



City of Alexandria  
Office of Historic Alexandria  
*Alexandria Legacies*  
Oral History Program



**Project Name:** *Alexandria Legacies*

**Title:** *Interview with Robert and Antoinette Fischman*

**Date of Interview:** *November 1, 2005*

**Location of Interview:** *The Fischmans' home in Alexandria, Virginia*

**Interviewer:** *Barbara Murray*

**Transcriber:** *Barbara Murray*

**Abstract:** Robert (Bob) Fischman was born in Del Ray in 1925 and is a lifelong resident of Alexandria. He grew up in Del Ray during the Great Depression, when livestock, coal deliveries, and revival meetings were part of neighborhood life and everyone found some way to cobble together a living. He rode Alexandria's streetcars and traveled on the AB&W bus when segregation was Virginia's law and Hoover Airport sold blimp rides. He helped his grandmother make beer, watched serials at Del Ray's Palm Theater, live dance marathons at the Riverside in Washington, D.C., and rolled cannonballs downhill at the old Calvert Estate as a boy. Bob shares stories about his grandfather and father (both railroad workers at Potomac Yard), his grandmother's rooming house in Del Ray, his mother's walk to Mount Vernon School over a rickety trestle, and an uncle who played baseball for Del Ray in the 1920s. An award-winning dress designer, Bob opened and ran clothing and tailoring shops (Robert's, Ltd.) in three Old Town locations and on Quaker Lane; he continued tailoring later, for a total of 55 years in the business.

Antoinette (Toni) Fischman, Bob's wife, suggested several interesting topics as the interview progressed and shared her own memories of the onscreen birth of a baby at the Palm Theater, eating a "one-arm lunch" at Lipp's, and the character of some Alexandria neighborhoods at an earlier time.

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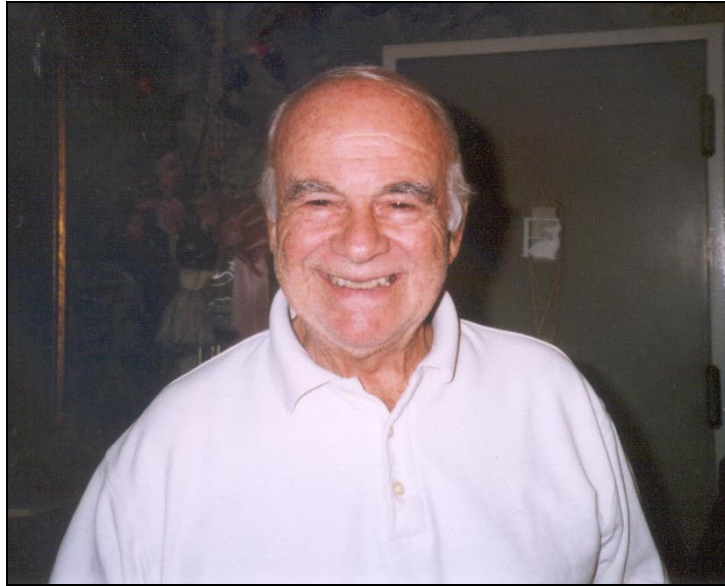
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*Robert Fischman, 2005*

**Introductions**

Barbara Murray:	[first part of tape is cut off] [This is Barbara Murray] and I'm here with Robert Fischman and his wife, Antoinette Fischman, Bob and Toni, here at their home in Alexandria. It's November 1, 2005. Robert is a lifelong resident of Alexandria and we're going to talk with him about his memories of his life and work in Alexandria.
Robert Fischman:	Mm hm.

**Robert's Maternal Grandparents Come to Alexandria**

B.M.:	All right, can you start by telling me when your family first came to Alexandria?
Robert Fischman:	I can't tell you exactly, but when the railroad opened up in Potomac Yard, that was considered big money, and all the farmers came out of Leesburg and everywhere else to get employment there.
B.M.:	And this was your grandfather?
Robert Fischman:	My grandfather, my grandmother. My mother's father and mother. And they came out of Leesburg. They were dairy farmers. And they—he was the yard engineer. Or some type of engineer in the yard, not for long-distance, but just in the Potomac Yard. And they lived in a company house on Powhatan Street. It's across the Monroe Street Bridge. It was the old rickety

	bridge at that time. It was a wooden bridge.
B.M.:	It's been rebuilt...since then?
Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah. Yeah. And they lived there, it was all company houses owned by the Potomac Yard, the railroad, RF&P [Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac] Railroad. And in fact, right there at Bashford Lane, their backyard was Potomac Yard.
B.M.:	Oh, my goodness! [laughs]
Robert Fischman:	And it was a big house, and my grandmother ran a, more of a boarding house for workers.
B.M.:	Other workers there?
Robert Fischman:	You know, and she, I don't know, but she had, like a room and board, so to...as I remember. I don't remember, but I...passed down to me. But I think my mother...
B.M.:	Did you visit the house at all when you were a child? [inaudible]
Robert Fischman:	Oh, yeah. No, I didn't visit the house, but I knew it was there, until it was torn down. And I have a friend who painted, he's an artist. He painted the house, the one next door to it, but not that particular house. But...
B.M.:	You said it was...go ahead, I'm sorry.
Robert Fischman:	What?
B.M.:	You said it was a large house. I was wondering...if it had a couple of stories, or...
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Yeah. It wasn't...yeah, it was two-story. It was larger than the other houses. The other houses were all row houses. They had little wooden steps up to the first floor.
B.M.:	And they were brick houses? They were all wood?
Robert Fischman:	No, they were all frame. All frame. There was a tremendous house on the corner of the bridge or, going towards the, what was that, say, the Dixie Pig, or what was that...
Antoinette Fischman:	Warwick Villages?
Robert Fischman:	Oh no, no, that's a different place. What was it, going towards Alexandria on the bridge, straight ahead, there was a sandwich shop there, and there was a Dixie Pig.
B.M.:	There used to be a Dixie Pig, yeah.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, on one side, but, and I remember the Brothers had a little deli there, and then there was the slaughterhouse there. That was the Alexandria Slaughterhouse.

