

Hunting Towers

Presentation to Hunting Creek Area
Stakeholders Group

by

Hunting Towers residents

May 31, 2007

View of Hunting Towers in the distance, on the right, taken from the Hunting Creek Bridge on the George Washington Parkway, heading north



View of Hunting Towers walkway between Center building and East building in 2002 before VDOT's demolition began



Parking area across from Hunting Towers, with one of its majestic trees, both gone now



**Area between East and Center buildings before
demolition of East building, Center building
underground parking garage, and removal of trees,
Fall 2002**



A demolition worker's trailer on Hunting Towers grounds during the demolition prep work and demo, 2002



Demolition preparation, 2002



East building denuding, Fall 2002



East building cordoned off for demolition, Fall 2022



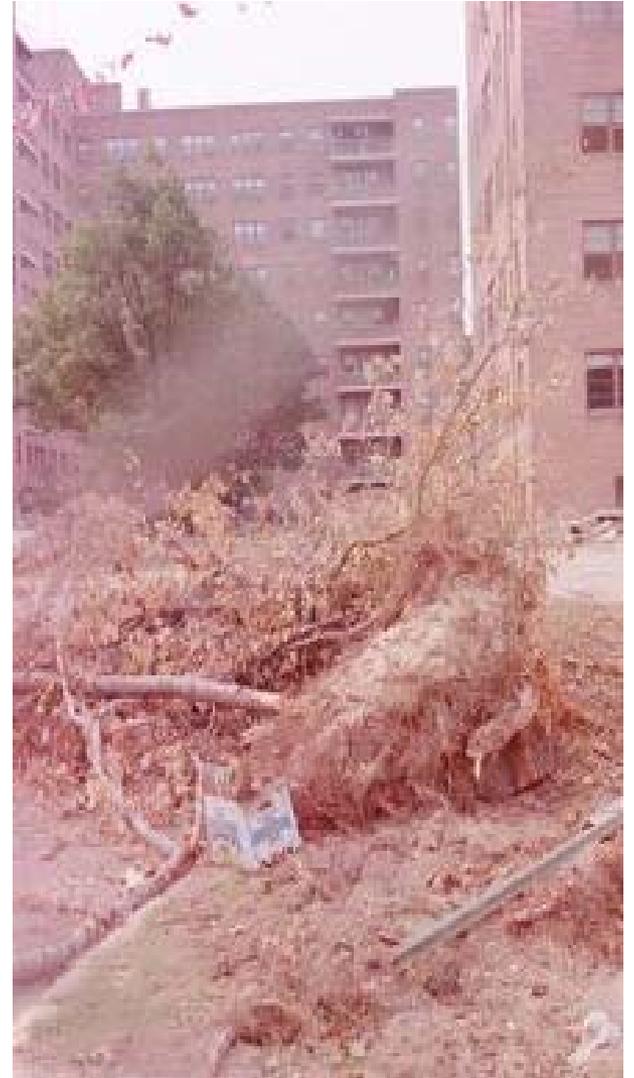
Asbestos removal at Center building before demolition, Fall 2002



