



# Oral History Interview

with

# John Quinn

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**Interviewer:** Kerry Reed  
**Narrator:** John F. Quinn  
**Location of Interview:** 305 W. Braddock Rd. Alexandria  
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**Transcriber:** Dr. Donna M. DeBlasio

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### Summary:

John F. Quinn is a native of Hartford, Connecticut. He received his bachelor's degree in architectural and civil engineering from the Catholic University of America. He moved to Alexandria in 1961 to work on the restoration of Old Town Alexandria and other urban renewal projects in the City. Some of his work included the Dip area and Seminary. Mr. Quinn was also active in local politics, including serving as manager of Melvin Miller's campaign for mayor.

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General	Urban renewal 1960s-1970s; rehabilitation of Old Town; dealing with City Council on rehab projects; working in City development 1970s-1980s; managing mayoral campaign and local politics; Old Town Citizen's Association; Alexandria Neighborhood Citizens Improvement Association (ANCI); Board of Architectural Review (BAR)
People	Hope, Lionel; Neer, Casper; Peterson, Rev. John Otis; Miller, Melvin; Green, Nelson; Mann, Frank; Berrghein, Melvin; Beatley, Charles; Ticer, Jack; Collins, Lester; Bostetter, Martin; Beatley, Charles
Places	Old Town Alexandria; Alexandria City Hall; Alexandria Courthouse; Mudtown; Gadsby's Tavern; The Dip; Jefferson Village; George Mason Hotel; Alfred St. Baptist Church; Apothecary; Torpedo Factory; Tavern Square; King Street Metro Station; Seminary

**John F. Quinn** [00:00:02] Okay, John Francis Quinn, I'm 90 years old. What was the other thing you wanted to know?

**Kerry Reed** [00:00:15] Just the date, but it's okay

**John F. Quinn** [00:00:16] The date. The date is May 9, Friday, May 9.

**Kerry Reed** [00:00:26] My name is Kerry James Reed. I am 28 and it is the 9th, and we are at Mr. Quinn's lovely home. So, Mr. Quinn, thank you so much for agreeing to do this interview. I had the pleasure speaking with you last time. Learned a lot. I suppose we can start from the very beginning. Where were you born?

**John F. Quinn** [00:00:42] I was born in Hartford, Connecticut.

**Kerry Reed** [00:00:51] Hartford, Connecticut. When did you come to Alexandria then?

**John F. Quinn** [00:00:54] I came in September 1961.

**Kerry Reed** [00:00:59] 1961. How old were you when you came?

**John F. Quinn** [00:01:03] I think I was 26.

**Kerry Reed** [00:01:05] 26. Okay. Was that after grad school?

**John F. Quinn** [00:01:09] No, no, I was working prior to that. I was working for an engineering firm in Prince George's County.

**Kerry Reed** [00:01:16] Okay.

**John F. Quinn** [00:01:16] Out in Riverdale, Maryland.

**Kerry Reed** [00:01:21] Where did you go to school?

**John F. Quinn** [00:01:22] I went to Catholic University.

**Kerry Reed** [00:01:24] Oh, Catholic. Fabulous. What did you study there?

**John F. Quinn** [00:01:29] Architectural and civil engineering.

**Kerry Reed** [00:01:32] Architectural and civil engineer, fabulous. So, when you came to the City in 1961, had you had any previous experience with urban renewal in the District or anything like that?

**John F. Quinn** [00:01:47] No. I was in Reserves with a fellow that worked here, and he told me there was a job and so I applied to it. I had planned to stay on with the firm I was with. It was a good-sized firm. There were about 60 or 70 of us. They had promised me a raise and I didn't get the raise, so I went in and said, "I'm leaving."

**Kerry Reed** [00:02:16] Absolutely. You said you were in Reserves with someone in Alexandria.

**John F. Quinn** [00:02:20] No, I was in the Army Reserves.

**Kerry Reed** [00:02:23] Oh, okay. I understand. Moved to Alexandria, or start to work in Alexandria, 1960.

**John F. Quinn** [00:02:32] Yeah, 1960 and moved shortly thereafter.

**Kerry Reed** [00:02:36] So, had you visited the City while you were going to Catholic at all?

**John F. Quinn** [00:02:41] No. Once, maybe twice, but not really spent much time over here.

**Kerry Reed** [00:02:48] So, when you came over here then to work on urban renewal, what were your first impressions of the City?

**John F. Quinn** [00:02:57] Oh, Southern. It seemed like a really Southern City. It was entirely different than the District or Maryland.

**Kerry Reed** [00:03:13] How would you characterize Southern then in 1960?

**John F. Quinn** [00:03:15] Southern and food and everything, it was a different type of atmosphere. And it was, I would say, it was a lot slower than today.

**Kerry Reed** [00:03:34] Yeah.

**John F. Quinn** [00:03:35] Speed, everything sped up in my time here. We initially lived in Old Town on Prince Street. I was only two blocks from City Hall, where my office was. And I could walk to work every day, which was nice. Part of that was that I really got to see the City firsthand and be there day and night. It was a City that the shopping was done generally on Friday night. People came from Fairfax County to shop in Alexandria. And a lot of them were, you know, more rural. They were farming, they were doing various things, so we didn't have the development that we have today. But, anyway, that's generally what happened. So, by Saturday afternoon, it was dead City, which it isn't today.

**Kerry Reed** [00:04:53] Yeah. So, do you remember your address on Prince Street?

**John F. Quinn** [00:04:57] Yeah, it was 415 1/2. It was a little house that was just a one-bedroom house, but it had a nice patio.

**Kerry Reed** [00:05:07] Absolutely. Is it still there?

**John F. Quinn** [00:05:11] Yes. It was converted into a condominium when the building was sold in pieces.

Before that, it was rented in sections. And so, it was a large building. It was the old capital of West Virginia at the time of the Civil War.

**Kerry Reed** [00:05:28] Oh, wow.

**John F. Quinn** [00:05:29] And you can see the plaque on it if you walk by.

**Kerry Reed** [00:05:34] That's really cool. So, you mentioned walking to the City Hall where your office was every day. So, walking through Old Town in the early 60s [1960s], what did the City look like then?

**John F. Quinn** [00:05:51] Well, it looked tired. I'm using that term, but I think it was an entirely different City than it is today. It was a City where you had some shops and a few restaurants. It wasn't as active as it is today. City Hall was probably closest to that. In the block with City Hall, there was a restaurant for white people and a restaurant for Black people. And so, it was because the City was segregated.

**Kerry Reed** [00:06:29] Was the segregation immediately apparent when you first came here?

**John F. Quinn** [00:06:33] Yeah, we came looking for a place, a house, and there were demonstrations, and there were quite a few demonstrations by Blacks, and they were singing, "We Shall Overcome," and whatever other things they were doing. But generally, they, at some point, they get arrested and put them in the holding pen.

**Kerry Reed** [00:07:00] Yes.

**John F. Quinn** [00:07:01] And then they'd go back through the same thing over and over again.

**Kerry Reed** [00:07:12] Right. So, when you were hired to come work in the City, what was the first project that they asked you to work on?

**John F. Quinn** [00:07:20] We worked on Mudtown and Gadsby simultaneously. Gadsby was more involved than Mudtown. Mudtown was just a big piece of land, and it was occupied by Black families. It had no plumbing, no water line going into it, and so they were using wells. And it had electricity going into the middle of it, with a couple of light fixtures, I recall, in the middle. But outside of that, it was just an open area. The decision was made to build a high school on that site, and so Mudtown was kind of a simple project. A few things sprung up along the way, but the project was just in acquisition, and then part of the arrangement was that to build houses along Quaker Lane for the families that had lived there a long time and had ownership. And so that was the transfer of those. And so, the houses were done early on before the time the school was done and they, the families moved there. And there were quite a few, you know, but it wasn't overpopulated. Mudtown was a result of people working for the Episcopal Seminary, and it started back in the mid-1800s and continued on all that time. So, it was an interesting project, but it was not as detailed as Old Town and Gadsby.

Gadsby was a result of, originally, City Council at that time, had a lot of businesspeople involved in City Council, and so they were looking at the potential of doing a project, relocating all the car dealerships where today is King Street Metro. There were car dealerships all in that general area and quite a few of them. And so, they felt that was a good location because then they could just acquire the car dealerships and help rebuild the downtown. The merchants in the lower part of King Street just went at City Council and they said, "you can't leave us out," so the council changed and decided they'd do it downtown in Old Town.

At that point, there were a couple of things that underlying everything was the fact that the State, for some reason, didn't have rehabilitation as part of their thing. So, the problem was you either acquired the building or you didn't acquire it. And so, the original plan was done by the housing authority and they hired a person

from Philadelphia to do the plan, or from Pennsylvania, I'm going to say. I don't know whether it was from Philadelphia. He came up with a plan for a 24-block area and the only buildings that he saved were Gadsby's Tavern and the Apothecary. Everything else was torn down and what he did was talk about having a mall between Fairfax and Washington Street on King and parking on the back side of the mall on each side and then the residential would be along Queen and it would be mid-rise apartments, probably 8 stories. And so that was the plan. Everything else came out. Buildings were just, everything, all the older houses were to be demolished and done. So, at that time, Old Town really stood up. And Old Town was mixed. It had a whole variety of different types of people and it had people that had invested in Old Town and they always had that. But they also had people with lower income, and they had Black families. It was a combination of a lot of different people. The north end was referred to as Fishtown and the south end, Tunnel Town. So, Old Town was a thing that was being created by investment and other things for the old structures.

We went back and because this was pretty much a federal City in architecture, we went back to street front locations and developing street front property was the plan and preserving as much as possible. So, it was a different arrangement. We ended up with coming up with a residential and a commercial development, two projects, side by side. Then we eliminated a lot of the older structures from the plan. Residential was because of the dairy. The dairy was located at Pitt and Princess Street. It was a big operation and it had a huge stack. It was a commercial venture that didn't really belong in Old Town. But the City had created a new police building right adjacent to the jail, which was right across from the dairy. Anyway, the dairy eventually decided to go on their own development and went out along the beltway and built a brand-new dairy. So, then the question was, what are you going to use it for? And the dairy sold it for townhouses and other things. And so, it was demolished and rebuilt as townhouses. There was no need for the residential development, so that was taken down. The residential development had a lot of people that objected to it because it was taking old houses and families along Queen primarily, some on Princess and the streets in between Fairfax up to St. Asaph.

**Kerry Reed** [00:15:12] Were the objectors coming from Old Town? Did they form any organization or are they just sort of a loose collective of opposition?

**John F. Quinn** [00:15:21] Well, you had the Old Town Citizens Association and it was formed for political reasons and originally, I believe, three people that were interested in this went around and they identified what they thought were the old buildings and that's still used today. It was used as a map and it became the symbol of not developing those buildings. So, the residential project went, the commercial was still there. One of the things that happened with the commercial property, there were properties along King Street, but many of them were in really bad shape. Park & Shop had created parking right behind the buildings in the center part of the, I think, three blocks had parking in them. And so that changed the philosophy of doing it because we just had the buildings along King Street. And again, we kept the streets the way they were because that's part of the original plan. We just went along and extracted wherever good buildings were. We ended up with getting approval to tear down the buildings in sections. Phase one was City Hall and Tavern Square and phase two was the remainder along the south end, three blocks and one block. The plan was to create underground parking and do some offices and make a center for the City. That's what did occur because it was commercial on the main floor and then residential--not residential--commercial above offices. That was the plan and we accomplished the first phase by the mid-sixties [1960s]. The first phase was Tavern Square and City Hall Plaza. The City Hall Plaza was designed by Casper Neer who had an office above Burke & Herbert on the opposite corner. So, he was close by.