<b>Alexandria Slaughterhouse and the Odells</b>	
B.M.:	Okay, when you say Alexandria Slaughterhouse, was it a privately owned business?
Robert Fischman:	It was at that time. It was a black man and his family owned it, and their name was Odell. And it was, it's a big house there. Later on, the Fagelsons bought it. They had a...
B.M.:	They were slaughtering pigs?
Robert Fischman:	Everything. Everything, because I used to, when I was, gee whiz, six, seven years old, after they were there, I used to go into the—there was a separate building there, across the street from the Dixie Pig, and they had these hooks on rollers, you know? They used to hang the beef on and everything? We used to hang on them and ride on them.
B.M.:	[laughs]
Robert Fischman:	But I don't know if it's still there or not, to tell you the truth.
B.M.:	Okay, that building. Do you remember, that was on the corner of Monroe, was it?
Robert Fischman:	No, that was right where Dixie Pig is, and I can't think of the name of it. It goes all the way to the Washington Expressway, I mean the George Washington Parkway.
B.M.:	Washington Street?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, it goes from that Powhatan Street, or whatever it is, all the way to, all the way through to George Washington Parkway, and I can't think of the name of that street [consulting map].
B.M.:	Okay, I'm sorry, I don't have that, I don't think that's gonna be on this one [map]. I'm so sorry I didn't bring that map with me.
Robert Fischman:	If I could see a map...in fact, I probably have a map.
B.M.:	Yeah, I had a wonderful map, and I folded it out and everything so it would be on the right page, and I seem to have left that.
Robert Fischman:	[laughs]
Antoinette Fischman:	Oh, it's so hard to thing of everything.
B.M.:	[laughs]
Robert Fischman:	But anyway, and my mother used to tell me about the—she used to play with the little black girl that, the family had the slaughterhouse, and she was always in her cotton dress, my mother, and this little girl was always in starched clothes!
B.M.:	Oh! [laughing]

Robert Fischman:	Always in starched clothes.
B.M.:	It sounds like the race relations were fairly good at that time.
Robert Fischman:	Oh, yeah. Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah. My mother kind of kept that up all the time.
B.M.:	That's wonderful.
<b>Hobos at Robert's Grandmother's House in Del Ray</b>	
Robert Fischman:	The whole time. In fact, they picked them out for some odd reason. Remember my grandmother in Del Ray. See, back in the [19]30s there was a lot of hobos and what have you, on the railroad.
B.M.:	Oh, okay, did you just see them around, as you went through your life, or—
Robert Fischman:	Well, yeah. In Del Ray. They would...it's like the house was marked! [laughing] You know?
B.M.:	How were the houses marked?
Robert Fischman:	No, no, no, my grandmother used to say...
Antoinette Fischman:	It was understood.
Robert Fischman:	It was understood. She used to feed them, in her house on Powhatan, or Bashford Lane, or whatever it is, or was, and they followed her to Del Ray! [laughing]
B.M.:	[laughs]
Robert Fischman:	I mean, they went way out of their way! [laughing] And...
B.M.:	Good food!
Robert Fischman:	No, it was a handout, you know, but I remember them saying that.
B.M.:	Did you ever see the hobos yourself? Or you heard of them? [inaudible]
Antoinette Fischman:	There was a black man.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, he came there. He ate on the back porch. Yeah, he ate on the back porch; my grandmother would always feed him.
<b>The Family Home on Windsor Avenue</b>	
Robert Fischman:	But they were probably one of the originals there. I think they, my mother was, I don't know, six, eight, or ten, something like that, when she, when they moved to Del Ray on Windsor Avenue. And it was 100 West Windsor Avenue.



B.M.:	100 West Windsor.
Antoinette Fischman:	At that time.
B.M.:	And you said that the boundary changed. The east-west boundary changed?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. That's right, from Mount Vernon Avenue to Commonwealth.
B.M.:	Okay. And so then it became East Windsor.
Robert Fischman:	East. That's right. 21 East Windsor.
Antoinette Fischman:	Today it's 21 East Windsor.
Robert Fischman:	That's right. It's 21 East Windsor now. But that's where we, my brother and I both were born there. My brother was born in I think [19]22, and I was born in [19]25.
B.M.:	Do you remember much about the house there, that you grew up in? You grew up in that house, right? Were there all your growing-up years?
Robert Fischman:	Oh, yeah. Yeah, and I'll show you the house. [shows a newspaper clipping from when the house was on the market some time ago] This is the house, later on.



*Newspaper clipping of the home in which Fischman was born  
(Courtesy of Bob Fischman)*

B.M.:	Oh, that's lovely.
Robert Fischman:	It's probably tripled its value now.