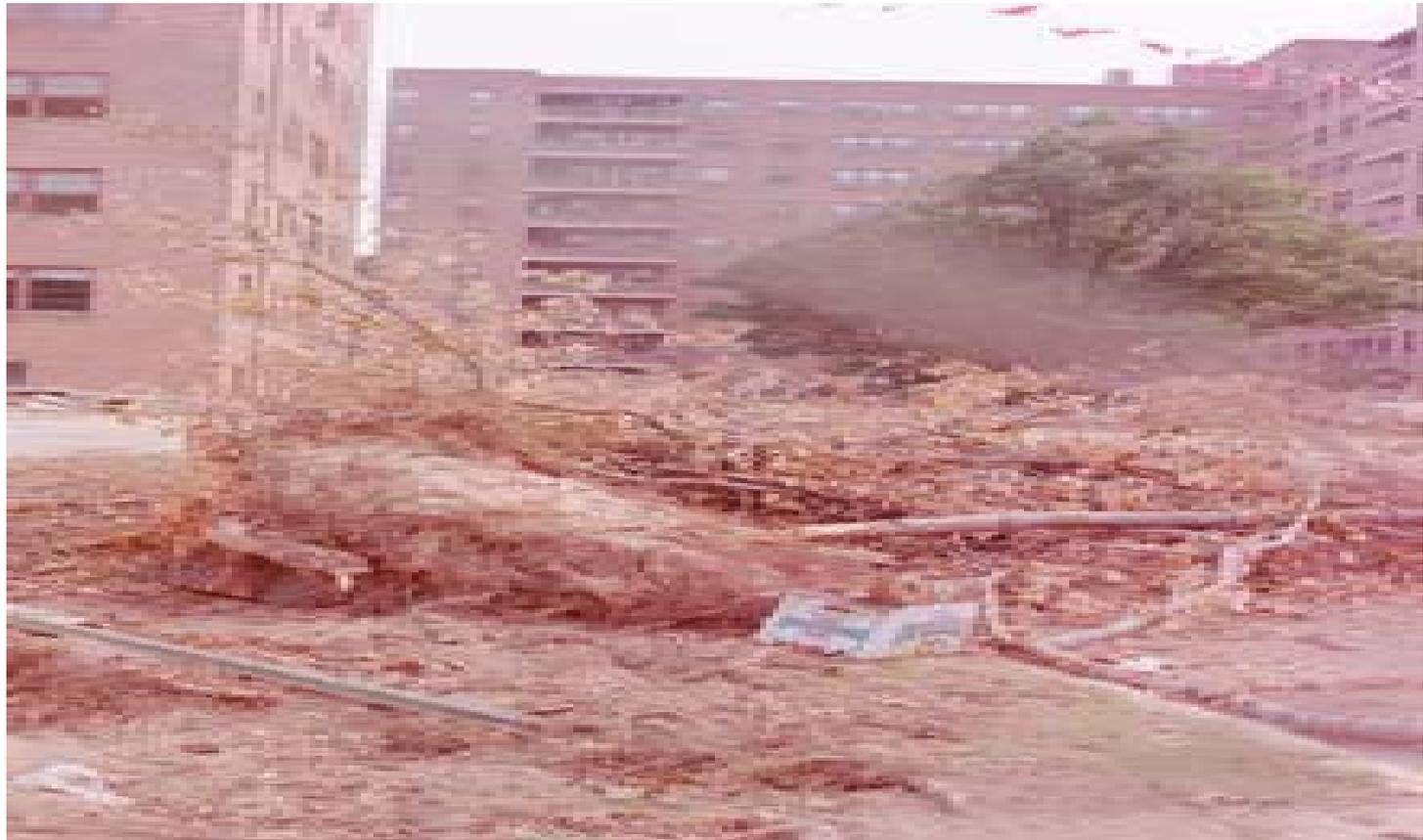
East building demolition and mess, ongoing asbestos removal, Fall 2002



Where did all the greenery and the trees go?



Denuding of trees between East and Center buildings, Fall 2002





Lost trees, demolition prep work, Fall 2002



East building front promenade, and parking area, not long for this world, Fall 2002