**Kerry Reed** [00:18:06] [00:18:06] Casper Neer.

**John F. Quinn** [00:18:07] [00:18:07] Casper Neer.

**Kerry Reed** [00:18:11] [00:18:11] Casper Neer, got it. So, really quick before asking some questions about the development of City Hall. The Mudtown project, the homes on Quaker Lane, what did they look like? Were

they designed to be single family homes?

**John F. Quinn** [00:18:24] Single family.

**Kerry Reed** [00:18:25] Okay.

**John F. Quinn** [00:18:25] Brick.

**Kerry Reed** [00:18:26] Brick, single family.

**John F. Quinn** [00:18:27] Brick, single family. They were nice houses. Simpson was the developer or the builder of the houses. And they were good, solid houses. They're still standing there today.

**Kerry Reed** [00:18:40] How many were in the plan?

**John F. Quinn** [00:18:44] I would say there were about 15 to 20, you know. I don't have an exact count, but they're right there on Quaker. You can see them on Quaker Lane, and then they turn and go back into that section along Quaker Lane was where the development occurred, and so TC, the high school was built. It had much bigger area along King Street.

**Kerry Reed** [00:19:19] And then when we spoke previously, you mentioned that during the development of Mudtown and the construction of T.C. Williams, that you found a cemetery? Is that correct?

**John F. Quinn** [00:19:30] We found a small cemetery in the middle of there, and I think there were seven graves, and we had to relocate it.

**Kerry Reed** [00:19:37] Do you know where they were relocated to?

**John F. Quinn** [00:19:39] No, I don't. I don't recall.

**Kerry Reed** [00:19:45] And then you also told me there was a stadium.

**John F. Quinn** [00:19:49] Small stadium, yeah, in the corner and they did cock fights and other things on weekends. That was the entertainment for Mudtown.

**Kerry Reed** [00:20:00] That sounds so fun. Very interesting. So back to the development of City Hall, phase one. Before development, what did City Hall look like?

**John F. Quinn** [00:20:17] Well, they were building, let's say; they were finishing, when I arrived, they were finishing City Hall, as we see it today from the plaza. They were adding on to City Hall because then you had the combination of the courts and City Hall combined. And the courts took up quite a bit of space. You had everything dealing with that and then you had City Hall. The only thing that left was the police department, which had moved. Of course, there was the area out in the west end where the City shop and other things were, but the City Hall for offices, that's where all the primary offices were, and that's where all the payments were on the main floor just as they are today. So, it was an active place. But it was two alleys. There was an alley in the middle of the block coming up and then a cross alley on the backside. And they did have the farmer's market there and other things going on, in those days. The alleys were occupied, they weren't used for vehicles, they were just used for that. On either side of the alleys was, I believe it was Hulfish Hardware, on one side and the Gazette was on the other side. And Alexandria National Bank was on the corner there, and then the Liberty Lunch, which was a Black restaurant, And then there was the Royal Cafe, it was right up from Liberty Lunch, and that's where a lot of people that did business in the court or City Hall. That was the hangout place where everybody stopped and had lunch or breakfast or coffee or whatever they wanted on

their way to court.

**Kerry Reed** [00:22:26] So before phase one really got into full swing with the development of Tavern Square and the finishing of City Hall, did you spend a lot of time at council?

**John F. Quinn** [00:22:39] I didn't. I wasn't fully in charge, but we did spend some time with the council. Council in those days was, the mayor was Frank Mann and the vice mayor was Gene Zimmerman, who was an electrician. And we had someone from the... Locken, Ed Locken. He was real estate and I believe, and we had somebody from the railroad and so it was a combination of people that got elected. Somewhere along the way then, Jack Ticer became elected from Old Town. So, it was a combination of people, and I think Jack Ticer came a little later, and it wasn't the first person I met. The council was elected in, I think, 1961 through 1964, I'm just guessing, but I think that was the case, and that was in that period. And then in 1964, Old Town had a lot more to say, because we were in the middle of doing all that and I believe Jack Ticer was elected then.

**Kerry Reed** [00:23:53] You also mentioned that the plan for development, there were certain businesses that were just seen as not fitting in as part of Old Town's future. You mentioned the dairy and you mentioned the car dealerships along King.

**John F. Quinn** [00:24:08] Yeah, the only one that sort of survived was Hayman's. It was a men's store and it was a two-story store in the old building, it wasn't on the corner, it was in the middle of the 500 block and Heyman's moved into the Tavern Square. So that opened up eliminating all that. And pretty much all the buildings were empty. Shuman's Bakery was a hangout spot and that was in the middle of the block, so that was one of the last, that grouping was the last group to go. And there was motion to save the buildings there, but the difficulty was to create an office complex and we really needed the parking

**Kerry Reed** [00:25:04] Absolutely.

**John F. Quinn** [00:25:05] That and getting two levels of parking. The only one that we didn't get two levels was where the Apothecary is because the structure was determined not to be strong enough to withstand going down two levels at that point.

**Kerry Reed** [00:25:27] You said Heyman's store returned or moved. Was that the only one that survived this phase one redevelopment?

**John F. Quinn** [00:25:35] Yes, I think that was it, because the stores in the 600-block remained there. There was a men's store, and there was a shoe store, a bunch of shops, and two jeweler shops. So, the stores that were there remained there, and they just stayed. And they benefited from the development, I think, in the long run. But eventually, as all things happened, they were all gone.

**Kerry Reed** [00:26:11] So you mentioned that, was it, I'm sorry, the Apothecary that was having the structural issues?

**John F. Quinn** [00:26:16] Yeah, the original section of the Apothecary was bought by the DuPont's for Winterthur and moved to Winterthur, so we only had one section of it. The City retained the back section, but the front section was sold, the one that went out to King Street. And the building that's there now replaced it in 1939 [Note: the shop windows are replacements; the other fixtures are original].

**Kerry Reed** [00:26:48] Were there any other difficulties, structural or architecturally, involved with the Apothecary development or with Gadsby's?

**John F. Quinn** [00:26:56] No, generally not. We used reinforcement and a lot of things. I mean, we were up

from the waterfront. There were water problems and as we went through and where the courthouse is now, it's a water problem because the stream went along Pitt Street and then cut up through that block, and so we had reinforcement and other things that had to take place there. The structural end of it in the substructure was spent time on that. Outside of that, everything worked well.

**Kerry Reed** [00:27:48] Who are some of the people you're working with? You mentioned Casper Neer. I'm sorry, what was his name? One of the architects.

**John F. Quinn** [00:28:01] Oh, Casper Neer.

**Kerry Reed** [00:28:03] Casper Neer, yeah. You mentioned him. Were you working on a team?

**John F. Quinn** [00:28:09] Yeah, we were working together. We were assigned to the planning department by somebody, but we were a separate section as the planning department. We didn't really interject ourselves into that. We were sort of a team that was off in a separate location. When the new City Hall took place, we moved upstairs, and we were on the third floor. There was Martin Smith. Martin was in charge, and he was there. He was in charge when I came. And Stuart Morrison; Stuart had retired from federal government and he came every day. And Bob Coyle. Bob and I were hired at about the same time. Bob was working on his master's degree and he used the City for his master's degree for Cornell. So anyway, we all got along, and we worked together on what was going on.

**Kerry Reed** [00:29:27] Absolutely. So, you mentioned that you were working at the, was it the old City jail initially before you moved out of City Hall?

**John F. Quinn** [00:29:36] No, no, it's the old police department.

**Kerry Reed** [00:29:38] The old police department, got it.

**John F. Quinn** [00:29:40] Out on Fairfax. That's where we started and then we moved into the new section when it was done.

**Kerry Reed** [00:29:45] What did the old police station look like?

**John F. Quinn** [00:29:49] I don't know how they operate, let's put it that way. Had a bunch of little offices with a window. The big windows were there. So, it was high ceiling and it was on the ground floor. And in back of it was a holding pen for the courts upstairs. The City courts were upstairs and right above where the police department was and then on the other side was the State court. It was a big courtroom. Then there were some other courtrooms on the further floors. And so, the rest of it was the City. There were council chambers were on Royal Street, and the City staff was scattered in between all of that. The first floor were all basically State people because they collected the money. They weren't really working for the City; they were working for the State.

**Kerry Reed** [00:30:59] Got it. Being in the police station and the courthouse, did you interact with a lot of lawyers and officers while you were there?

**John F. Quinn** [00:31:09] Oh yeah, yes. We had lawyers. When I transferred to the Housing Authority, and that was after five years of doing the planning and working on all that, an opening came for the director in charge of redevelopment, and so I went to the Housing Authority. And the Housing Authority, then I only had five, six people working for me. We weren't spending a lot of money. We were spending money acquiring property; we weren't turning it into a long-term thing. I always contended we had to get it done because of the tax money going out the door.

**Kerry Reed** [00:32:00] Yeah.

**John F. Quinn** [00:32:02] When I did that, which was five years later after I came in the late, it was in '66 [1966], '67 [1967], then I got into actually acquiring the remaining properties, involved in acquiring the properties and, and selling the property on the south side and the bank. Now First and Citizens Bank was the bank and First was on the corner and then Citizens was down the street and they combined, they became one. And I think before I arrived, anyway, they decided they'd build their own bank and so we extracted them out of the redevelopment. So, the redevelopment wrapped around where the bank building was. But they put up the developers. Don Simpson and Jerry Halpern were the developers, because they wanted the ability to expand into that space if they ever had to. They didn't expand into the space because eventually they were acquired by other banks. But anyway, that was the plan for them. They kept the corner of St. Asaph and King, and we extracted them out of the plan. Then we just did the development around. It was L-shape if you look at Banker Square, that's what we did there. And so that was done.

The south side was the three blocks, and I ended up advertising that as a three-block development. We allowed for the hotel to be in the middle and then office space on both sides and eventually the courthouse that by the time we got there, after I had contracted with JBG to develop that south side. They had hotels in the Washington area, and they wanted another hotel. So, they were interested in the site. They contracted for all three properties. I was involved in that. And then they developed it, but the courthouse, the judges wanted to move. They were willing to give the judges the courthouse as you see it today, which is the back section of the property, and went through the courtyard and they had the office building on the front, which was a benefit to them because a lot of attorneys moved there and the law library was in the basement of the courthouse, so it was convenient for attorneys to have that. And so that development occurred over time. The one thing we did in the middle, 109 South Pitt, there was a lot of discussion about retaining that building. What I did was I suggested that we move the building, which we did. It's a static structure. It was a brick structure, so it's a little more involved in moving it. You have to really tie it together. We moved it down to Franklin Street and became a house on the corner of Franklin and on Pitt, I believe [now 414 Franklin Street].

**Kerry Reed** [00:35:58] What was the reason for saving that property?

**John F. Quinn** [00:36:02] Everybody thought it had a lot of value. And in fact, it was the location where Washington's, Washington had his--what the heck was it? It was his survey office, that's where he went. He surveyed from there.