B.M.:	I'm certain!
Robert Fischman:	[laughing] But that was it. In fact, you can have that, because...
B.M.:	Oh that's wonderful, thank you.
Robert Fischman:	I've got another one. [silence for a moment]
Antoinette Fischman:	That was his grandmother's house. Grandmother and grandfather's house.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, that was my grandmother's house.
B.M.:	Oh, this was your grandmother's house.
Robert Fischman:	This was the house that they...
Antoinette Fischman:	He was raised in his grandmother and grandfather's house.
B.M.:	Okay, they owned this house.
Robert Fischman:	Mm-hm. Yeah.
Antoinette Fischman:	And their name was Stunkle.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. S-T-U-N-K-L-E.
B.M.:	Yeah, I have that written somewhere.
Robert Fischman:	George and Ella.
B.M.:	George and Ella. Oh, okay, I had Nellie.
Robert Fischman:	Nellie is my mother.
B.M.:	Oh, that's your mother. Okay, George and Ella Stunkle.
Robert Fischman:	Mm-hm.
B.M.:	And this was their house on Windsor Avenue?
Robert Fischman:	Mm-hm.
B.M.:	Did it—and is this how it looked when you were growing up?
Robert Fischman:	No. Well, actually, it was a half a house. See that house, I mean, over there? [pointing to the left side of the house shown on the clipping] That's their one side. This was added on, later on. [pointing to a wing on the right side of the house in the clipping] There was a whole side.
B.M.:	Okay. Was this also a wood house?
Robert Fischman:	Mm hm, yeah, it's all frame.
B.M.:	Do you know when that was built, by any chance?
Robert Fischman:	I don't know. I really don't...

B.M.:	It says here [in the newspaper clipping] it's 90 years old, but I don't know when this was... Oh, this is from [19]95, so it's about 95 years old, if their calculations are right.
Robert Fischman:	Mm hm. Yeah. I don't know if my, if they had it built or what, you know. I don't remember.
<b>Grandfather's Garden and Vegetable Sales in Del Ray</b>	
Robert Fischman:	I do remember, the side yard went half a block up. [laughing] You'd go from here, up. In those days, when a person had a house, they got so much land for gardens and everything else. It wasn't next to each other.
B.M.:	So a lot of people had gardens?
Robert Fischman:	Oh, yeah, they had a big, tremendous garden.
B.M.:	Was the yard, like a half an acre or something? Quarter acre?
Robert Fischman:	Oh, yeah. It was, maybe, four lots. Four lots at least. It went down quite a ways. In fact, he had a man every year come and plow it. With donkeys, you know?
B.M.:	And grew vegetables there?
Robert Fischman:	Oh, yeah. And he used to sell them.
Antoinette Fischman:	On that corner.
B.M.:	Your father?
Robert Fischman:	My grandfather.
B.M.:	Your grandfather sold the vegetables right on that corner. That's the corner of...
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. In fact, they claimed that it used to be a store. But it was never a store. He sold vegetables.
Antoinette Fischman:	On the corner...
B.M.:	So they called it a store. This is the corner of Windsor and...
Robert Fischman:	Windsor and Clyde.
B.M.:	...and Clyde.
Robert Fischman:	Mm hm. Del Ray Methodist Church is across the street.
<b>Coal Deliveries</b>	
B.M.:	Okay. Now, when you were growing up in this house, it already had City sewage and...
Robert Fischman:	They just converted. They just converted into oil. Because I used to put the coal in the stove. Yeah. And then, when we lived there,

	then they converted it to oil. But, no, I remember, the coal man used to come and put the coal in the shed and we used to go out and get it. Put it in...
B.M.:	And okay, so you carried it in buckets? Something like that?
Robert Fischman:	Oh, yeah, a regular coal bucket.
B.M.:	How much did they, did they, this was a whole, what most of us today would think of as a shed? Is that what you're talking about?
Robert Fischman:	Oh, yeah. It was a garage shed. They had the sheds for all the tools, and then they had a shed for like a horse and buggy, on Clyde Avenue.
B.M.:	Oh, okay. Oh, so this was not a shed that belonged to your home, this was like a shed...
Robert Fischman:	Oh, it was separate.
B.M.:	It was a separate shed. For the community?
Robert Fischman:	No, just for my grandmother and grandfather.
B.M.:	It was like an outbuilding. But on the property.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. It was a shed, or like a detached garage that was a shed.
<b>Union Tent City and Civil War Swords</b>	
Antoinette Fischman:	Did you want to mention the sword? The Civil War sword?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. My grandfather told me that back in the Civil War, they had a tent city on that property.
B.M.:	Oh, is that right?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, and I've got a couple swords that he dug up off of the property.
B.M.:	Wonderful!
Antoinette Fischman:	They're in the closet, in the middle bedroom, against the wall. [Interviewer stops tape for a moment until Robert comes back with the swords.]
B.M.:	Can I get a picture of these as well?
Robert Fischman:	Sure, if you want to.
B.M.:	And this tent city, was this a Union camp?
Robert Fischman:	This was a Union camp, and he dug up...and we used to, when we were kids, we'd go out there and throw them up against the door of the shed.
Antoinette Fischman:	The shed. [laughing]

B.M.:	You threw these [inaudible]...tossing...[ laughing]
Robert Fischman:	That's awful! [inaudible]
B.M.:	So, you found them there, when you were a child, is that...?
Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah, we always had them, he always had them in the shed.
B.M.:	Your grandfather.
Robert Fischman:	My grandfather did. And he, when they were digging up the garden, that's when he found them.
B.M.:	Oh I see, they were buried there. So the thought is that they are probably from the tent city, it was a Union camp or something like that?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Union camp. Yeah, it wasn't, the Rebels didn't have one! [laughing] They were—the Union took over Alexandria, I mean, like the first day. In fact, there's, the District [Washington, D.C.] line is on, down on, almost on King Street. The District line! [emphasizing District]
B.M.:	Yeah, I haven't actually gone down to the exact spot.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, and the little tombstone there.
B.M.:	Okay, there's a marker.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah.
<b>Robert's Grandfather, a Railroad Yard Engineer</b>	
B.M.:	And your grandfather, you said he worked on the railroad. He was, you said, a yard engineer?
Robert Fischman:	I think it was a yard engineer, because they...
B.M.:	Do you know what that job entails?
Robert Fischman:	Well, the, it was...they used to make up trains, going South. Or North. But generally, what they did, they used to have what they called the Hump. They used to have a yard engineer...used to take the trains and push them up on this Hump. And the men used to get on the trains...now this is not, this was just a boxcar.
B.M.:	Used to physically push the car?
Robert Fischman:	No, they would do it with their locomotive...and they'd push it up on this Hump. And the, what would they call it, the brakeman, would get on that boxcar with a stick to turn the brake, and it would go down the Hump, and it would go in the particular tracks where they make up trains going South. You see? A lot of trains would go this way, that way...it was just full of tracks! Now, it's only got two tracks, I think: North and South.

