecks in peoples' wallets and allowed them to live a more prosperous life. The manufacturing jobs that existed in the Fell's Point, Canton, Locust Point area was significant at improving the economic status of the people who lived in the neighborhood. The influx of young urban professionals, I think, lead to a more active community in challenging the businesses that impacted on them.

Frequently we would meet with community associations and to get a better understanding of what the communities' interests were, how we impacted on their quality of life. And the companies were very used to ... wishing to improve the environment in the area.

[End of tape discussion; 01:33:56;29]

[Rich]

I think that one of the things I would like to comment on, when I first came here in September of '78, it was apparent that the manufacturing operations that existed in Fell's and Locust Point were making a significant negative impact on the community, on the water and on the air. It was not at all uncommon to see large oil spills, floating foam stretching all the way down the Patapsco down towards Fort McHenry. Those were very common occurrences. By the mid 1990's, the visible air emissions, the visible water quality emissions were completely gone.

[End of tape break; 01:34:53;19]

[Jacquie]

You started to say the thing about these community organizations, and then I wouldn't let you talk, until the camera turned on, so go ahead.

[Rich]

The community associations, the peninsular organizations, Fell's Point, Locust Point, had very different character to them. But both were dominated by mistrusts and paranoia of the businesses that operated in and about the communities. Very often there was no objectivity on the part of the members of the community association. And they were pretty much ... the character of the association was driven by the dominant personalities that lead the organizations. But very clearly, there was a huge mistrust of the business community and what the business community's intent and

impact would be on the future of the local communities. Having worked with the Locust Point Community Association, there was a very clear belief that Procter and Gamble wanted to buy up the whole community if they could, and clear all the houses out, and make it be this huge manufacturing site.

[Jacquie]

Did you want to?

[Rich]

No. I don't believe that that was an intent of the company. However, the company frequently bought properties, and then site cleared the buildings that existed on the properties.

[Jacquie]

Why did they do that?

[Rich]

Good question. I don't know. I can't tell you. Maybe with the intent, ultimately, of utilizing the space. That never came to fruition, and so the fear of it was relatively ... never ... it was unfounded. There was a large German church that existed in the middle of our warehousing operation on Locust Point, and we had made several offers to relocate the church, entirely ... a very, very large brick structure that was built in the 1840's. And the community association resisted it until the plant finally shut down. And again, the idea of moving the church fueled the paranoia that the company ultimately wanted to get rid of all of the housing that was in or about the manufacturing site.

[Jacquie]

Was it the same thing in Fell's Point?

[Rich]

I believe that the same mistrust existed.

[Jacquie]

Okay, you just don't have any concrete examples.

[01:37:46;25]

[Rich]

I don't have concrete examples. But, I believe that all of the manufacturing operations that existed on the waterfront felt a great deal of pressure about being in an inner city, the risks to the community, and the negative impact they might have on the city.

Just before I came to Baltimore in September of 1978, the Baltimore soap plant had a significant environmental release that gained national press coverage. We used to use a chemical called sulfur trioxide to help make our liquid detergents. And we had a large storage tank ... sulfur trioxide is a very reactive chemical. Under normal circumstances, releasing even a drop of sulfur trioxide into the environment leads to a very large cloud of sulfuric acid. And in August of 1978, there was a leak that

developed on the sulfur trioxide storage tank on Locust Point. And of course it was summer time, and summer time the prevailing winds were out of the south. Well, this small, gradual leak, which had a persistent cloud, gradually got larger and larger as the day progressed, and by 7 o'clock in the evening, which was about 12 hours after the release began, there was a sulfuric acid cloud that extended from Baltimore northward to York Pennsylvania. Of course, it went directly over Fell's Point.

Fortunately, the local authorities and Procter and Gamble were able to minimize the negative impact that it had. But it was significant. It showed the vulnerability that a manufacturing site like the Baltimore plant could have on an inner city. And that was not lost to the other businesses existed, nor was it lost to the communities that existed on the waterfront. All of that was leading, I think ultimately, to make businesses reconsider the benefit of existing on an inner city waterway for their manufacturing operations.

[Jacquie]

... You said the company was able to minimize the negative impact. What do you mean by that? How did they do it and what was a possible negative impact?