East building above and underground parking demolition, Fall 2002



Demolition of East building above ground parking lot, Fall 2002



Dirt, dirt, everywhere – ongoing demolition, late summer 2002



East building cordoned off pre-demolition, 2002



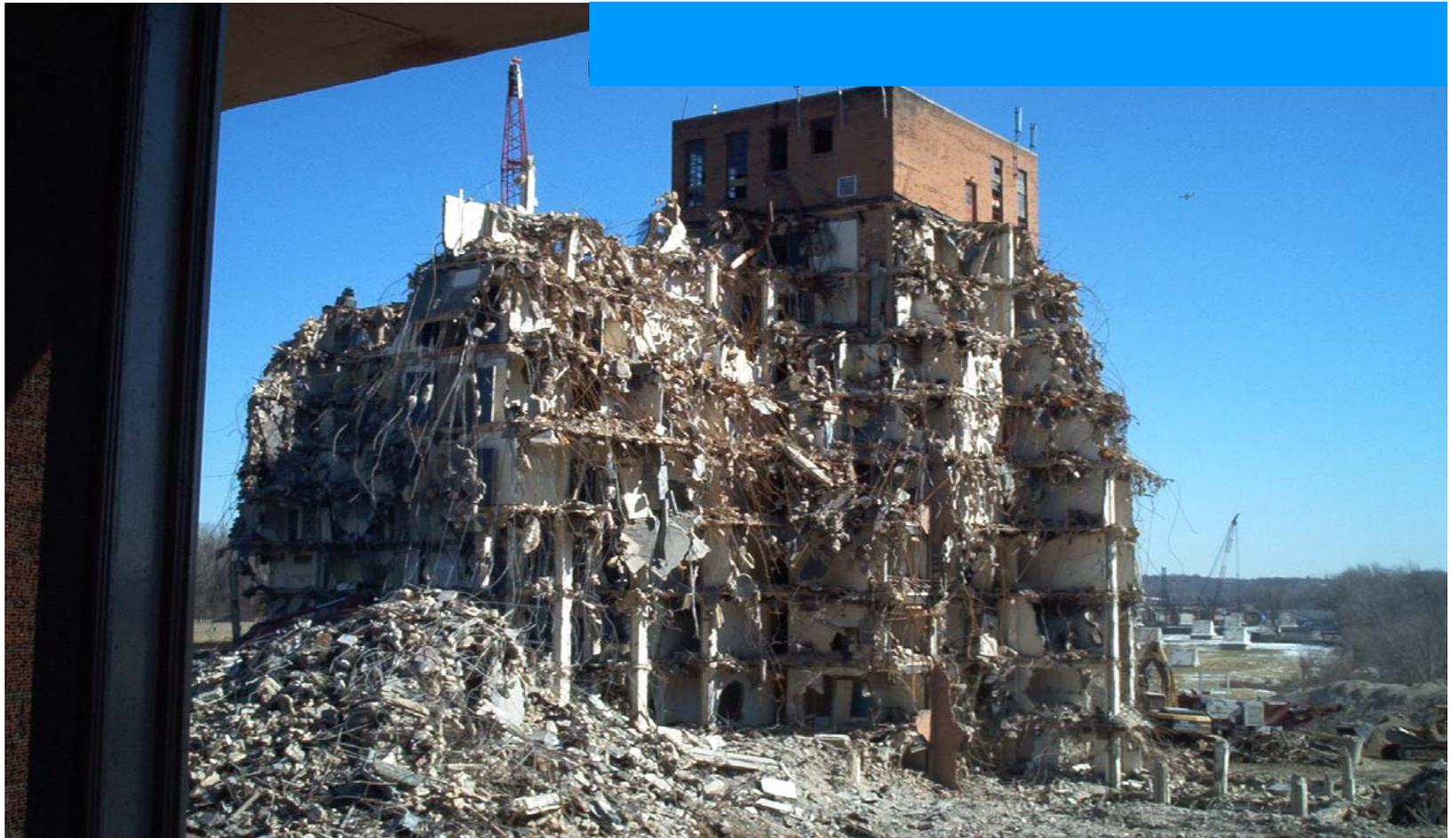
East building demolition continues, January 14, 2003



Lone workman hosing down demolition dust at East building, January 14, 2003



East building demolition, as seen from Center building resident Bob Holland's window, Winter 2003



Hunting Terrace Travis Boozer expresses his feelings about the construction mess, June 2003



VDOT's surprise for a Hunting Terrace resident, Travis Boozer, in June 2003 – a brand new above ground oil tank within feet of his kitchen! This was Travis' response to VDOT:



Hunting Terrace resident Travis Boozer felt sending one postcard to VDOT about his “new concrete neighbor” wasn't enough, so he sent this one too in June 2003



Hurricane Isabel's wrath, September 19, 2003, to which one resident exclaimed, "Surf's up on the tennis court!"



Hurricane Isabel's fury, where Hunting Towers meets Porto Vecchio, September 19, 2003



Dodging construction vehicles in Hunting Towers parking lot behind the West building



Edge of Center building and emerging outer loop of the new Woodrow Wilson Bridge, and Jones Point; construction trailers too!



Hunting Towers 2 bedroom unit kitchen



Original double hung windows at Hunting Towers



Hunting Towers 2 bedroom unit, facing the Potomac River



Hunting Towers 2 bedroom unit with balcony, living room view



Hunting Towers 2 bedroom unit bath



Resident leaving only remaining underground parking garage between West building and Center building, near West building basement, July 2004



View of trees along S. Washington Street, and the West building parking lot, before the trees were removed; Hunting Terrace in background



Similar view of edges of two remaining Towers, the tennis court parking lot, and courtyard, with Porto Vecchio in the background



Similar view, but look at those clouds and the vast Potomac River looking south!



Similar view, with courtyard between the two remaining Hunting Towers buildings visible



View from Center building of part of West building, Porto Vecchio, and Potomac River



Front entrance of the Center building, 2007



View of West building driveway, with Convenience Store on right on ground floor of West building



West building entrance, 2007



These 1950s red bricks look better than most – the buildings' bricks are in desperate need of re-pointing! During harsh storms with driving rains, the rainwater travels quickly through the mortar into some apartment walls! Yikes!