	[inaudible] That's why they're building so much out there, in Potomac Yard. But they used to make up trains full of merchandise. That was the big thing, North and South, right there.
B.M.:	So the merchandise was coming in on train cars, and then they were sort of rearranging things.
Robert Fischman:	Mm hm. That's right. They would lay out on one side, and then they would bring up a car, and all of a sudden, the brakeman would climb up on it, and then they would push him off, and then he would glide down, and it would go to different tracks to make up trains. Then they would get an engine on them and off they go!
<b>Robert's Father (a Brakeman) Comes to Alexandria</b>	
Antoinette Fischman:	His father was a brakeman.
Robert Fischman:	My father was a brakeman.
B.M.:	Your father was a brakeman?
Robert Fischman:	My father was a brakeman. After World War I, my father stayed in Washington, or Alexandria.
B.M.:	Your father had come here, you said, he was guarding the gate at the White House? [inaudible]
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, his job as a soldier was to guard the 15 <sup>th</sup> Street gate at the White House. And my mother used to go over there on the streetcar.
<b>Alexandria's Streetcar (Trolley) Route and Del Ray Stops</b>	
Robert Fischman:	The streetcars used to go down Commonwealth.
B.M.:	The streetcar was in Alexandria. Is that the same as the trolley, what some people call the trolley?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Yeah, that was it. They didn't have any buses. They had just trolleys.
B.M.:	No bus.
Robert Fischman:	And they would go all the way into Alexandria. They would go...
B.M.:	Into Alexandria, when you say into Alexandria, you mean what we think of as Old Town today?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, Alexandria per se. They would go into Alexandria, up Prince Street, and it would turn and come down King Street, go West on King Street, and then back out Commonwealth, and into the District.

B.M.:	Okay, so if you got on in...you could get on either way. You could go into Alexandria...
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, you could go to Alexandria, or D.C. It would stop, there's a couple stops. St. Elmo in Del Ray, Mt. Ida, it would stop there, and keep going, and it would stop before you got to the, what we used to call the Dump, but it wasn't the Alexandria Dump. [laughing] It would go down and cut across Commonwealth...where is this? Glebe Road, all the way across Glebe Road, and that way through, over the 14 <sup>th</sup> Street Bridge. It was a separate bridge.
B.M.:	A different bridge at that time.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah.
<b>Alexandria Versus Del Ray</b>	
Antoinette Fischman:	And it was not called Old Town Alexandria at that time.
B.M.:	Oh, what was it called?
Robert Fischman:	It was just called Alexandria! [laughing]
Antoinette Fischman:	His mother would call it Old Alexandry! [all laugh] Old Alexandry!
B.M.:	And that was considered...was Del Ray considered to be Alexandria at that time?
Robert Fischman:	Well, no. [inaudible]
Antoinette Fischman:	It was like a separate, yeah, it was a separate...
Robert Fischman:	We never went, hardly ever went into it. We used to go swimming at the pool in there.
B.M.:	The Cameron Street pool?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Yeah. That was the first thing, the only thing open. And of course they had the Boys Club there in Alexandria. And we didn't have anything in Del Ray. No Boys Club, or anything like that.
<b>Del Ray's Baseball Team in the 1920s and Robert's Uncle</b>	
Robert Fischman:	Here. I'll show you. This was my—this was the Del Ray baseball team. [showing an old newspaper photo of a baseball team]
B.M.:	And are you on this team?
Robert Fischman:	No, no...[laughing]
Antoinette Fischman:	That's way before his time!
Robert Fischman:	This is my uncle. That was Stunkle. Jim Stunkle.

B.M.:	Okay, he's in the middle row, the third one from the left, that's your uncle.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Mm hm. Yeah.
B.M.:	And so, Del Ray had its own baseball team.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, it was sort of a sandlot team, you know?
B.M.:	And who did they play?
Robert Fischman:	Oh, they played Groveton, and different places.
B.M.:	Local folks, localities...
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Yeah. And they were hard players, too. I mean, they weren't sissies! [laughing]
B.M.:	Did you go to the games?
Robert Fischman:	No, no, I wasn't born!
B.M.:	Oh, this was before...
Robert Fischman:	This was in the early [19]20s. [laughing]
B.M.:	Is this something I can...I'll take a photo of that later.
Antoinette Fischman:	There's a story about his uncle in this, his uncle Jim.
Robert Fischman:	He was a lieutenant on the Fire Department in Del Ray, on Windsor Avenue. At the Fire Department.
B.M.:	Okay, that was near where you lived.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, yeah, one block away. And he, they called the engine out, and he was standing too high on the engine. When it went out, it caught him on the head, and he flipped backwards and hit the concrete. And later on he died because of the hemorrhage.
B.M.:	Oh, how sad.
Antoinette Fischman:	But his name is on a plaque at that...
Robert Fischman:	They have a plaque there on the...
Antoinette Fischman:	In Del Ray. At the firehouse.
Robert Fischman:	In the firehouse.
B.M.:	Oh, that's wonderful. He's memorialized there.
Robert Fischman:	Mm hm. Jim Stunkle.
<b>The Koppa Girls</b>	
Robert Fischman:	And these were the Koppa girls. [laughing] [showing a newspaper photo of five or six young women, each with one leg