**Kerry Reed** [00:36:29] Okay.

**John F. Quinn** [00:36:30] And I think he also, he had another one over on Cameron Street at one point. But anyway, he was involved there pretty much.

**Kerry Reed** [00:36:39] Got it. I would like to know more about the involvement of the banks. You said that First National, on the corner of St. Asaph, you let them keep that tract?

**John F. Quinn** [00:36:53] Yeah, we extracted it out of the thing, and they bought it and did it.

**Kerry Reed** [00:37:01] How involved were other banks in Alexandria?

**John F. Quinn** [00:37:04] Well, Alexandria National Bank, which was the other major bank, they were on the corner of King and Royal Street and they were in a building that was where the square is now; they were on the main floor of that. I think it was a four-story building and they bought the property across the street before we did. We became involved and built a new bank building over there. And so, they had it on King Street. And that wasn't part of the renewal. We excluded that.

**Kerry Reed** [00:37:45] Okay, Burke & Herbert wasn't involved?

**John F. Quinn** [00:37:48] No, Burke & Herbert, we never took anything from Burke & Herbert.

**Kerry Reed** [00:37:52] Got it.

**John F. Quinn** [00:37:53] Burke & Herbert it was on the other side of Fairfax and so, they were out of the plan. And they had a bank at the 600 block, but we never got to the 600 block, so we weren't involved with them

**Kerry Reed** [00:38:10] Why did you never get to the 600 block?

**John F. Quinn** [00:38:13] Well, because at the time the City was picking up shops and everything else, it was starting to turn the corner, and it didn't make sense to go up there and add on. We weren't doing it in the sense that the development would be in the way where, you know, it didn't need to be developed by then. We ended up with 6 blocks instead of 24. Parts of 6 blocks. We didn't end up with the whole six blocks either-- parts of 6 blocks, so it worked out. I think people were opposed to urban renewal, and part of it was the parking, part of bringing in restaurants and other things. Old Town didn't like the idea of having that. The people that had bought and redone the properties were starting to appear that they didn't, and I think they were opposed to it. But in the end, the arrangement had been made, money had been spent, and everything was done, and it was too late. The other factor that was in there that the State never had, you know, we couldn't do rehab like you could do in Philadelphia or Providence or other places. That wasn't part of the State law, and so we couldn't sell buildings for rehab as part of that thing.

**Kerry Reed** [00:39:52] That's so interesting to me, because you always think of Virginia as being one of the States that protects its history.

**John F. Quinn** [00:40:01] Yeah, I know. I was surprised that that was the case, but that didn't allow for rehab in urban renewal. You either were in the project or you were not, and if you were in the project you went down. It was pretty simple. That's why we ended up with a line that sort of just went in every which direction to avoid properties. We tried to salvage as many properties as possible but accomplish the idea of having at least a coherent place where people could park and do business and the hotel in the middle.

**Kerry Reed** [00:40:44] I wonder what the reasoning behind that was. That's so fascinating.

**John F. Quinn** [00:40:47] Yeah, I don't know, because it occurred in other States. As you went up and down, there were developments that were College Hill in Providence was all development. The same in Philadelphia, the south side. The development from the whole section was rehab. And then, what they did was they built high risers on the river, because that was open land, and so they built some high risers along the river in Philadelphia, but the rest of it went a number of blocks with rehab.

**Kerry Reed** [00:41:30] That's very interesting. So, you mentioned resistance in the Old Town community towards some of the businesses and restaurants that moved in.

**John F. Quinn** [00:41:38] Well, people like the idea of having it quieter and being in Old Town. An Old Town salvaged, you know, except along Washington Street where some buildings were taken down. And that's why you had the Charleston Ordinance and the Board of Architectural Review [BAR].

**Kerry Reed** [00:42:06] Was the BAR around?

**John F. Quinn** [00:42:09] Yes, we had to go through approvals and other things, but council, you know, City Council was the final say because they can override even the Board of Architectural Review. And so, it was,

do we want, you know, whatever they wanted, and part of City Council was, you know, we want to get the City going. And I think it did provide an impetus to help create the tourism and everything else that occurred in the lower part of King Street and even on the upper part because a lot of people take the subway here and they walk along King Street. And so that was the base. I think it worked.

**Kerry Reed** [00:43:02] Yeah, absolutely it's funny to me to think of a time when people wouldn't want, you know more commercial.

**John F. Quinn** [00:43:11] They wanted everything preserved and put in. But a lot of the townhouses were old. It's like this house here. They were old, but they've been modified. Again, the exterior architecture was pretty much held in most cases. And it's a very simple architecture on the outside, and it might be very elaborate on the inside. But that's what was being built here. Three story, three, four story houses that were just very simple on the outside with windows on the street. And they were right on the streets. If you walk down the blocks, you see a lot of them were coming up to where the sidewalk was.

**Kerry Reed** [00:43:58] Absolutely. I know this is kind of a loaded question, but what were some of the costs involved of redeveloping Gadsby's, Tavern Square, Apothecary?

**John F. Quinn** [00:44:11] We developed a plan where we did all the planning. Originally, it was going to be one-third, two-thirds--in other words the City put up one-third, but they would cover the cost of planning and all the other things that were involved. So, we reversed that because basically we were shrinking everything that was there. We went to the alternate program [that] was 25% City and 75% federal government. The government provided that three-quarters of the amount of money that we spent, and most money was spent basically in acquisition. And then I had to get two appraisals for the sale and MAI [Member of Appraisal Institute] would come up with a value and that's the value we'd sell it for.

**Kerry Reed** [00:45:22] I'm sorry, who were the appraisers that you just mentioned?

**John F. Quinn** [00:45:25] Bill Fuhrman and a fellow named Babcock, whose family had written the books on appraising, and Bill Fuhrman was a MAI appraiser, but he was also a civil engineer and an attorney. So, they were both good people.

**Kerry Reed** [00:45:50] Yeah, absolutely. So, you also, last time we spoke, you also mentioned something interesting to me, that you were actually pretty involved in the landscaping plan for the redevelopment.

**John F. Quinn** [00:46:02] Lester Collins was the landscape architect and he did the sunken garden on the Mall in front of the Hirschhorn and he worked on the Panda House at the Zoo. He did a number of projects here but also, he worked on projects in Florida and other places. He was head, 14 years, at Harvard. He was Head of Landscape Architecture at Harvard. Anyway, he did the plan and he recommended that we use scarlet oaks on King Street because it was a tree indigenous to Virginia and there weren't that many that were indigenous, but this was an indigenous tree, so we did that. Then we used little leaf lindens on the side streets. I tested all the bricks and we ended up with a really thin brick, but it was mined in Ohio. It was 400 feet down and so it was a very hard clay and we put those brick sidewalks on top of concrete so they wouldn't break and they're still there today. If you look at them, they're in pretty good shape.

**Kerry Reed** [00:47:30] Yeah, they are in excellent shape. I'm curious though because it seems like you're involved in so many aspects of this. You're going to the courthouse, you're meeting with City Council, and you're even working with Lester Collins on the landscaping plan. So, on the lower end of things, I guess, how involved were you? Were you visiting construction sites? Were you doing anything like that?

**John F. Quinn** [00:47:54] Well, the construction was approved. No, I didn't have to do the construction end of that. I had to work with the City on getting certain things done. One of the things that happened with this

was in, I think it was 1960, the franchise agreement. They knew we were going to develop part of King Street at that point, so they put it into the franchise agreements with Virginia Power. And part of the arrangement was that Virginia Power put everything underground at no cost to the City. And so those blocks that we did work on--King Street and St. Asaph, Pitt, and Fairfax--were all undergrounded and that tore up the City a little bit because we had the streets were constantly working and if you go today, you're going see some of the compressors and other things are underground and they're on a grate underneath the street. I don't think they're around the sidewalks; they're in the street. So anyway, that was a big element of work that sort of disrupted the City a little bit.

**Kerry Reed** [00:49:15] Yeah, I can imagine. So, speaking of, you know, disruption, you mentioned early on that civil rights demonstrations were pretty ongoing during those initial years of the redevelopment. Were those ever disruptive towards the plan?

**John F. Quinn** [00:49:34] No, not towards the commercial. We dealt with housing. We did some housing projects and some other things, and the Housing Authority of course built the first integrated development right over by the Braddock Road Metro. The last development that they did was integrated. Before that, housing was not integrated. The Black housing was downtown on the north end of town, and the white housing was up by where the Braddock Road Metro sits today. Then we also had housing from World War II that sat out next to where Mudtown was. And we had it over on Duke Street. They had a lot of housing because the Torpedo Factory was producing torpedoes.

**Kerry Reed** [00:50:48] I'm curious about some of the buildings that were acquired for the redevelopment, specifically you mentioned the *Alexandria Gazette* early on in our conversation today. What did the *Gazette* look like back then?

**John F. Quinn** [00:51:05] Well, the *Gazette* was a big building, and we did save the exterior and put it out in the shop, and we moved the *Gazette* to a new building. They were happy to get the new building. It was up on St. Asaph Street, and they were able to get a new printing press out of this. It was beneficial for them and the *Gazette*, at that time, was a daily newspaper. It was it was going out every day except Sunday. They were six days a week and so it was brand new, everything was good, and I think they were happy with the new development. They didn't have the old printing press in the old building, so that lasted for a period of time.

**Kerry Reed** [00:52:02] Absolutely. So it's interesting because you know you paint this character of Old Town of Alexandria sort of certainly more industrial than it is today when this project started, and I was curious how many industries or companies that we would identify with industry today, how many left during the course of the redevelopment or immediately after it?

**John F. Quinn** [00:52:33] I don't remember anybody majorly. There were some shops and people. The upstairs in about three of the buildings were used to house people in individual rooms. They might have been a three-story building or a four-story building and they, the people, unloaded the ships for the *Washington Post* and the bow waterline down in the piers. Then both piers were busy at times and so they just wait and unload the ship and then they you know--I don't know what they did in the end, but I have a pretty good guess they either got some alcohol or they got something to weather them through till the ships needed to be unloaded again. So, the *Post* had that, and they basically owned the bow waterline, and they owned both piers. They were busy doing that because they had the paper intake not only for Washington but also for Baltimore. They shipped the paper up to Baltimore. They were controlling newsprint for both of them from Canada and Finland.

**Kerry Reed** [00:53:57] Finland, really? You mentioned the two piers at the waterfront. I guess a better question would be what did the waterfront look like while all this was going on?

**John F. Quinn** [00:54:11] Well, when I arrived there was, at the end of Princess Street, there was a fertilizer

plant. Then you had a Texaco-owned section where United Way is now and the building next to it, which they sold, which is now a condominium. And then in between that was the Bogle train. The Bogle brothers, Jack and Ralph, in the eastern part of the United States, they did all the train tracks and they put down an insecticide that killed the grass growing along the rail lines because a lot of freight wasn't used all the time and so that stuff would grow up and that's what their job was and they occupied the area down on Princess Street. They went on the northern section of the train tracks up there. They'd get out and go, and they did all this, they did the insecticides. When that property was developed, Roger Mechanic had to dig out that section there and put the townhouses on, eventually he was able to get the townhouses in, but he had to move the earth. That was because of the insecticides.