**This fire plug seems to be missing some earth.
Bet VDOT has it! Notice the Great Wall of VDOT in
background...**



**One of a few lovely bushes that escaped the VDOT's
axe!**



South Street looking east past the edge of the Center building, 25 feet away from the Great Wall of VDOT, and the new Woodrow Wilson Bridge beyond, 2007



South Street looking west to South Washington Street (notice the visually attractive green metal casing for we're not sure what, in the median), 2007



View looking towards the intersection of S. Washington Street & the new South Street, with Hunting Terrace in the upper left; new Great Wall of VDOT on the right, 2007



Hunting Towers remaining two buildings, post demolition and construction, from S. Washington Street entrance, 2007



**Temporary Mount Vernon Trail Behind Hunting Towers
Pool Area, looking North towards VDOT & subs'
construction trailers on left of photo**



Hunting Towers History

- Designed by architect William H. Harris, who designed Yates Gardens and Hunting Terrace. He “endeavored to combine the best attributes of modern conveniences with attention to the Colonial background of life in Alexandria” (Alexandria Gazette, Dec. 9, 1950)
- Owned and operated by the Hunting Towers Corporation, formed by Alexandria businessmen John-Barton Phillips, Vaughan B. Connelly, Elliott F. Hoffman, and Frank M. Pratt
- The building contractor was the Charles H. Tompkins Company of Washington

Hunting Towers – Construction

Envisioned in September 1947, delays in project financing meant the buildings were constructed between 1949 and 1951. Federal Housing Administration loan monies financed the project. Each of the three buildings cost \$3,000,000, and the total cost was projected, in December 1950, to be \$14,000,000 when the stores, shops, and other facilities were complete. At the time of its construction, Hunting Towers Apartments project was the largest of its type in Alexandria.

The City agreed to abandon all platted streets running through the project site (including the 141 year old Park Street), because the complex would serve to relieve the tight post-war housing market. Later, construction of the Capital Beltway and the Woodrow Wilson Bridge ramps both physically and visually isolated Hunting Towers from Alexandria proper.

Hunting Towers – Why built?

World War II had brought many workers to the Washington area, and many decided to remain after the war was over. Hunting Towers was created to provide affordable housing in a rapidly growing region, aided by the Federal Government's housing programs initiated under Franklin Delano Roosevelt. As a 1999 report prepared for VDOT about Hunting Towers revealed:

“The goal of these programs was to provide good quality, affordable housing for defense workers and their families, which often provided the sense of a self-contained community, and which could be constructed in a reasonably quick time frame.”

URS Greiner Woodward Clyde 1999 Report to VDOT about Hunting Towers and its neighbor Porto Vecchio

“The site where nearby Porto Vecchio (designed in 1982 and built in 1985) now stands was developed in 1948 as a part of Hunting Towers grounds. When Hunting Towers opened, that portion of the grounds included an outdoor swimming pool and a marina. The marina rapidly became unusable because it filled with silt from Hunting Creek, which empties into the Potomac River at that point. Dozens of piers are still in place from the marina along the shore in front of the Porto Vecchio development.

The swimming pool currently in use at Hunting Towers is not the original one used by Hunting Towers residents. That pool was located on grounds sold to the Teamsters Union shortly after Hunting Towers opened. Hunting Towers management continued to rent the pool from the Teamsters for its tenants use, but when the rent became too high, the management had a pool built on Hunting Towers property. The Teamsters had the original pool filled in. When development on Porto Vecchio was initiated, excavation crews were surprised to find the old swimming pool still intact, though buried, on the grounds.”

URS Greiner Woodward Clyde 1999 Report to VDOT about Hunting Towers “Raison d’Etre”

“The Hunting Towers complex itself is an early representative example of the type of public housing that would commonly be built for the next 40 years throughout urban and suburban areas of the U.S. Including Alexandria. Rents for this property have remained comparable to, or even lower than, the rents charged by similar establishments. As a result, Hunting Towers has primarily served as a residence for single persons, young families, and elderly individuals of moderate income, those persons for whom federal involvement in construction of public housing was found to be necessary if they were to have adequate housing.”

HUNTING TOWERS – BREAKDOWN OF UNIT TYPES AND SIZES

The three Towers together offered a total of 372 efficiency units (4 types, average size 393 sq. ft.),
54 junior one bedrooms (500 sq. ft.),
264 one bedrooms (two types, average size 680 sq. ft.), and 105 two bedrooms (two types, average size 895 sq. ft.)