	in a high kick, like in a chorus line] They lived on Hume Avenue, every one of them, right there at the railroad track.
B.M.:	They're all sisters?
Robert Fischman:	They're all sisters. Yeah. [inaudible] them going to GW [George Washington] High School.
B.M.:	They're acting like they're in a chorus line! [all laugh] You went to high school with them?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, yeah.
B.M.:	This is from the <i>Alexandria Gazette</i> .
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, yeah they had all of those things.
B.M.:	I'd like to take photos of these, I hope you don't mind?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, sure.
<b>Raising Chickens at Home</b>	
B.M.:	Okay. So let's see, we've talked about your father, your mother, and—we talked about the house a little bit. You had, you said you had the City water and sewage, and you had electricity by then...
Robert Fischman:	We were the last people in Del Ray to have chickens.
B.M.:	Oh!
Robert Fischman:	[laughs]
B.M.:	Are we talking about a lot of chickens? [inaudible]
Robert Fischman:	Just chickens!
B.M.:	Chickens at all!
Robert Fischman:	Chickens! That's it! That's the grandfather! After these, no more! [all laugh]
Antoinette Fischman:	For frying chicken! [all laughing]
Robert Fischman:	That was our source of food, you know?
B.M.:	For eggs and the meat.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, yeah. We used to have a big chicken coop, and I'd go out and get the eggs, and everything.
B.M.:	Is this something you did as a little boy, or a little older.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah.
B.M.:	Kind of a chore.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, that was my grandmother's thing with me, to do the

	helping, you know.
<b>Family and Roomers in the Family Home</b>	
B.M.:	So did your grandparents live in the same house as you lived?
Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah. Yeah.
B.M.:	Okay, you lived there, and your brother? He was older?
Robert Fischman:	Older. Yeah. Three years older.
B.M.:	And your parents? And your grandparents. That's who lived there? That's a lot of people in the one house.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Hey, and then they rented rooms next door!
B.M.:	And so you had visitors all the time.
Robert Fischman:	We had 10, 12 people in one bath.
B.M.:	[laughs]
Antoinette Fischman:	Upstairs bath.
Robert Fischman:	An upstairs bath.
B.M.:	Did you socialize with the people who—the roomers? They were part of your social life?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Oh, well, it was divided off, that little room [showing the newspaper photo of the Windsor Avenue house]
B.M.:	This house.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. This part here was the extra apartment.
B.M.:	Okay, so the part looking at the front, the part that's out towards the right, the part that was added on you're saying, and that's where the rooming area was?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. And there was a living room, the kitchen, and a bedroom.
B.M.:	Now about how many roomers would you have at one time?
Robert Fischman:	Well, one family. And I think one time—1, 4, 5, 6, I think they had, there were six in one family.
B.M.:	Ah ha. [laughing]
Robert Fischman:	And we all—
B.M.:	All shared—
Robert Fischman:	Each shared that one bath [laughing]. That was in the [19]30s. [pause] And most people in Del Ray did rent rooms.
B.M.:	Oh, they did.

Robert Fischman:	Yes.
B.M.:	Okay, so that was an extra source of income?
Robert Fischman:	That was it. Sure.
B.M.:	Most of the people were railroad workers?
Robert Fischman:	Most of them were railroaders.
<b>The Harding House, Coal Subletters, and More on Coal Deliveries</b>	
B.M.:	Okay. Del Ray, did it have a lot of houses at that time?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, the bungalows. Everything was a porch and, like, a little bungalow, maybe twice or three times bigger than the garage. But that's the way it was. They weren't big houses. The biggest house that I remember was at Mount Vernon Avenue and Windsor, and that was the Harding house. And they had a—everybody was in the coal company...
B.M.:	People named Harding lived there? That's why you call it Harding house?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. They...everybody was subletting coal companies, or something, because they'd have a truck, and they'd go over to the Potomac Yard or someplace, and they'd get the coal, and then they would deliver it to people. So they were in business, you see. So everybody needed coal to heat.
B.M.:	And can you describe what this was like, getting the coal? Was this like, the whole shed was filled with coal?
Robert Fischman:	They would come out with half a load, a half a ton, or a full ton, and dump it. We'd open the shed door, and they'd have a, what was it, a type of a chute they'd fasten on, and the coal would come out, and go into a...
B.M.:	Pouring through... Was this something that, when you were kids, you liked to watch that?
Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah, big deal! I mean, it was, you'd end up with all the stove black on you, because of the soot.
<b>Robert's Mother's Walk to School as a Child</b>	
Antoinette Fischman:	I think you ought to talk about your mother as a child, having to walk to school. I think that would be very interesting because of where she lived. She was a child.
Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah. From Powhatan Street.
B.M.:	She went to Mount Vernon as well?
Robert Fischman:	She went to Mount Vernon, she would—and here's a five-year-