**Kerry Reed** [00:55:57] You said it was Roger Mechanic, I'm sorry?

**John F. Quinn** [00:56:00] Yes.

**Kerry Reed** [00:56:01] So when did the townhouses along Union Street and all of that, when were those built?

**John F. Quinn** [00:56:08] What happened was you had the Torpedo Factory and the developer of Watergate wanted to build along there. His partner lived in Old Town, Royce Ward and Chucky and Royce Ward were going to build high rise buildings along the waterfront because it wasn't part of the old historic District at that point. And they were getting the property. What happened prior to that was Stewart Oil was going to build a tank farm on that property, and council turned them down. And that changed everything. They came in, and then the City traded them. They decided they didn't want high rises there. And they traded them the Ficklin School site, which was in the north end, and then they developed it as a park, adjacent to that. There was one office building added on the side of Torpedo Factory, but outside of that, everything else was done as a park.

**Kerry Reed** [00:57:32] So when did phase one finish or when did you start moving on to other projects?

**John F. Quinn** [00:57:41] Phase one finished in the late 60s [1960s] because it took time to get the courthouse in there. It was a block-by-block event and so it was almost, I guess, 1970 when it was done. It was in at least 1970, it was maybe longer than that. We'd already started working on the Dip project, which was the next project. And that was the area along Columbus all the way through to US-1, Henry. It went from Duke all the way to, let's see, how far? Went up to Franklin. Duke to Franklin, and so it was an extensive project and it was a mixture of mostly--there were some people living there--but there was also a lot of industry and other things there. The train went through to the tunnel that came from the rail yards and just above it, and so it came down through the project and out to the tunnel. We had to see if we could get rid of that, which we did. We had to go to the State Corporation Commission and the *Post* opposed it because they wanted to continue having that train come through. I hired an expert and they; the delivery was for IBM paper on major, major printing devices. And that's all they were getting there, so they ended up having to get it out at Springfield, where they have a site. Anyway, we accomplished that by getting the State Corporation Commission to approve it. That eliminated the rail lines in the middle of the block, even though the tunnel's still there and there was no more rail going down that area. The only rail was in the north end where the power plant was and they had to deliver coal there, and they came across the parkway and delivered it there. But they didn't come all the way in as they did when the Bogles were using their property to do it. And they moved on and bought a property in southern Fairfax, I believe, and that's where they moved to. So, there was a lot of change going on in the waterfront.

**Kerry Reed** [01:00:57] Absolutely. Before we talk about the Dip, do you have a memory, or an achievement involved with phase one One or the development of Tavern Square or City Hall that you're most proud of?

**John F. Quinn** [01:01:14] No, I think it was getting the development done and doing it as efficiently as possible. That was the thing I probably liked the most. You know, it was a lot of negotiation and a lot of

issues that you had to go through. We had opposition a couple of times. People tried to get injunctions in the court, but the attorney I worked with was Martin Bostetter, and I have to tell you his name is on Washington Street, among other things, on the courthouse on Washington street. He was probably one of the best attorneys I ever dealt with.

**Kerry Reed** [01:01:59] Absolutely.

**John F. Quinn** [01:02:01] It was good. I mean, I think we accomplished a lot and we were able to get it done and not drag it out forever.

**Kerry Reed** [01:02:16] Just for a bit of color, because I had never heard of that cafe you mentioned, or you mentioned Liberty Cafe, or Liberty Lunch and Royal Cafe.

**John F. Quinn** [01:02:28] Yeah, the Royal moved up to the north end. We relocated him up to north end.

**Kerry Reed** [01:02:34] Interesting. When you were working on this project and you're working out of the old police station, was there a spot in Old Town that you would like to go have lunch that you took your team to?

**John F. Quinn** [01:02:45] We went to lunch a lot down to the Snack Bar. The Snack Bar was on lower King Street. I mean you have to remember everything below where we were working, a lot of them were warehouses or they were involved. There was one at Lee and King [that] was an antique store and then on the other side you had Market Square and a couple of stores which are still there. But basically, everything else was sort of shuttered and used for storage and other things. So lower King wasn't really an attractive area to walk down. There was a restaurant where the coffee shop is now at the corner of King and Union. And the restaurant was good because in back, and that area along the waterfront, that was where Interarms was located. They used to bring up ships from South Carolina, I mean, not South Carolina I'm sorry, South America--places like Chile and other things. And they'd bring fish. They'd bring langostino, for instance, it was one of our favorites. And they'd show up once a week. And then so we'd have fresh langostino and we'd go down to this restaurant Fridays and celebrate the week and have langostino.

**Kerry Reed** [01:04:21] Oh man, that sounds great.

**John F. Quinn** [01:04:24] It was an interesting time, but then gradually restaurants developed and other things. Warehouse was one of the first that I remember, because, well, it was when Holton was governor, was elected governor, he was the first Republican governor in a long, maybe ever, who knows. But anyway, Keynes was married to his daughter, Senator Keynes, married to his daughter.

**Kerry Reed** [01:04:56] Okay.

**John F. Quinn** [01:04:57] And so, he changed a lot of things, and we got liquor by the drink. It was the first time restaurants really opened up and you could serve drinks and other things along with the food. You had to have food, 50 percent of it had to be food and 50 percent others. But before that, at one point, we had a bottle club in Tavern Square on the second floor. People went there and they kept their bottles in lockers and they were able to drink. But that way, Virginia was really behind the times and it changed everything.

**Kerry Reed** [01:05:47] Oh, that's so funny.

**John F. Quinn** [01:05:49] So the change came in the late 60s [1960s], right around 1970, and they came with Governor Holton, and as far as liquor by the drink goes, and by having restaurants being able to serve liquor and not be as restricted even with wine and beer.

**Kerry Reed** [01:06:17] Do you remember what the restaurant was called where you guys would go on Friday?

**John F. Quinn** [01:06:21] I can't remember the name of it. I should remember it. I'll see if I can get that for you.

**Kerry Reed** [01:06:32] When did City Council or the housing authority first express interest in redeveloping the Dip?

**John F. Quinn** [01:06:42] The City expressed interest in it because of the mixture they felt housing would be more appropriate at that location even though it was US-1. The question was eliminating the industrial places that were located along US-1 in that area and providing housing. Additionally, they needed more housing for people and so we did the project and we put it out for bids, and they came. The guy that did the metro for this area, I can't remember his name, I'll think about it and get it to you. We hired him to develop a plan for the area that would be able to be developed for residential use, and that's the way it ended up.

**Kerry Reed** [01:07:56] Absolutely.

**John F. Quinn** [01:07:56] But then a developer came and built it up.

**Kerry Reed** [01:08:01] So the Housing Authority wasn't managing the properties before the Dip development project started?

**John F. Quinn** [01:08:10] Well, no, we acquired the property and then we sold it.

**Kerry Reed** [01:08:16] When did you acquire it?

**John F. Quinn** [01:08:19] Well we acquired it, we started in, again in the late 60s [1960s], we started, and we acquired the property. It went fairly well.

**Kerry Reed** [01:08:30] Okay.

**John F. Quinn** [01:08:30] We had a site office on, on Alfred Street, so, we had an office where we had staff on site working, working with the people and working, you know, getting everything done.

**Kerry Reed** [01:08:51] Where out on Alfred Street?

**John F. Quinn** [01:08:52] It was near the train tracks. It was a good building there we acquired early on and relocated, I think it was, I forget who it was. But we acquired it early on and then we converted it into an office. And so, we had relocation, the people that were dealing with the people there; to be constant and work with them. And we were able to relocate those people and wanted to stay in the project. They could stay somewhat further away.

**Kerry Reed** [01:09:37] Did you have the same team with you on the Dip project as you had with phase one?

**John F. Quinn** [01:09:44] No, it was a little different. We had more people because we were dealing with more people. A fella named Bill Blair--doesn't live very far from here--Bill was in charge of the site office. And then we had people doing acquisition and people, you know, doing various things in the structure and we were able to accomplish quite a bit. The idea behind it was to get the project done as quickly as possible. I met with the Black community in the basement of Alfred Street Baptist Church weekly. We had a weekly meeting and they developed a group called the ANCIA [Alexandria Neighborhood Citizens Improvement Association]. It was Alexandria something. I did at one point, but I don't know [what] ANCIA was. Lionel Hope, who became a councilman, was involved in that and Reverend Peterson [Rev. Dr. John O. Peterson, Sr.], who was [at] the Alfred Street Baptist Church, he was involved. Those were the two principal people that

we were dealing with. And so, we'd have a weekly meeting, a progress meeting, and discuss any problems that they had, or we had. And we'd work back and forth. And it was accomplished. And the Church wanted to build a new church next to the old church. They still have the old church there, and they built a brand-new church, a big church.

**Kerry Reed** [01:11:36] What were some of the issues that ANCIA brought to your attention while the redevelopment was happening?

**John F. Quinn** [01:11:45] It wasn't City-wide. We stuck pretty much to the Dip. If something went wrong in the Dip, they'd let me know and we'd have to correct whatever the problem was. So, we met on a regular basis with that in mind and where we were headed and what we were doing, so they could keep abreast of what was happening.

**Kerry Reed** [01:12:16] What was it like working with Lionel Hope and Reverend Peterson?

**John F. Quinn** [01:12:20] Well, it was fine. Lionel became a City Councilman for a number of terms. It changed a lot of things. And Reverend Peterson got the church that was needed to really develop a large congregation, and that's what he wanted to happen there. And it had a history, and it was a church. There were a number of Black churches in the City, and if you wander around, you'll see them, especially in the north end, but he had the south end. And it worked out.

**Kerry Reed** [01:13:00] Yeah, absolutely. I'm curious about resident involvement because you mentioned to me in our previous conversation that you had some employees that were living in the Dip.

**John F. Quinn** [01:13:13] Yeah, I had one employee who worked part-time, but she had grown up in the Dip. I had a program that the Johnson administration had at that point which was I could hire unwed mothers and I hired two of them and they paid the salary, they reimbursed us for the salary for the year for both and they went on. One ended up after a year at City Hall and the other one ended up going on when I saw her later. She went on to Georgetown and so they both did fairly well because they needed to get their feet on the ground. My theory in the Black community was that women had more difficult time than men in a lot of ways, because they couldn't get jobs, and so they'd do Aid to Dependent Children and they'd have a baby and then they could they could get money and they could be a little more self-sustaining. So, these two women ended up doing what they given the opportunity, could do it. It was one of the good programs I think Johnson administration had and they came up with a lot of good programs and I think they helped push the Black community forward.

**Kerry Reed** [01:15:00] Absolutely. What were the plans for the redevelopment of the Dip? Because you mentioned that the City wanted more residential.

**John F. Quinn** [01:15:13] Well, it was a combination of apartments and sale housing. We did both. We didn't do the development, maybe we did, take that back. We did some, a little bit of commercial development, office space in the section where Patrick and Henry come together. Along Duke Street, we did some townhouse development and then we did more back in the back section and put in some parking, which the church uses for overflow on Sundays, and so it worked out. That part, the development, that was easy. We didn't really get heavily involved in the block on Duke Street between Patrick and Alfred. Is it Patrick and Alfred, I'm trying to remember? Yeah, well the church was there, but there's a block of houses that we sort of backed off from. They were all single-family townhouses that a lot of them were already there, so we didn't really fool with that. We went on to develop along Cameron and Alfred. Apartments backed on to U.S. 1, and along U. S. 1 was the plan.