HUNTING TOWERS – CURRENT 2007 RENTAL RATES (INCLUDES UTILITIES)

Efficiency Plans 1 & 2 (380 to 385 sq. ft.) - \$869 to
\$891

Efficiency Plans 3 & 4 (395 to 405 sq. ft.) - \$920 to \$941

Junior One Bedroom (500 sq. ft.) - \$949 to \$991

One Bedroom, Plan 1 (660 sq. ft.) - \$1,054 to \$1,130

One Bedroom, Plan 2 (700 sq. ft.) - \$1,110 to \$1,150

Two Bedroom Plans 1 & 2 (800 to 940 sq. ft.) - \$1,400
to \$1,433

**HUNTING TOWERS – 1950 RENTAL RATES
(INCLUDES UTILITIES) - SOURCE:
ALEXANDRIA GAZETTE, DEC. 9, 1950 ARTICLE**

Efficiencies (380 to 405 sq. ft.) - \$75 to \$95 a month

One Bedrooms (500 to 700 sq. ft.) - \$110 to \$130 a
month

Two Bedrooms (800 to 940 sq. ft.) - \$135 to \$155 a
month

PARKING SPACES, PRE-VDOT AND NOW

Hunting Towers, pre-VDOT, had a total of 500 parking spaces in a combination of surface parking lots and three underground parking garages. The underground portions of the garages contain 50 spaces each and the East building garage had 47 spaces available on the roof. We also had 268 other spaces available at various times in the office building parking lot and nearby open lot north of the buildings, for a total of **768 parking spaces**.

Now, we apparently have **519** parking spaces which include 9 handicapped user spaces, only 1 underground garage with 50 spaces, and a temporary 16 space parking lot. VDOT “borrowed” the tennis court to turn into a parking lot in the fall of 2003, and said it would replace it with a new tennis court when it sold the property back to its former owner. So far, that hasn't happened, and we don't expect it will.

SOME RESIDENT COMPLAINTS

Electrical circuits overload in some tiers; parquet floors aren't consistently maintained or repaired; air conditioners aren't effective as management uses refurbished units; bathroom tiles crack and are rarely repaired; there are no dishwashers or garbage disposals; kitchen cabinets have been repainted 1,000 times so don't close properly; kitchen cabinets have rotted and split; screen doors on balconies need replacing, windows do not close anymore and need replacing, caulking around windows has fallen away, red brick needs re-pointing and cleaning, mold is a constant visitor because of the use of ancient A/C units, ventilation systems (2) are antiquated and need updating, elevators can be a bit scary, we need a bit more disability access too...**BUT WE LOVE HUNTING TOWERS ANYWAY!**

SOME FAMOUS RESIDENTS

Emily Newell Blair (1877-1951), a writer and lecturer, was press and publicity chairman in the initiative suffrage campaign in Missouri, 1914; she served in several capacities for the Democratic National Committee (1921-1928); she was editor of Missouri Women (1914-1915); and she was first secretary (1922-1926) and then president (1928-1929) of the Woman's National Democratic Club; U2 Spy Plane Pilot Francis Gary Powers, put in a safe house here by the CIA in the early 1960s; Walter "Wally" Schirra, one of the Mercury 7 astronauts (who died May 2007) lived here too while in training!