	old, six-year-old at the most, go from Powhatan Street across that rickety bridge. Sometimes the boards would be out! I mean, the footboards! Because I used to go across it myself, and have to jump, I mean—and the railroad cars are down below, going back and forth!
B.M.:	Oh my! That was a tall bridge.
Robert Fischman:	And she would leave the house there and go down Monroe, and down to DeWitt Avenue, okay? Well, the lady who owned all that property was named Hattie Duncan. She was a “bitchy old lady” as my mother would say it, because she would complain when us children would cross her property to get to DeWitt Avenue.
Antoinette Fischman:	And his mother had to walk through it to get to the school!
Robert Fischman:	All the way to Mount Vernon School yet, you see?
B.M.:	That’s a long walk.
Robert Fischman:	That’s a heck of a long walk. And you know, snow or anytime. And she would complain. She’d go down to the principals and raise Cain with them. She lived on the corner of Number 1 and Monroe. There was a big old house there. And that’s where she lived.
B.M.:	U.S. [Route]1 you mean?
Robert Fischman:	U.S. 1, that’s right.
Antoinette Fischman:	And his mother tried to avoid going through her property, walking to the school.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, she’d go all the way down. But the kids would...
B.M.:	..so she wouldn’t get yelled at...
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. All the way down there. And anyway, she’s—so they made a Poor House out of her house later on.
B.M.:	Oh, that’s where the Poor House was. I had heard of the Poor House, and I could not remember where it was.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. They did it from her house. I don’t think she would dedicate it, or give to it, I think she would probably sell it, but, if I knew Hattie Duncan, but...
Antoinette Fischman:	He had to bring that up, too...
Robert Fischman:	Because my mother, she sort of resented that all of her life, that this woman would complain to the principal, and she would call up to the principal’s office about it! That’s ridiculous! You know?

B.M.:	[laughing]
<b>Mount Vernon Elementary School and St. Rita's</b>	
Antoinette Fischman:	You might mention the generations from your mother going to the Mount Vernon School.
Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah. We're the third generation.
B.M.:	And where is this school? Is this the same...where is it...
Antoinette Fischman:	Mount Vernon Elementary.
B.M.:	Is it located the same as it is now?
Robert Fischman:	No.
Antoinette Fischman:	Mount Vernon Avenue.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Well...
B.M.:	Right. The same one that's there now.
Antoinette Fischman:	Yeah. Of course it's extended now. There's an older building.
Robert Fischman:	No, it isn't. No it isn't. This was the original school. [showing a newspaper clipping that has a church, a school, and a home]
B.M.:	Oh, my goodness.
Robert Fischman:	It was on Uhler Terrace and Mount Vernon.
B.M.:	It looks like a church!
Robert Fischman:	Well that's...
B.M.:	Oh, that's the church, I'm looking at the church, that's why...okay, here's the school...
Robert Fischman:	That's the school...this is the church...
B.M.:	About two stories...
Robert Fischman:	This is St. Rita's.
B.M.:	Oh, that's St. Rita's, okay.
Robert Fischman:	Well it's not on Russell Road. This was on Hickory Street.
B.M.:	Now what have I heard about St. Rita's? That there was some sort of chicken coop where they were doing something? Do you know anything about that? Someone else was interviewing. I'm sorry, I'm not remembering it well.
Robert Fischman:	But this was on Hickory, off of Mount Ida. Mount Ida.
B.M.:	That was St. Rita's.
Robert Fischman:	That was the original St. Rita's. And this was the Mount Vernon

	Elementary.
B.M.:	Mount Vernon School.
<b>Mr. Groves, Mount Ida, the Groves Family, and the Groves Home</b>	
B.M.:	And what is this? [pointing to the third structure in the photo]
Robert Fischman:	This was the mansion on, they said it's on the property. You see...
B.M.:	Yeah, that's why I'm confused, everything says it's on one property.
Robert Fischman:	A Mr. Groves lived in this house. And it was this, Mount Ida is Groves' subdivision. And when he subdivided it off for housing, all on Mount Ida hill, Uhler Terrace, [inaudible]...all through there...all the way down...[tape ends]
B.M.:	[first part of tape cut off]...the interview with Robert Fischman and Toni Fischman, Bob and Toni Fischman, and we're looking at some photos of Mount Ida, Virginia. I'm not sure when these are from, do you? There's not a date on it...
Robert Fischman:	It has to be before Mount Ida was sold, and that was back in, it could be 1910, 1912, something like that.
B.M.:	And this was Mount Vernon School here...
Robert Fischman:	This is Mount Vernon.
B.M.:	...when your grandmother went there?
Robert Fischman:	My mother.
B.M.:	When your mother went there.
Robert Fischman:	That's right. My mother went there, I went there, and my daughters went there. We are the only...no, there's another family named Morris. Bruce Morris. He died just a few years ago. But his mother went, he went, and his daughter went.
B.M.:	Another three-generations-in-Mount-Vernon-School family.
Robert Fischman:	And he lived on the same block on Uhler Terrace we lived in, in this house [showing a newspaper photo of another house]. That's across the street from this mansion [the one in the photo with the school and church]. That's where she [Toni] and I lived for twenty years. In that house.
B.M.:	So right across from that school, you two lived for twenty years. This was after you, well obviously, after you got married, but before you lived here.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. We had two or three houses before, but after that. But this