**Kerry Reed** [01:17:05] Got it.

**John F. Quinn** [01:17:06] And so all the development took place, and It was okay. You know, it was what could be done--and again, that was moderate income housing. And in the sale housing, a couple of people stayed and they bought one of the houses that was rebuilt, because they were there.

**Kerry Reed** [01:17:35] How many families or residents do you think stayed in the Dip once the project was complete?

**John F. Quinn** [01:17:43] I would say maybe 10 to 12. It wasn't overwhelming; remember a lot of it was industrial also.

**Kerry Reed** [01:17:53] Right.

**John F. Quinn** [01:17:53] And younger people, if they got the money, always wanted to go to a single-family house. They'd leave town and go south until they could get afford a single-family house. That was one of the things I really felt that everybody wanted in a house that showed up on television or wherever in the good life.

**Kerry Reed** [01:18:24] So, when you were working on phase one, you had the Royal Cafe and the restaurant down...

**John F. Quinn** [01:18:32] Liberty Lunch, the two of them right there adjacent to City Hall.

**Kerry Reed** [01:18:38] Was there anything like that in the Dip? Any local takeout places, any restaurants or anything?

**John F. Quinn** [01:18:45] No, I don't think there were. Adjacent to where we were, there was a place you could walk up to and get food, stuff like that. And then the drug store was down on--the drugstore didn't have any restaurant. There were some restaurants along the way on Washington Street. We didn't go to Washington Street; we stayed off of Washington Street completely.

**Kerry Reed** [01:19:20] So you mentioned it a little bit previously, but could you describe what the Dip looked like when you started the project, what the houses looked like, some of the industry?

**John F. Quinn** [01:19:31] I think the industry, it was all low scale. It wasn't huge, but it was a combination of industry and houses. Houses were tucked in there some places, and you know, they were old, but the industry was there at the same time. They were all merged into one thing. By separating them, we were able to get the housing so that people could live there as a neighborhood and not have not have industrial close to them. And then we did the project that was up on Duke Street, for the few people that were around that wanted a relocation and so we did a small project up on Duke Street. There were warehouses on the back and offices up front. They did that development. We acquired it and they bought it from us and did it. It wasn't a big splash or anything. It was just a simple development to keep businesses in town.

**Kerry Reed** [01:20:52] So you mentioned to me before that a lot of the houses when you first started the redevelopment had coal bins and coal furnaces.

**John F. Quinn** [01:21:02] That was in public housing. That was public housing when I started. Public housing had a central furnace, because it was built just prior to World War II. It's 41.

**Kerry Reed** [01:21:19] Was that public housing still in the Dip?

**John F. Quinn** [01:21:23] No, that was over in the north end of town. One section of it is still there. They've torn down a big section and what they did was incorporate some public housing into the new development.

And so it was a combination of some public housing and townhouses.

**Kerry Reed** [01:21:49] Got it, got it. You mentioned the involvement of ANCIA, which seems like it was pretty church led.

**John F. Quinn** [01:22:00] It was involved with the church, but it was separate. The two merged, and they both had objectives. One, to develop the property and make it more beneficial for residential, and the other one was the church. And so, they got along pretty much.

**Kerry Reed** [01:22:25] So I think you mentioned a couple, but who are some of the other contractors and developers that you brought into work on the Dip project?

**John F. Quinn** [01:22:37] Well, basically, it was a low-income profit firm. Harkins was one of the developers. He was the builder. And I think they brought in a variety of people to do these programs. These were FHA programs. So, it was moderate income housing, and we built one building for elderly right in the middle of the Dip. These weren't public housing, they were moderate income, we called them, moderate income housing. And so people could afford to go in because they had a 25-year mortgage on them or whatever. The mortgage is up now. You can see they're tearing down the apartments and putting up a new City Council approved some six-story or whatever apartments along there. Everything changes.

**Kerry Reed** [01:23:50] Well that brings up sort of an interesting modern or contemporary connection, I should say. So, when you see council, current council, or immediately prior, approve these plans for development along the places where you yourself worked, what do you think of that? What is your reaction to it?

**John F. Quinn** [01:24:10] Well, I think, again, my feeling is that you need to replace it with something that people can, again use to a large extent and, you know, we're going to always have moderate and low income housing in the City because that's what the City's made up of as most cities are. And Alexandria was the one place that had it in Northern Virginia and I think we're going to continue to have a certain amount of that.

**Kerry Reed** [01:24:45] Absolutely.

**John F. Quinn** [01:24:48] So it's beneficial too because not everybody's going to do all the jobs that the low-end people will work for a salary and do jobs that you or I may not want to do.

**Kerry Reed** [01:25:10] Definitely think keeping that mixed cultural socioeconomic levels is imperative.

**John F. Quinn** [01:25:18] Well that's part of it. It's imperative to the City and I think it's important to the City because it really helps balance the City.

**Kerry Reed** [01:25:27] Absolutely, not everything can be a million-dollar home in Old Town.

**John F. Quinn** [01:25:35] A \$3 million home a block off from here. I just, you know, I just I'm always surprised.

**Kerry Reed** [01:25:43] Oh, my gosh. Speaking of homes, you have a lovely one here at 305 West Braddock. if you allow a brief tangent. When did you guys move into this house?

**John F. Quinn** [01:25:55] 50 years ago.

**Kerry Reed** [01:25:56] 50 years. ago.

**John F. Quinn** [01:25:58] This July.

**Kerry Reed** [01:25:59] Absolutely gorgeous. What did you pay for it, if you don't mind me asking?

**John F. Quinn** [01:26:03] We paid a lot of money then, it was \$105,000.

**Kerry Reed** [01:26:07] Oh, wow.

**John F. Quinn** [01:26:08] And so now it's worth a lot more.

**Kerry Reed** [01:26:15] Yes, to say the least.

**John F. Quinn** [01:26:16] According to the assessment and everything else. Having worked on the Board of Equalization, I have seen a lot of pricing, a lot of things go up. But we also had a downturn in 2008. And I think if we're not careful, we may have another one before this year is out.

**Kerry Reed** [01:26:43] So did you know the history of the house before you moved in?

**John F. Quinn** [01:26:47] I knew a little bit about it. It was originally in the District of Columbia and then it was transferred to Arlington and the City annexed it I think in 1932. So the records before that would be, if I went back and we did look at it in Arlington County from the previous records they had and it was It was built in, it started in 1811, from what we know, and it was a farmhouse, and they sat it on top of the hill here because it probably got good air in the summertime and it was a location that they could see down if they were working down below. I don't know what the extent of property was, but this was all acquired in late 1800s, it was subdivided. They called it Northeast Improvement Association, and they subdivided the lots along here. But then the houses were built in the early 1900s up in here. One or two are later, but basically most of the houses were built at that time.

**Kerry Reed** [01:28:17] Yeah, absolutely stunning property. I wish we had, well, I don't want a video, but it's absolutely gorgeous.

**John F. Quinn** [01:28:25] We liked it.

**Kerry Reed** [01:28:28] Yeah, absolutely. I like it as well

**John F. Quinn** [01:28:30] It's nice because there's privacy and I have a lot of trees and so, you know, we've been very happy here.

**Kerry Reed** [01:28:42] Yeah, you have a great garden, too. Have you always had a green thumb? Always had a garden?

**John F. Quinn** [01:28:46] Yeah, I actually had a vegetable garden at one point. I lost that because of insects and other things piling up on it, unfortunately, and animals. We have deer, we have fox, we've a little bit of everything, rabbits occasionally.

**Kerry Reed** [01:29:12] Really, rabbits?

**John F. Quinn** [01:29:17] Anyway, here we sit in the middle of the City and I'm besieged with animals. They come in and eat my tulips and eat flowers and anything I'm growing is subject to the animals.

**Kerry Reed** [01:29:33] Oh, that's funny. What kind of vegetables would you like to grow?

**John F. Quinn** [01:29:37] I used to do tomatoes and I did like green beans, I did certain vegetables, peppers, stuff like that, but mostly tomatoes. I love having tomatoes, but then there's this giant worm that looks the same as the stalk going up. It's very green and crawls up there, and while we're sleeping, it just gnaws away at it.

**Kerry Reed** [01:30:07] Aw, man.

**John F. Quinn** [01:30:08] And then we had the birds, a cat bird loves tomatoes and then would peck at it until it was ripe and then once it was ripe, it drained the tomato.

**Kerry Reed** [01:30:19] Oh my gosh, you really are besieged. You mentioned the projects on Duke Street that you built for people in the Dip or was it businesses that wanted to stay in Alexandria?

**John F. Quinn** [01:30:33] Yeah, part of it. I think Duke Street, they just went ahead and did it. And then the back section of that block, we put out for bid, and the same developer was buying that and putting up the project. I don't know. We didn't get very heavily involved in it. We were more concerned with the residential.

**Kerry Reed** [01:30:56] Yeah, absolutely. Was that something that had to happen a lot during your tenure with the City or with the Housing Authority where you had to make these little developments off to the side to move businesses or residents to?

**John F. Quinn** [01:31:13] Not really. It was just the idea that we didn't want to lose business and we didn't want to lose people or business. That was our goal, to keep the people in the business. And it was a very interesting time. Occasionally, people would sue us and do all this stuff. We were constantly in some form of legal all the time. Never left us, unfortunately. But, you know, and so, we did, with Martin Bostetter, we had to condemn certain properties and go after them, because they didn't agree with us. But we were able to do that. We created the whole thing because there hadn't been much done in that area, so we did that. Anyway, it was an exciting era, and it was constantly a challenge to get everything done and done within reasonable time. A lot of cities sat on their space for years and other things, but Washington and even southwest Washington was a huge renewal project. But they did it pretty moved right along. The nice thing about being in the Washington area is that it was constantly growing and going in a positive way.

**Kerry Reed** [01:33:03] Yeah, absolutely. Were you in dialog with a lot of the other, you mentioned southwest DC, were you in dialog with other planning offices in the area?

**John F. Quinn** [01:33:15] No, not really, because we were so different. In northern Virginia, we were the only ones really doing this, and so it was it was different, but Melvin Miller, he took over. It was Don Haddock's father, and Don was a judge here, senior judge, for a period of time. Melvin was then in charge and he had worked in the District. He had been an undersecretary at HUD, so he was familiar with all that was going on there.

**Kerry Reed** [01:33:58] So I was actually going to ask you about Melvin Miller, because I've heard a lot about him in the other oral histories that we have, but unfortunately, he passed away before we were able to interview him. So, what was he like, how did you meet him?

**John F. Quinn** [01:34:12] I met him through our meetings and when we were doing urban renewal and we became friends. His children were the same ages as mine, basically. And my daughter knew his son, his oldest son. And they all went to school together for a period of time. And then Melvin put them into private school, and they went off to college. Melvin's wife was a teacher at Northern Virginia Community College. They were, they lived out in the West End, and he was very good at what he did. He was good. He ran for mayor in 1976 against Frank Mann and Melvin Bergheim, and I was involved in that, and it was a difficult uphill battle, and Frank Mann won. The mayor that year. But Melvin he never got upset. He was always positive and go

forward. I think he had a great personality.