[Rich]

First, our knowledge of the use and methods of dealing with a release was pretty extensive. We had worked with the city in the event that there may possibly be a release, or a potential accidental release. The Dupont Company had a number of experts that responded quickly to the emerging environmental incident that took place on that day, as did the Baltimore City Fire Department. And those efforts helped to reduce the risk of harm to the local community. After the incident took place, we worked with the Dupont Company and with city planners to install a failsafe storage system. And in the event of a release in the future, it would not have an impact on the community. The cost of that effort was in excess of 5 million dollars. But those types of efforts also made companies rethink their presence in a place like being on the Inner Harbor in Baltimore City, where you've got stadiums and a downtown area that has a significant population during the daytime.

[Kraig]

What would happen ... You've got this cloud. What's the actual danger, say this cloud comes over me. Is it by breathing it, is it by ... What happens to you?

[Rich]

Contact to your skin and inhalation would be significantly harmful, with the potential of significant number of fatalities if people were directly impacted by the release.

[Jacquie]

No offense, but this sounds like a corporate executive speaking. Is this going to burn my skin, is this going to give me pneumonia?

[Rich]

It will burn your skin. It will destroy your clothing. It would be like breathing acid.

[Jacquie]

Did they have to evacuate Fell's Point?

[Rich]

They evacuated portions of the downtown area. There were a number of folks that went to hospitals and reported breathing problems, skin burning issue problems. Fortunately, the ambient conditions resulted in the cloud rising very quickly.

[Jacquie]

What does that mean?

[Rich]

It means that instead of the plume going in a horizontal direction, it went vertical to several thousand feet. And fortunately, it literally went up over the top of the neighborhoods and drifted with the prevailing winds northward towards York Pennsylvania. Of course, the plume continued to gain in elevation as it progressed northward so the outlying areas were much less impacted. The visible event was significant. It was unparalleled in the Inner Harbor area to see a large plume of sulfuric acid rising from a site several thousand feet and then drifting across the top of the city.

[01:44:19;27]

[Jacquie]

Going back to your comments about industry being near the city itself... Is this ... I guess it started based on what said because the water transportation was so helpful to industry, and then of course transportation wasn't that great, and people wanted to live near their work ... and so you had people around all this manufacturing based on the water and then, I guess, when... It looks like a societal change in the way water is used, in the way they think about water. Is that fair to take that away from what you're saying?

[Rich]

Absolutely true. In the 60 years that the plant operated, the thing that brought us to Baltimore, the harbor, the access to both water and land transportation, the large base of skilled workers that existed in the inner city – those were the things that brought us to the Baltimore area, and those were the things that lead to leave the Baltimore area. Our impact on the land and the air, our impact on the people in an urban setting, the risk that manufacturing operations with hazardous chemicals... lead the company to, I think, ultimately, decide that we were better moving our manufacturing operations out of urban areas, and out of the Baltimore area in particular. The Baltimore plant was considered to be the ... to have the second largest risk of any manufacturing site we had in the world.

[Jacquie]

Why?

[Rich]

Because of the use of some of the chemicals we had. We used fuming sulfuric acid in manufacturing our dry detergents, and we used sulfur trioxide in the manufacturing of our liquid detergents. Both of those chemicals could have a significant deleterious effect on the community if it were to be released. And reducing that risk became a priority for the company.

[Jacquie]

So it was really more focused on what kind of operations and chemicals you had, rather than something that was unique to the Baltimore area?

[Rich]

Absolutely.
[01:46:37;22]

[Jacquie]

Okay. Now, it seems like, you know, we being kind of the yuppies and coming down here to be near the water for its beautiful, I mean, obviously, back in the days of industry belching fumes and everything, it probably wasn't so beautiful and that's one of the things that drove people out. Do you have any observations about the change and how it came about. Because, that's a big change, the water being a positive versus the water being something you really want to stay away from. I mean as a person, not as a representative of any company.

[Rich]

Well, I think, if I were to be a resident of one of these peninsular communities, Locust Point or Fell's Point, the gradual absence of manufacturing was positive. No longer did you have the odors. No longer did you have the truck traffic. No longer did you have the noise. And although there were jobs that were lost in that transformation, going from being a manufacturing-based community to a non-manufacturing based community, the impact to the communities was very, very positive in improving quality of the environment in which they lived in.