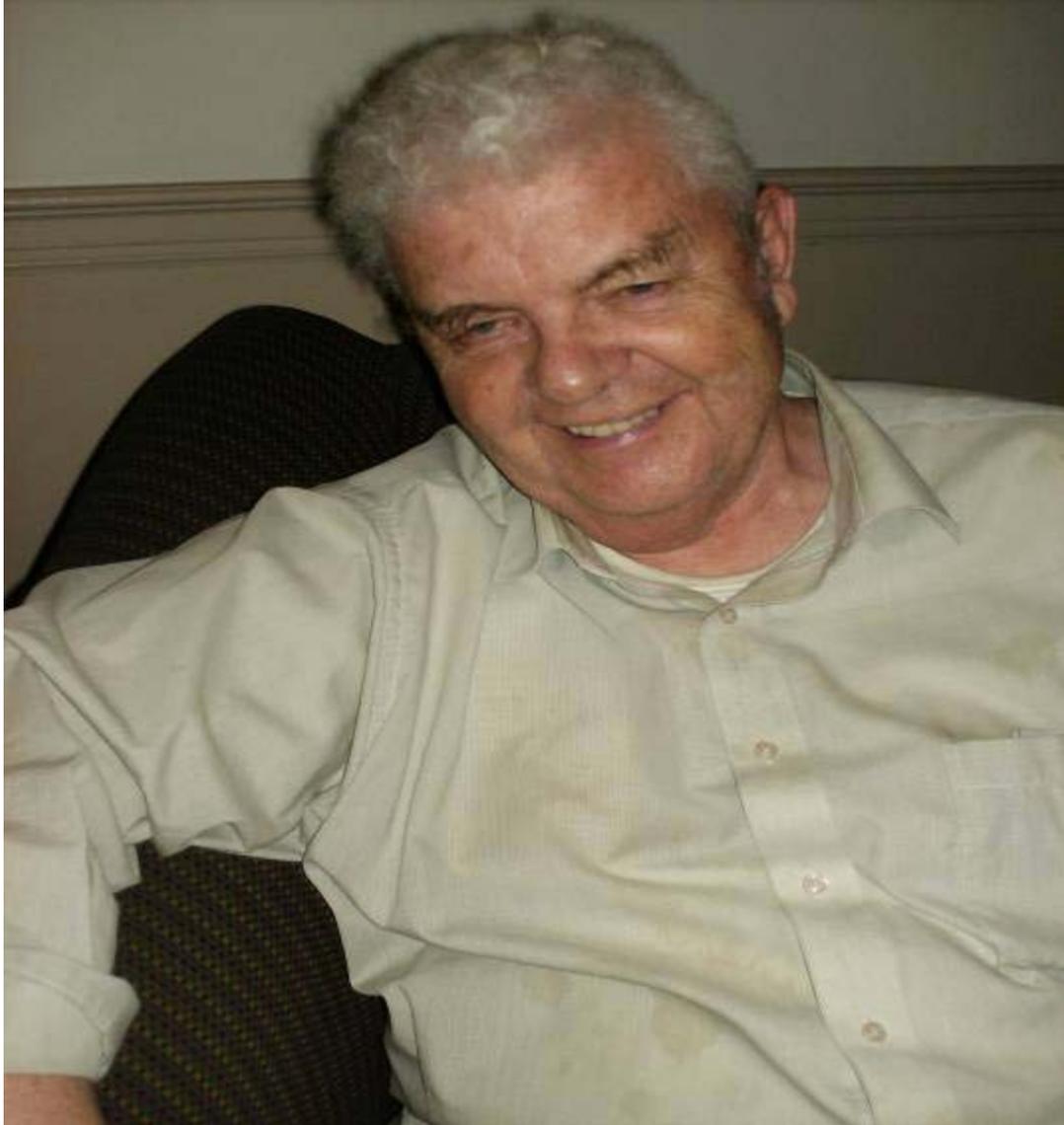
SOME MORE FAMOUS RESIDENTS: MARY MOORE AND
JUNIOR LEE SCALES, 22 AND 50+ YEARS
RESPECTIVELY, AT HUNTING TOWERS



SOME MORE FAMOUS RESIDENTS: CARROLL
LESTER, 40 YEARS AT HUNTING TOWERS



SOME MORE FAMOUS RESIDENTS:
JOE KYLE, 10 YEARS AT HUNTING TOWERS



SOME MORE FAMOUS RESIDENTS: ADRIAN AND ALEJANDRA REYES, 1 YEAR AT HUNTING TOWERS



Reminder: Hunting Creek Area Plan Section 3.4.3

In order to retain affordable and workforce housing in the City, the City may consider a zoning text amendment or zone change to allow additional height and density with setbacks appropriate to the project and the site, and in conformance with the Board of Architectural Review's Washington Street Standards and Guidelines, with SUP (Special Use Permit) approval, if the project provides for extraordinary affordable housing, including but not limited to the acquisition by the City, or by a non-profit housing corporation, of units at the project.

TO SAVE HUNTING TOWERS

The subsidy needed to rehabilitate and preserve our buildings as affordable workforce and retiree housing is approximately \$20,000,000.00. VDOT is required by law to offer the property to its original owner at “Fair Market Value”, which is based on the highest and best use of the property which translates into luxury condominiums rather than affordable workforce and retiree housing. So in order to make it economically feasible to preserve Hunting Towers as affordable workforce housing, a subsidy of +/- \$20,000,000.00 is necessary.

That subsidy can be provided by the extra profit generated by the additional height and density granted to IDI Group's Hunting Creek Plaza 400 luxury condominium project. In fact, this extra \$20,000,000.00 is generated by the top 5 floors in the high rise portion of the project where the units have unobstructed views of the Potomac River.

Now let's go jump in the Hunting Towers pool...