**Kerry Reed** [01:35:36] So you said you were involved with his mayoral campaign in 1976.

**John F. Quinn** [01:35:40] Yeah, I helped with that.

**Kerry Reed** [01:35:42] In what capacity?

**John F. Quinn** [01:35:45] They made me manager, but it was George Cook and I had Harry Fleming as the treasurer. Harry had been with Nixon at the White House, and Harry had a business in Alexandria. So, I worked with Harry Fleming myself, and we took care of the money. And then the question was, would everybody come to the voting booth? And they didn't. Frank Mann got the most votes.

**Kerry Reed** [01:36:29] Oh, man.

**John F. Quinn** [01:36:32] After that, I became good friends with Mel Bergheim and it was, you know, one of the nice things in Alexandria--nobody held, you know, long-term, if you weren't with that person, you could still come around the corner and be friends with him. And that was one of nice things about politics in those days in Alexandria. I don't know whether it's that way now or not. I've stayed away from everything. Stay away from urban renewal, from development, from real estate, period. So, I, in the last few years, I walked out the door one day and never went back.

**Kerry Reed** [01:37:17] When was that, when did you sort of remove yourself? Because I mean, your, your resume is, you know, at least to the extent that I know it, you were PTA, you were Board of Equalization. I mean you were just so involved with the City.

**John F. Quinn** [01:37:31] Well, I was involved in a lot of things. I enjoyed doing them and I was happy to do them. Yeah, I was involved in Citizens Association, PTA. I was involved in United Way for the City, and also, I was president of a handicap workshop for a number of years. So, I got involved in a lot of different things. People'd ask me and I always hated to say no, you suffer, you know, say no. Anyway, I didn't know how to say no.

**Kerry Reed** [01:38:22] Absolutely. So, was there anything else that you worked on with Melvin Miller besides his mayoral campaign?

**John F. Quinn** [01:38:31] No, I helped other councilmen, but I didn't really, at least not in front. I was friends with Doug Harman, who was a City Manager, and I became friends with the fellow that came right after him. I can't think of his name at the moment, but I can picture him. And we became friends after having one mishap. We got together and talked it out.

**Kerry Reed** [01:39:08] Speaking of the mishaps, you told me a story previously about a time--running isn't the right term--but an issue you had with City Council when you were trying to bring plans to them, if I recall correctly.

**John F. Quinn** [01:39:23] I was going to bring what?

**Kerry Reed** [01:39:27] Plans I believe to, to City Council? I don't want to speak for you, of course, but you were at council chambers rather late

**John F. Quinn** [01:39:38] Oh yeah, when Chuck Beatley was mayor. I was supposed to be first on the agenda and end up not being on it at all and at two o'clock in the morning when the council finally got through the meeting, I was really irate because I was prepared to go forward with it and somehow we didn't

get it and so I think I'm back another time. I was not happy.

**Kerry Reed** [01:40:05] Yeah, I can imagine so. Did that sort of thing happen a lot with council?

**John F. Quinn** [01:40:11] No, Chuck, Chuck let people talk. He didn't, he didn't cut them off. And so, the meetings would go past midnight. Yeah. It was just the way Chuck was. He was more that way. And he was a good person. I mean, he loved the City and he loved doing what he did. He was an airline pilot for United Airlines, and he was a good person

**Kerry Reed** [01:40:42] Absolutely. Do you remember what you were bringing to their attention that evening?

**John F. Quinn** [01:40:46] Approval of something I needed. I put it out of my mind, but I got it in the end. It took a few meetings later to get it.

**Kerry Reed** [01:41:01] That's good. During our previous discussion, you mentioned that there were some houses of the rising sun, to put it rather colloquially in the City, some brothels.

**John F. Quinn** [01:41:16] Well, there was one in the Dip, and we acquired it from a fellow that lived in Fairfax, and so we put it out of business--unfortunately, for some people, I guess, I don't know. But anyway, yeah, we did that.

**Kerry Reed** [01:41:37] That's interesting. What was it like acquiring that building? I mean, I've never heard of it before.

**John F. Quinn** [01:41:43] Well, it's like all buildings. We had a number on it, and we negotiated with the owner and we acquired it. He'd have trouble selling it, I think.

**Kerry Reed** [01:41:59] Yeah, with that reputation attached.

**John F. Quinn** [01:42:00] Yeah, and we had to buy a lot of properties that were, you know, pretty questionable, but we dealt with a lot of attorneys in town, and so we were able to do that and get them to settlement.

**Kerry Reed** [01:42:16] Absolutely.

**John F. Quinn** [01:42:16] We tried to keep everything moving constantly. The idea--my idea anyway--was that we don't want this thing lasting forever. It's got a beginning and an end. And you want to go on to the beginning and the end, and then you can move on to something else. We did do Jefferson Village, which was near Jefferson School before we did the Dip. We worked on that, and it was sold from the City. It was excess land that the school had, and we sold it for moderate income housing. And it was developed and still there today.

**Kerry Reed** [01:43:02] Yeah, yeah. Do you remember any of the other hotels that were in Alexandria before the redevelopment?

**John F. Quinn** [01:43:12] The George Mason was always there on the corner and, well it's back as a hotel. But, you know, the George Mason, was the old hotel and that's where everything functioned there. The new hotels were all developed later. The one that's the highest price was the Hilton up by the Metro and that went for a big number per room. All the other hotels came along afterwards. We tore a hotel down, the Belvoir Hotel, but that was sort of a joint.

**Kerry Reed** [01:44:01] Oh really?

**John F. Quinn** [01:44:02] It wasn't a first-rate hotel.

**Kerry Reed** [01:44:05] Interesting because I'd heard about the Belvoir Hotel before and I was curious about the process of acquiring it

**John F. Quinn** [01:44:13] Well, it was part of urban renewal. We acquired it and tore it down.

**Kerry Reed** [01:44:18] Where was it?

**John F. Quinn** [01:44:19] It was right next to Gadsby's Tavern, right up against Gadsby's Tavern. We had to get it down and we did some damage to the wall, so we had to rebuild a section of the wall. We didn't do it. The contractor did. He missed when he was tearing it [down]. Well, he drove something into the wall, causing the damage.

**Kerry Reed** [01:44:50] Were there a lot of mishaps like that with contractors?

**John F. Quinn** [01:44:54] Occasionally it would be something that would go on.

**Kerry Reed** [01:44:57] Naturally.

**John F. Quinn** [01:44:57] In those days we had to acquire--if there were restaurants, there were a few, but not very many, you had to sell the equipment. We had to go through and price everything and sell the equipment and then they would tell what the value was. We could sell it individually or collectively and do stuff like that. There was a lot of detailed stuff that you do in commercial [projects].

**Kerry Reed** [01:45:32] Yeah, I'm sure.

**John F. Quinn** [01:45:34] You know, it's not moving somebody out temporarily and moving them back in. It's more involved with what the business is doing and where they're relocating to and if they're relocating or they're going out of business. You have to figure out exactly what's happening there.

**Kerry Reed** [01:45:57] You mentioned doing work on Jefferson Village. So, were there any other projects that you were involved with?

**John F. Quinn** [01:46:06] Not really. There were more, the City did more. They did some, they scattered site a couple of public housing projects, but that was after I came. That was, I think in the late 70s [1970s] they started in 70s [1970s] and 80s [1980s]. They did projects in other parts of the City.

**Kerry Reed** [01:46:33] Yeah.

**John F. Quinn** [01:46:33] And tried to scatter the housing. Council approved a lifetime thing which is that there would be a thousand--I think it was a little over a thousand--but a thousand units of housing forever. Public housing.

**Kerry Reed** [01:46:54] Yeah, really. I didn't know that. When did they do that?

**John F. Quinn** [01:46:58] Oh, they did it back in, I think it was back in the 70s [1970s], 70s [1970s] or 80s [1980s]. You'd have to look it up. But they did do a thing guaranteeing that public housing would continue. And I think Melvin was involved in that.

**Kerry Reed** [01:47:17] Absolutely. So outside of Jefferson Village, that little project on Duke Street, and of

course Gadsby's, Apothecary...

**John F. Quinn** [01:47:27] Jefferson Village was up on West Street.

**Kerry Reed** [01:47:29] West Street, okay.

**John F. Quinn** [01:47:33] There were more projects. There's a project up the street across from T.C. That was a little Black community and they converted that into housing.

**Kerry Reed** [01:47:49] So were you involved with that?

**John F. Quinn** [01:47:51] No. I was gone by then.

**Kerry Reed** [01:47:53] So how long was your tenure at the Housing Authority then?

**John F. Quinn** [01:47:57] I was there for, let's see, I left in 1973, I started in 1961, so 12 years. I spent about half and half, maybe a little more, maybe a half a year more at the housing authority than I did with the City. But anyway, so I was split. I'd say pretty much was a split between the two.

**Kerry Reed** [01:48:26] Got it.

**John F. Quinn** [01:48:27] And it was fun. I mean, I was involved, as I said, with Lester Collins on plant material and we went out and picked out the plants that were going on to the Market Square. So I went on those trips with a fellow who's doing it and because we were going on top of a garage, we hired a firm out of Long Island that had a good reputation and because of the trees going in there and we had to make sure everything drained and didn't cause garage leakage and all that stuff. And so, it was a little more precise in getting the City garage. And so, we did stuff like that and it was fun doing that and everything worked out pretty well. And I think the Black community came around the corner because they took a position on City Council. Nelson Greene was the first one to do it and then others came along. Nelson and I got along, as strange as it seems, because he could be pretty tough on you, but he and I get along pretty well. He was on the authority board when I came to the authority. And we became good friends.

**Kerry Reed** [01:50:03] Absolutely, I've read his oral history. It does seem like a steel pole I guess very yeah, very, very set in his ways. So, he was on the board of the Housing Authority when you met him?

**John F. Quinn** [01:50:18] When I came to the Housing Authority, he was on the board.

**Kerry Reed** [01:50:22] Interesting. He didn't mention that. Very cool. Did you work on him with anything?

**John F. Quinn** [01:50:30] Not really. We talked a lot. I mean, but there wasn't anything other than what I was doing, and he was involved in when I was there.

**Kerry Reed** [01:50:37] Got it.

**John F. Quinn** [01:50:38] And then I think he went to City Council after that. They talked him into running it for City Council and he did that in the late 70s [1970s] and then he became a councilman. It was interesting in those days because you had at least three of the councilmen were Republican and Democrat with the other side and once in a while you had an independent and there was somebody that was, you know, it was back and forth. It's kind of an interesting thing.

**Kerry Reed** [01:51:15] Was the political relationship between council members, was it always amiable?

**John F. Quinn** [01:51:23] It was, it was pretty good, I think. I think council, they weren't at each other's throats all the time. They, they worked things out. You know, it's more like politicians should be. I don't know how they are today, but you know, there were a lot of issues and a lot of things going on.

**Kerry Reed** [01:51:46] Well, they're all, at least supposedly, politically homogenous now. I don't know when the last time a Republican was on City Council, but I think it's been a while.