[Kraig]

You know, between Exit 7 and Exit 8 going north on 95 coming out of Cincinnati, there's a chemical plant. It produces a smell like you have never smelled before in your life.

[Rich]

That's just north of where the soap plant was.

[Jacquie]

It wasn't the soap plant, though.

[Rich]

No.

[Jacquie]

Because I got used to soap manufacturing.

[Rich]

You had a hydrolyser there.

[Kraig]

It was a sickening, sweet that, I would hold my breath when I got near that area as to not even get it into the car.

[Rich]

I remember seeing the place that you're talking about. Because I'd always stay up north around Sharon Woods, so I'd always have to go up there. And that thing was spewing nasty looking stuff, and I don't know what it was. Somebody knows what it is.

[Kraig]

It's not Procter and Gamble...

[01:49:09;06]

[Jacquie]

You were talking about the nasty chemicals that you worked with, and some of the stuff.... Of course Procter and Gamble wasn't the only plant that affected Fell's Point, it was probably one of the lesser ones, maybe overall. Did the people worry ... was there any health affects that you knew of, or that you personally speculated of?

[Rich]

I think that it was broadly held within the community that rates of cancer were probably higher than in other areas of the community. That was certainly the fear that was voiced by the community associations. There was press coverage that indicated that there were higher cancer rates in the Fell's Point area. I don't think that the Locust Point area was studied as dramatically as that. For sure, there were hazardous chemicals, and hazardous materials that were housed in these manufacturing sites. Asbestos was a significant material to be used during the construction of these facilities. Most of the facilities were built in the '30's, '40's, and '50's, well before anybody considered things like inhalation hazards existed in manufacturing. So, I think the fears, although maybe not supported by fact, was supported by anecdotal evidence that there were health issues associated with these facilities.

[01:50:46;06]

[Jacquie]

Now, one of the things that I have kind of taken away from talking to you is that wasn't really an issue of uncaring manufacturers being located next to poor communities that couldn't defend themselves. It was more a case of science evolving...

[Rich]

Certainly, in my experience, coming here in late '70's, there was a going awareness of the impact of chemicals on workers, on the communities that they resided within. Because of that increasing knowledge, the community associations almost demanded that industry act more as a good neighbor. As a result of that, there was an association that was developed called the South Baltimore Mutual Industrial Aid Program. And in that, all of the large manufacturers and the city and the communities put together a coalition of individuals who worked at improving environmental quality and reducing hazard and risk to the communities. That started in the early '80's, and continues today. One of the events that has taken place over the last 20 years is a practice drill within the communities, from Curtis Bay coming up through Locust Point, Fell's Point, and Canton, looking at the hazardous materials that are transported through and/or utilized in manufacturing. And these drills are held to try to minimize risk to the community and to the workers of these facilities. So, it has been a significant effort. It's taken a lot of people, and a lot of money to put together this coalition of communities and manufacturers to try and improve on a situation like we had back in '78 when we had our release of SO₃.

[01:52:57;19]

[Jacquie]

Now Baltimore has a reputation of being a heavy, blue-collar union town. It's interesting that you didn't mention unions in all this whole discussion. ... Did unions do anything, did they play any role at all?

[Rich]

I don't think that they played an active role in the environmental circumstances that existed at the time. They were more interested in improving the working conditions and pay for their workers. I don't think that the unions actively worked with the community associations. They were more interested in employment benefits, pay, and they didn't look external...

[Jacquie]

Worker health? Was there any worker health issues?

[Rich]

Certainly worker health issues were evolving at the time and sort of was interest to the unions, you know, to look at injury rates, death rates, illness rates... And with the evolving awareness of manufacturing and impact on the worker, all those areas were pretty much addressed, and really addressed, I think, very adequately. The Baltimore plant had worked well in excess of a million worked hours without injury. And that was all, I think, a result of cooperate effort between the unions and management, to make working conditions less hazardous.

[01:54:42;12]

[Jacquie]

Any other thoughts that you have...