**John F. Quinn** [01:51:57] Yeah, it's not bad having the other party, and the other party was good, and then both parties were good. Republicans are a little more conservative, but the Democrats, you could have some conservative Democrats in the old days, and they were, you know, Harry Byrd people. They're on the first floor of City Hall. That was all appointee things that they had. And you know, there was a lot of stuff that went on. It's kind of a fascinating time. I don't know how the judges were appointed, but Leroy Bendheim, who had been our State senator, was head of the judicial section around Virginia, and he had a lot to say about what went on, and he was, at one point, he was mayor before Frank Mann.

**Kerry Reed** [01:52:52] Oh, was he? I wasn't aware of that. It seems from what I've read and conversations I've had with other people, the judges were very vocal during the redevelopment process. Did you ever have any interactions with any judges?

**John F. Quinn** [01:53:10] Yeah, I did. I don't know why I can't remember names when I need them at the top of my thing. That's one failing I have at this age is names. One of the judges filed a constitutionality suit against us and--what's his name, he's right over here, he isn't very far from me. I knew all these people. But anyway, he filed this constitutionality suit against us because he didn't want his property acquired. He wanted to keep it the way it was. We had a couple of constitutionality suits. The other one would have been Alexandria National Bank on the alley rights, and I think they filed it, Howard Smith filed it. So, we had people that thought we didn't deserve to do any of this when we needed to, and so judges were in our way, in certain aspects of it. But outside of that, most of the judges--we had the best appraisers in town, and so most of judges went with what we were doing. But the constitutionality suit held that up. We needed his property because of being able to use the access. It was where the access for the parking for the 300 building was, we'd needed it. And so, we went around. So Judge DiMatteo decided he was going to solve the problem and I got up there and he came up with something and I said, "you know, we can't do that." He said, "I don't have approval for that." And he said, "where do you think you are, son?" And we became good friends after that, because he belonged across the street.

He and Joe Peters I had to deal with on the breaking of the wall at Gadsby's Tavern. They were part of the American Legion is in Gadsby's Tavern, and they were involved with the American Legion. And we became friends. And one day I was on jury duty and it was a murder trial, and it was change of venue. The guy shot somebody in Norfolk and shot somebody in Roanoke, and he was doing armed robberies and stuff like that. And so, I'm standing there. They do two panels for those, and I'm standing down there, and there was a pause. And Judge [01:56:18]DiMaterra, [0.0s] from his bench, he was handling the trial. And he said, "Bailiff, get Mr. Quinn a chair. He needs to sit" and the attorneys flashed around at me "who is this guy the judge knows" and then I was out of there in about two minutes. So, there were good, good parts of that kind of thing and there were some really nice things that happened along the way that I get to know the attorneys. But, when I went into development, our first project, the lender went bankrupt, and I must have come across a third of the bar association. Everybody was making money off of this deal, and I bet it was close to a third of the bar association was at us all the time. They wanted a piece of this, piece of that, so I got to know a lot of attorneys. Anyway, that's my history.

**Kerry Reed** [01:57:33] Absolutely.

**John F. Quinn** [01:57:34] But also, I've learned a lot about the law, and so I was able to really handle a lot of legal situations.

**Kerry Reed** [01:57:43] Yeah, I'm sure I'm being friends with all those judges.

**John F. Quinn** [01:57:50] It's like anything else, you know, it was fun.

**Kerry Reed** [01:57:55] Absolutely. So, you mentioned the American Legion was in Gadsby's?

**John F. Quinn** [01:58:00] Yeah, it was, they owned Gadsby's Tavern.

**Kerry Reed** [01:58:02] Oh, they did?

**John F. Quinn** [01:58:03] They may still. They are in the basement. They have a bar down in the basement and they finished off the basement of the Gadsby's. So, where the big ice thing is that if you walk down that end there's a stair down to the bar of the American Legion.

**Kerry Reed** [01:58:23] I don't know that.

**John F. Quinn** [01:58:24] I don't know whether they still own it, but they did own it for a long, long time. They may still own it, I don't know. The restaurant's upstairs and they lease that. You're able to get the restaurant.

**Kerry Reed** [01:58:38] Well, even though I've only eaten there once, it's very, very heavy, I think.

**John F. Quinn** [01:58:42] Yeah, it's not great food. They were using the courtyard and having the restaurant outside in the courtyard for a while, which was really nice, but then closed it down. And the room upstairs is in New York at the Metropolitan Museum. If you go in the Metropolitan and you get back, you have to go upstairs to get to the ballroom, the Gadsby Tavern ballroom is at the Metropolitan. I forget what's at the Ford Museum outside of Detroit. I can't remember what building went there. I remember one of the buildings went there, and I've been in St. Louis, and I've seen a section of a house at the corner of Fairfax and Prince. They took two rooms out of it and put them in the museum. Everywhere you go, you're gonna see a little bit of Alexandria

**Kerry Reed** [01:59:52] Yeah, absolutely. That's funny.

**John F. Quinn** [01:59:55] Well, it was poor, you know, even when we came along, it was a poorer, poor setting. I mean, the 30s [1930s] didn't do much for it. As I mentioned to you earlier, there's a lot of information over at the Library of Congress. So, you can get information on buildings that were there. And you can see what was there before, because we had pictures of everything, all the buildings, and I'm sure they're in the City. Whatever, you know, wherever the City has all of its records. But the police department took the pictures. So, we had police and fire with us. And we had a representative of each, and we went around to each building and took pictures.

**Kerry Reed** [02:00:52] So you mentioned to me previously that the Fawcett House, there was a...

**John F. Quinn** [02:00:59] Yeah, part of the courthouse, when we did the courthouse, the Fawcett House went out beyond the alley that sat on the lower part of the block, and it went into where the building was. We acquired the church building on the corner. The church had decided to move out to the west end of the City, and so they leased that portion, but we took the building down--it was on the other side and we traded that corner for Fawcett so they could get away, the house could be seen from that side and so we traded that for what penetrated in. There was no building on the other part, it was just land. In both cases, it was land traded. I had to deal with the attorney on that; it was there 160 years, and so the attorney eventually worked it out, found a way to work it out for E. Waller Dudley, who's buried down at the cemetery. And so, we did get it all

worked out. And that helped square away that corner because I've been through, I went through it with Mr. Fawcett at the time and he was one of the heirs and a direct family descendant. And so, I was able to go through the entire place with him. I don't know how they dealt with the bathroom on the back, and they had a well in the back. They put them underneath an extension of the building, and so they were closed in. It's a fascinating place, because it's that old, it's neat.

**Kerry Reed** [02:02:55] Yeah, absolutely. Fawcett House [Murray-Dick-Fawcett House] is really cool.

**John F. Quinn** [02:02:58] And when I came, in front of the Ramsay House, not Ramsay, the other one, Carlyle House, it was a big building and they showed it when they ran the program on Alexandria on PBS and that was used as a hospital in the Civil War, but is a big structure. It was four stories high, four or five stories high in front of the house. And so, it was donated to Northern Virginia Park Service [Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority] that took it over and then they tore the building down there. And originally you had to go through the building. It was owned by whoever owned the building and you had to get a ticket and go in to see the house. It had an escape route up the back down to the water because the water came in closer and it was constantly building on to the waterfront, so they could escape if the Indians came.

**Kerry Reed** [02:04:10] Really, is that the reason they have the escape room? Escape way?

**John F. Quinn** [02:04:14] Yeah. They could get to a boat and had a boat dock there and they could get out in the river.

**Kerry Reed:** [2:04:20] Oh wow, I didn't know that, it's really cool.

**John F. Quinn** [2:04:23] Yeah. And then there was a big fire in the 300 block. At one point, most of it, a big section of the 300-block burned. So, there have been some fires along the way too. And one of the things I always used was they had the fire maps from the late 1800s and in the mid to late 1800's they had all the buildings, you have them in the Lloyd House, and they showed what properties were there then and that gives you an indication of what was happening because they were just drawn out as a fire map.

**Kerry Reed** [02:05:06] Yeah, I've seen those. They're really cool. I love looking at all the old maps of Alexandria. Yeah. It's really fun.

**John F. Quinn** [02:05:12] Yeah, it's good. So, the projects are done. I mean, I left when Nixon came in because he killed the urban renewal. That was one of his things. They went to, you know, neighborhood type things. Funding.

**Kerry Reed** [02:05:42] What did you do afterwards?

**John F. Quinn** [02:05:44] I went into development.

**Kerry Reed** [02:05:45] Development. Okay.

**John F. Quinn** [02:05:46] Yeah, I stayed with development. The first project we did, the lender went bang. I was an REIT [Real Estate Investment Trust] and it went bankrupt and it was a difficult period because it was in the 70s [1970s] and we got into the late 70s [1970s]. And then interest rates just kept going up. And the last project we did, we did an apartment building on Duke Street. But then I acquired the land and we built the project on Prince Street, 1600 Prince. We had to do it the way it is because it was once a pond.

**Kerry Reed** [02:06:29] Oh really?

**John F. Quinn** [02:06:30] There's nothing but water down there and we had to sink 60-foot piles into the old

mother earth, which you can't call piles, nobody sees them? Anyway, the building, structurally, it's good. It's held up. I haven't been in it in a long time. I try to stay away from all my prior events. It was 100 units to the acre. There were only three buildings, and, at one point, they had zoning for 100 units to the acre and so three properties got zoned that way. And that was one. That's on one acre and a 100-unit building. So anyway, we assembled that and built it. So, it was good. It worked out. The problem was the interest rate, prime was at 20 and we were paying a couple points above prime for the loan. I knew what I was doing. I made the loan in about half hour to 35 minutes on the phone with First National Maryland because the guy had been at Marine Bank and I dealt with him up there. And so, we were able to do the deal. U.S. Steel bought half the deal, so I'm sitting on a 10-million-dollar loan with interest rates and then the end loans were high. We bought them down to 17 and a half percent. We're offering 17 and half percent end loans. Can you imagine that today?

**Kerry Reed** [02:08:22] No, not at all.

**John F. Quinn** [02:08:25] And then Metro, we tied it to the opening of Metro. Metro was having the cars built in Brazil and they were two years behind schedule, and they didn't announce that until after we were practically finished with the building. They were going to be delayed two years with the opening of King Street. King Street station was there but there weren't any Metro cars going back and forth. So, it was a difficult uphill battle. I got out of it all after that.

**Kerry Reed** [02:08:55] Yeah, I can imagine after that.

**John F. Quinn** [02:08:58] And I went in and I stayed in Alexandria and I decided, and I worked with John McEneaney. I did commercial, within two years I was working on commercial real estate. And I worked in Maryland, D.C., and Virginia. I did well enough. Vosbeck's building on North Pitt, which has just been demolished--I sold that to Oliver Carr for \$14.4 million. And they just, whoop, the whole thing.

**Kerry Reed** [02:09:42] Well, Mr. Quinn, we've been talking now for a little over two hours. It's been an absolute pleasure speaking with you. I just have a couple more closing questions, if that's all right.

**John F. Quinn** [2:09:50] Go ahead.

**Kerry Reed** [2:09:51] What do you think has been the legacy of the redevelopment in the 1960s and early 1970s?

**John F. Quinn** [02:09:59] Well, it helped the City get moving. I think it really did help the basic City because then, as you look at the City now, the lower part of King Street all changed, became restaurants and a variety of shops and things. Whereas it had been auto parts and a variety of other things were down in there and it changed everything. I mean there was a slow process, but it's picked up steam I think as development occurred. It helped the City, I think. It was good and it was good that we limited it. I think to continue doing that in the City would have been a nightmare. King Street is nice and it's nice the way it is. I mean it's nice going up and down the street and you see a lot of little shops and a lot of other things and then that's nice. If you look at the pictures of what was there, there might have been a few places where you could have done that, but it wasn't the same. It was the commercial structures were really a lot rougher in that location. So, it worked out, I think. That's my feeling. I say that because I did it, but also, by the same token, I'd think it helped the City push ahead with being what it is today. It probably would have ended up doing that, but it's a King Street location. King Street is the premier street.

**Kerry Reed** [02:11:55] Absolutely

**John F. Quinn** [02:11:57] And Washington Street's very nice, but King Street's the street. It's where people like to come and shop and eat and do whatever, just tour.

**Kerry Reed** [02:12:10] Absolutely. What is your fondest memory of the redevelopment era in the City?

**John F. Quinn** [02:12:22] Well, I've learned a lot about the City, about the architecture and about what was going on. And that probably was the fondest thing. I know a lot about what happened and why it happened and how it happened. And so that was the interesting part of it. But it was a living City and it wasn't a museum. There was a big push when I first arrived, to make it just like, you know, Williamsburg, and it isn't Williamsburg. It's an active City that had to develop and get itself going commercially. And that's why we lost those buildings in the 30s [1930s]. It wasn't a terribly active place in the sense there were attorneys and there were things happening at City Hall and in the courthouse. But outside of that, not much was happening here. And so, all of a sudden--it wasn't a sudden--but a gradual improvement all the way up King Street. The other end of King Street was a disaster. I mean, coming home from the Dip, I got surrounded by "he-shes" one night at King and Alfred in my car, and I just honked the horn and I started revving the engine and they got out of the way, thank goodness. And I had that happen a few times. And then there was a bar up there called the Casablanca and the Casablanca, its front window was completely out. They had plywood on the front of this bar and a police car parked there in front every night. No, it wasn't. The policeman was there. He was ready. And I remember, and we went for a drink, and one of the guys was an FBI agent that worked with us on some of the stuff, and he lived on the 200 block of Fairfax. We walked into the bar that was at the corner of King and Pitt Street, where the hotel is now. And all of a sudden, this fist came flying through and Bob, at the time--he was the FBI agent--he said, "I think we better leave here before we get in trouble."

**Kerry Reed** [02:15:11] That's funny. What was that bar called?

**John F. Quinn** [02:15:14] Oh, I got to remember it back. I'll come up with these. I have to send them to you. When people ask me a question about names, I usually can't remember them. I don't know why I have that mental thing; I don't know. Anyway, but I will remember the name.

**Kerry Reed** [02:15:38] Oh yeah, please whenever you get the chance. I mean, I'm amazed that you remember as much as you do.

**John F. Quinn** [02:15:43] Yeah, well, I had a pretty good memory in the buildings I've been in and what I've done, and I remember all of them. No, I remember most of the buildings. I sort of imprinted on my mind and on the history of what I did. And the same was true when I did real estate. I mean once I get through a building, I'd remember. But it's interesting and so I stayed in Alexandria and I made a few bucks doing commercial of it. This isn't a commercial world here in Alexandria.

**Kerry Reed** [02:16:21] No, not at all.

**John F. Quinn** [02:16:22] No; that's why I did I did leasing in D.C. I only sold one building there, but I did sell a building in Southlake, Texas. I did a 1031 exchange in Southlake, actually near the airport, outside of Dallas. The fellow wanted to do it. He moved from here to Florida and he owned the building. He actually owned the Vosbeck building before I sold it to Carr and when I sold it to Carr he needed to do a tax exchange everywhere. I took part of it and I said there are no hurricanes in Texas or Phoenix or in western Carolina. I was wrong about western Carolina but anyway he ended up in Southlake, Texas, and that worked out really well, and it was easy.

**Kerry Reed** [02:17:33] And then lastly, if you could hold on to one memory forever, what would it be? This is just a general question. Anything that comes to mind.

**John F. Quinn** [02:17:42] Well, about Alexandria, I remember the way it was and how we really enjoyed it. We lived here and our children came up, were brought up here, and so that part is nice. And I remember, you know, them going to the schools and being involved, all that stuff. And that was good. It was fun. And the

people were good. I was President of Rosemont Citizens and involved with Rosemont and involved with the schools that Rosemont did. Except I didn't do Maury. But I did get involved in adding the addition for a little gymnasium in front of Maury. I beat the drums on that with a couple other people. And so we were able to get that little addition onto the front of Maury, because they really didn't pay attention to Maury. And I had a lot of friends, I used to have lunch with Sam Ellsworth, who developed most of those little townhouses you see all over town, and Sam and I were good friends. And I was friends with most of the councilmen, and friends with the City manager, Doug [Harman]. I just was looking for some of the brochures that I had, and I haven't found them yet, but when I do, I'll call you and drop them off. You may be able to find them in the records, but I know I've got them in boxes upstairs, and I just have to find the box there. Anyway, I was friends with a lot of people here, so it was good. We did a lot of stuff. I mean, it was good, it's good stuff. I mean we really tried to make the City better than it was. And it was.

I remember being out with Joe DeFray, who had the Budweiser distributorship, and he let us use his trucks when they were empty, and we did the first pickup. Now they stopped the pickup slide during the pandemic. We used to have that one pickup in the fall and so we did that in the spring and fall I guess it. It was spring maybe. Anyway, we started that and also, I remember telling George Cook I said, "George if you're not careful we're going to take the City of Rosemont and we're going to incorporate ourselves out of the City of Alexandria." [Laughter] It was always fun. And then when Jim Moran was the congressman, one day I used to have a beer with him occasionally and I'd say, "Jim, I'm really proud of you. You haven't screwed up all day." I'd say, "you haven't screwed up this month," I think I told him. Because he was involved in all sorts of crazy stuff and I and so I teased Jim. And then I went to him, because my name was up on the Do Not Fly list. There was a John Quinn somewhere in Ireland who was doing some things that he shouldn't have been doing. And so, they got me on the Do Not Fly list. And I went and I told Jim, I said, "Jim, get me off the Do Not Fly List", he said, "I can't get you off anything. They listen to me every conversation I have, and I give them something to listen to. They listen to me and they try to get to me all the time. I can't help you," he said. "I barely can help myself." [Laughter]

**Kerry Reed** [02:21:50] Oh, that's funny.

**John F. Quinn** [02:21:53] So, that was the end of that. But it was fun. I always teased Jim. So, it was fun, you know, it was like "Our Town." When I go back now to the cemetery, I know one hell of a lot of people that are buried there. And it's "Our Town." When I bought a grave down there and I said, "you, know, when I arrive here, they're have a party for me." I've got a college roommate that's buried down there that lived here, and his wife is also buried there. I know I had some really close friends that are all scattered through there, and Martin Foster is down there, a bunch of people. I know, 90 years, and I spent quite a bit of time here. You get to know people. And so, it's really fun. It's fun walking through the cemetery and seeing if I find somebody new that I haven't seen before. And there's a cemetery, a couple of cemeteries downtown. One is St. Mary's, and then the one, the Episcopal cemeteries are back near the sewage treatment plant. There's a bunch in there and there's the potter's field there. But, you know, I get reminded of all the people that I was close to. And it's fun. So that's good news and the other good news is I had another great-grandchild this week. So there we go.

**Kerry Reed** [02:23:40] Congratulations. That's amazing. That's terrific.

**John F. Quinn** [02:23:44] Yeah, it's fun. My grandson, one of my grandsons is up in, he's up in Prince Edward Island. Is it Prince Edward Island? One of those up there in the Atlantic. And he's with his girlfriend and her parents own a place up there. Her father just died; he wrote the book. It's in one of those books, are those yours, or is it me?

**Kerry Reed** [02:24:17] No, these are yours, yeah.

**John F. Quinn** [02:24:18] Yeah, the one on top, I think he wrote.

**Kerry Reed** [02:24:21] Okay.

**John F. Quinn** [02:24:25] He was an editor for the Wall Street Journal and did a whole series of things. And he wrote this book. And what he did was, they lived on Capitol Hill. And he walked from here to New York City. He went up towards the edge of Pennsylvania and went across into New Jersey. He sort of followed the old, an old, location and just talked to people on the way and find out and he wrote all that what he did. He ended up in New York City. He walked into New York City and ended up there. He did it over a couple weeks. He was he was going in a section and he'd stop and talk to people about what their concerns were and what was happening. He was really a neat guy. His daughter and my grandson lived together in Chicago and she's on a program, a PBS program. He was there. He did radio and then television in Chicago, and then he decided he liked writing too much. He went to GW and that's when he went to the school. And his sister went there also.

**Kerry Reed** [02:25:51] Absolutely.

**John F. Quinn** [02:25:53] So the two of them are writers, and the sister moved out to Chicago. It's cheaper to live there. So that's where they are. And the granddaughter that just had the babies, and she's in Austin, Texas, with her husband works for Apple.

**Kerry Reed** [02:26:11] Fabulous.

**John F. Quinn** [02:26:11] And she continues to work for Procter and Gamble. And she has, I think it's eight countries she deals with. She deals with India, even having babies and everything, she still deals with them. She deals with India and England are two of her eight countries. And so, she has to get the product line, make sure they're all up to date and everything. But she can work from home. She was going to leave them and move to Carolina, because that's where her boyfriend was and they were going back and forth to Cincinnati and so she said "I have to leave and I'm going to move to North Carolina" and they said, "we don't want you to leave," so they gave her a raise and said, "you can work from home. How's that?"

**Kerry Reed** [02:27:07] That's terrific.

**John F. Quinn** [02:27:08] That was a good setup, so she's doing that. And then my other granddaughter who lives in Alexandria, it's the only one that lives in Alexandria. She spent maybe six, seven years with Microsoft. And then they didn't give her a bonus and they had earned a lot of money. She'd said, "I'm leaving."

**Kerry Reed** [02:27:29] Absolutely. Good for her.

**John F. Quinn** [02:27:30] She just walked out the door. Of course, her husband's working at the World Bank, so she's in pretty good shape.

**Kerry Reed** [02:27:36] Geez, your family, they're doing a lot of stuff, Mr. Quinn.

**John F. Quinn** [02:27:39] Well, it's fun. It's fun doing that. It is fun with all of them. I've got one in New York City and I've got one down in Richmond. They were all over the place. It is fun. Seven of them graduated from college too. The one I went to see is just going into high school. So, it's fun

**Kerry Reed** [02:28:08] Well, Mr. Quinn, we've spoken now for two and a half hours. It has been an absolute pleasure.

**John F. Quinn** [02:28:12] In fact, we recorded the end of this.

**Kerry Reed** [02:28:13] Yeah, we've recorded the entire thing. We're all good. Thank you so much. It's been an absolute pleasure. I've learned a lot.

**John F. Quinn** [02:28:18] Well, if I come up with things, I'll keep the notes here, and I'll give you a call. I'll drop them off. It's easy for me to get down there. I get down to Old Town periodically.

**Kerry Reed** [02:28:34] Awesome. Thank you, Mr. Quinn.