[Rich]

I think what's going to be interesting in the future is, we're going to see Locust Point go through the same evolution that Fell's Point went through back in the late 70's and early 80's. The migration of young urban professionals into a neighborhood that has been traditionally blue-collar, people who didn't speak English, who have been in this neighborhood for 2 or 3 generations... That they will be impacted by this transition, just as Fell's Point was impacted on it. Absence now, though, is that heavy manufacturing that existed at the time. Now the issues will be, who gets to put the largest high-rise in on water and will the community tolerate such things.

[Jacquie]

Can you characterize Fell's Point today, and do you have a crystal ball what the future might be like? Your own personal crystal ball.

[Rich]

Well, I think property values will continue to rise. It will continue to be attractive for people to move back into the inner city, and to move into communities like Canton and Fell's Point and south Baltimore, Federal Hill, and Locus Point. And Locust Point's transition now is absolutely dramatic, absolutely dramatic. The businesses certainly have changed, the price of property has gone up significantly. It'll be interesting to see what happens.

[Kraig]

Did you ever live in Fell's Point, I mean, in Locust Point, or did you commute?

[Rich]

I commuted, but I did live in south Baltimore for awhile and I knew many, many families on Locust Point.

[01:56:41;02]

[Kraig]

Is there any ... from the plants that have been there, over the years, and there's these brown areas, what the name of the technical term ... brownfields ... as a guy that worked in these plants, and really knew what... It's one of those terms that's tossed around a lot ... Oh, we can build here now, it satisfies the Environmental Protection Agency, thinking of waiting 10 years or whatever, now we can build here or it's safe. Is it really safe, I mean, would you put a home on a brownfield now?

[Rich]

Yes. I believe that it is safe to build on the Allied Chemical site, which may still be classified as a brownfield. I think that the environmental cleanup that has taken place in these communities has been successful. Most of these sites have been characterized now. In other words, they looked for pollutants and contaminants in the ground and in the water and I think that the communities, Locust Point, Fell's Point, Canton, are absolutely satisfactory for non-manufacturing development.

[Kraig]

I mean, they've got, of course, Fell's Point, if it's not marked brownfield, but, right up north of Fell's Point, actually the west side, that area is there still, you see it's all barren up there by Living Classrooms, it's still characterized as a brownfield, and they're now going to start to build there. Is that safe? So you'd have a home there?

[Rich]

Yes, I would have no problem owning a condominium on a brownfield.

[Kraig]

As long as it's on the eight floor... [Laughter]

[01:58:48;20]

[Jacquie]

They talk about this EPA approved procedure for penetrating the cap so they can put foundations for these buildings. Do you think that people can trust, if somebody says "EPA's approved it," should everybody go "Oh, okay, no worry" or should they still ask questions?

[Rich]

I think questions ought to always be asked. Regulators are not perfect. There are judgments and assessments that may or may not address the issue. So I think people in the community have to question the decisions that get made and why they got made. Why would somebody put a high-rise here, is that acceptable to the community? Is it going to benefit the community in any way? Are there hazards the community is being presented with because of the placement of a business or of a structure? I think the community has to challenge it, has to look at it and come to its own conclusion that it's going to be beneficial and acceptable.

[Jacquie]

Now, you're probably one of the few people that would qualify as a corporate executive that we've interviewed for this Fell's Point thing. And you've dealt with a lot of community organizations, not the kind of topics we're dealing with now, because now the people are the developers, instead of the nasty industrialists. But, if you were speaking to a community activist that wanted to have success on an issue, or even wanted to pick their issue and figure out whether they should be worried and how much time they should spend on something, do you have any advice? You know, kind of from the other side to what worked, you know, and what doesn't work?

[Rich]

I think, trying to maintain objectivity, having clear objectives that you wish to have addressed, or to met by someone who's wishing to come into your community, that's how you should deal with the issues at hand. The paranoia, the "not in my backyard" mentality is probably ... should be avoided. There are many things that business can contribute to a community that should be looked at before somebody passes judgment on whether it's good or whether it's not good.

[Jacquie]

And how do you find out what even to worry about? How do you understand issues that are in a field that you're totally not competent in?

[Rich]

Well, if you're not competent in it, then you need to get people who are, to advise you. And when to look at the diversity of these communities, I think that there certainly is adequate expertise to help community leaders address the questions.