	house is across the street...Russell Road is here, we're on this side, and they're on the other side. This was Saint Mary's Girl's School.
B.M.:	Oh, okay, yes, I think one of the interviewees went to that school.
Robert Fischman:	This is where the nuns lived. And before the nuns, my schoolteacher, Ruth King, lived. Her father was a senator from Idaho or someplace, and she was my fourth-grade schoolteacher at Mount Vernon. And she lived there. They owned that house. The Groves family lived there originally, and back many years ago, there's families from GW lived there.
B.M.:	Is that right? So that's a very old house.
Robert Fischman:	Oh, in fact, Lincoln had dinner there.
B.M.:	Oh, is that right?
Robert Fischman:	I mean, he's been...
B.M.:	So does that house still exist today?
Robert Fischman:	Yes. There's two, four big houses in front.
B.M.:	I think you mentioned the location of that house, right?
Robert Fischman:	I don't know.
B.M.:	You can mention it again, if you remember it.
Robert Fischman:	It's on Russell Road, and it was Groves. They owned all that property, all the way down to Commonwealth. In fact, they built—the Groves people—built the Cavalier Hotel in Virginia Beach. The original one.
B.M.:	Oh, that's a very famous hotel.
Robert Fischman:	So it goes way back. That family goes way back. In fact, the Groves boy used to come down to take my aunt out. And my grandmother'd chase him out of there, in his Stutz-Bearcat.
B.M.:	[laughing] Stutz-Bearcat!
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, he had a Stutz-Bearcat! And my grandma just didn't like the way that boy was doing...
B.M.:	[laughing] He was living too fast!
Robert Fischman:	He was too, he was fast. That was the Groves boy. They didn't like that. And that's, yeah...but you have to understand, this property was put on the market about 1910 or whenever it was...
B.M.:	This whole property that included all these [inaudible]—the school, the church, and that house...

Robert Fischman:	Yeah, and it said “this house on the property”—Can you imagine, with those little bungalows? But it was across the street.
<b>When Russell Road Was a Path</b>	
Robert Fischman:	Actually, Russell Road hardly was there. It was like a path. Because...
B.M.:	Oh, is that right? It was not a paved road at that time?
Robert Fischman:	No, no, not at all. Because the Loudon sisters told me one time—they lived down the street from me—they were two older ladies, never got married, they worked for the government all their lives, and they owned, about, oh, eight or nine houses they owned on my street.
B.M.:	On Windsor Avenue?
Robert Fischman:	No, on Uhler Terrace.
Antoinette Fischman:	On Uhler Terrace.
Robert Fischman:	This is right across the street from this...
B.M.:	Oh, you lived in this house [pointing to the newspaper photo].
Robert Fischman:	No, no.
B.M.:	I’m getting confused.
Robert Fischman:	No, I’m in this house.
B.M.:	Oh, okay. Yeah, that’s what I meant. This is the house I meant. I was just looking at the wrong picture. Where you and your wife lived.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. And they used to come up and talk to us all the time in our living room, and one died, and the other one was saying “this was before Russell Road.” [laughing]. There was a path, so to speak, that was Russell Road. But...
<b>Mount Vernon, George Mason, and George Washington Schools</b>	
B.M.:	Did this school look like this when you went there?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. You see...
B.M.:	Okay, and by the time your daughter...
Robert Fischman:	Well, next door here, was George Mason High School.
B.M.:	Oh, right next to it. There’s a different building that it’s in now.
Robert Fischman:	Actually, it’s in, this is no longer there. But George Mason is now Mount Vernon School.
B.M.:	Okay. This was located where Mount Vernon School is now, and



	George Mason, there were two buildings near each other?
Robert Fischman:	Well, this was on the corner of Uhler Terrace, I mean Uhler Avenue, and Mount Vernon. Down the street on Mount Vernon Avenue a little further was another big building which housed the high school. This was the grammar school...
B.M.:	Okay. And years later...do you remember when that moved to where it is now? George Mason is...
Robert Fischman:	George Mason is...Well no, I went to grammar school in George Mason Annex. It was Mount Vernon Annex. This was the main school, and we called...you see when they built GW High School, that was built in [19]39. No, I'm sorry, [19]35. Their first graduating class was [19]39. So that was built in [19]35. They had to...If you lived in Alexandria, you went to Alexandria High School. That was on West Street.
B.M.:	And you went to George Mason, or the Mount Vernon Annex?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, I went to both. I went from here, over to, after the fourth or fifth grade—this was first, second, and third grade, and then we went to the fourth and fifth and sixth and seventh grade at George Mason Annex.
B.M.:	Okay. And then was there another—did you go to high school beyond that?
Robert Fischman:	No, we went right into high school. No junior high.
B.M.:	So that was called—
Robert Fischman:	George Mason Annex, or Mount Vernon Annex.
B.M.:	And that was fourth, fifth, and sixth, and seventh. That was high school?
Robert Fischman:	No.
B.M.:	Okay, I'm confused.
Robert Fischman:	You see, they did away with the high school after that. They did away with the high school from here. When I was going here, there were cadets and everything. They used that George Mason as the high school. So many years later, which I can't say exactly, they were no longer there, and then we went over there in the fourth, fifth, and sixth and seventh grade. You see?
B.M.:	I think I've got it. You went here for the first, second, third.
Robert Fischman:	...third grade...
B.M.:	You didn't have kindergarten then?

Robert Fischman:	No, they didn't have kindergarten.
B.M.:	No kindergarten. And then, you went to George Mason which was then fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, that was the Annex. They did away with the high school because GW opened up in [19]35.
B.M.:	Okay, and then you went to GW.
Robert Fischman:	Then we went to GW after the seventh grade.
B.M.:	And did that go to twelfth grade at that time? Some people talked about it going to eleventh.
Robert Fischman:	You mean the high school?
B.M.:	The high school.
Robert Fischman:	Now, that I don't know...
<b>Leaving High School to Join the Service</b>	
Robert Fischman:	...I went in the service. Everyone was quitting high school...
B.M.:	[inaudible] at that age...
Robert Fischman:	We were 17.
B.M.:	You were hearing...we didn't talk a lot about where you were growing up, some of the activities you did as children, but you can fill those in if you think of it and places that you went as a child. And now we're kind of like, you're just before young adult, you're kind of high school age at this point...and so, you're hearing, was there a lot of talk about the war at that time?
Robert Fischman:	No, no talk about the war.
B.M.:	Everyone just went into the service?
Robert Fischman:	After Pearl Harbor. See, that was in [19]41. I was 16. And in April of [19]42, I was 17. And everybody was going in the service. And I went in the Navy at 17. And I was in the Navy and I stayed aboard the U.S.S Texas, for almost four years.
<b>Horseback Riding and the Swimming Hole</b>	
Robert Fischman:	But around what we used to do, activity, was, we used to go riding horses.
B.M.:	In Del Ray?
Robert Fischman:	Well, over in Seminary, right where the hospital is now. We used to ride horses through there.
B.M.:	Oh, that's wonderful.

Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah. The Shirley Highway wasn't there. And we used to swim "nekkid" right there at Shirley Highway and Four Mile Run! Because we used to dam it up, and that's where we'd all swim. Before the Alexandria Swimming Pool!
B.M.:	Somebody dammed that?
Robert Fischman:	Oh, yeah, us guys would dam it!
B.M.:	Oh, you guys dammed it, to make a swimming hole!
Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah, water would just come rushing through, so we'd just dam it up and swim in it.
B.M.:	Oh, that's just wonderful. [interviewer and Antoinette Fischman laugh] And you went horseback riding. Somebody had a stable there?
Robert Fischman:	They had the stables. The family—oh, what was it, it was a German family right on Seminary Road there, way back in, had a house and had all horses and all kinds. And they would rent horses to you for a dollar a day, you know. But you could go out for hours...
B.M.:	You didn't need to have any training or anything, just go on the horse.
Robert Fischman:	Oh no, no! You want to ride, you just get on. We also used to ride, they used to have stables where the Pentagon is.
B.M.:	Oh, is that right?
Robert Fischman:	Well, right—you know where Macy's is?
B.M.:	Oh, yeah, at Pentagon City?
Robert Fischman:	At Pentagon City. There was a stable there. And we used to ride...
B.M.:	Okay because I heard that where the Pentagon is there used to be an airport?
Robert Fischman:	Hoover Airport. And we used to swim at the airport swimming pool. They used to have a beautiful pool. I mean, athletes from all over used to come there for the diving boards.
<b>Hitchhiking and Riding the AB&amp;W Bus</b>	
B.M.:	How did you get to these places?
Robert Fischman:	Hitchhike.
B.M.:	Were there a lot of cars on the road?
Robert Fischman:	Not too many, but they would pick you up and drop you off

	[inaudible]. And sometimes we could take the—now, you see, the bus company, Mr. May and his wife, started the AB&W Bus Company—Alexandria, Barcroft, and Washington. And they lived on Russell Road. Mr. May. At Braddock and Russell, they lived there. It's a church now. And he and his wife used to drive the buses. His wife used to drive the buses.
B.M.:	And where did these buses go?
Robert Fischman:	They went from Alexandria to [Washington,] D.C. And back.
B.M.:	How much? Did you ride those buses sometimes?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Mm-hm.
B.M.:	How much did it cost? Do you remember?
Robert Fischman:	I don't know if it was 20 cents, or something like that, 15 cents.
<b>Segregation on the Bus at the Virginia Line</b>	
Robert Fischman:	But I do know that—and another thing, they had, you know, talking about, what's-her-name, that wouldn't sit down...
B.M.:	Rosa Parks?
Robert Fischman:	I used to get so embarrassed, you know, because once we got on this side of the bridge, the 14 <sup>th</sup> Street Bridge...
Antoinette Fischman:	Virginia side.
Robert Fischman:	All the blacks have to go to the back of the bus.
B.M.:	Oh my, that's where segregation would begin...so they didn't have it in the city...
Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah. They would stop the bus; everybody...they would all get in the back of the bus. It was like a, and it was just automatic, you know?
B.M.:	That was just the way it was at the time.
<b>At Hoover Airport: Shantytown and Blimp Rides</b>	
Robert Fischman:	And where the Pentagon is right now, there used to be completely city, a slum city. It was bad in there. It was just shantytown. And when they started to build the Pentagon, everything had to go.
B.M.:	They wiped all that out...
Robert Fischman:	They wiped it all out. From Arlington Ridge Road all the way down.
B.M.:	Do you remember when that was?
Robert Fischman:	I don't know...well, it had to be about that time, because I went in the service in April/May of [19]42, and I don't remember, I

	remember going through it with the AB&W bus. We used to go through...if you wanted to catch the Arlington Ridge Road bus, you had to go through that area.
B.M.:	Go through that town.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. But if you went through Number 1, it would go the other way.
B.M.:	Were these people natives of the area...or were they people who came in? Hoboes, or workers, who lived there?
Robert Fischman:	You mean the people who lived there? No, no, they worked in around everywhere, and they caught the bus as well, getting in and out, maybe in D.C. as well. But that was right at the entrance of the Hoover Airport. And for five dollars, which, nobody has five dollars, they'd take you on a blimp ride.
B.M.:	[laughing] From the airport?
Robert Fischman:	From the airport. Around D.C.
B.M.:	Did you...
Robert Fischman:	No, no.
B.M.:	...[inaudible] quite an experience...
Robert Fischman:	Oh, yeah, yeah. [inaudible] It was a blimp!
<b>Watching Water Turn to Land for the New Airport</b>	
B.M.:	Were there many planes flying over at the time?
Robert Fischman:	Not too many. They had these old biplanes and propellers. And this buddy of mine, his name was Douglas Drake, he lived next door. He got killed in the service in Australia. He was in the Submarine Corps. We went in the Navy together. But we would walk from where we lived over to where the airport is right now, and watch them fill in the water with trucks, because that's all fill-in. That wasn't land there. See?
Antoinette Fischman:	The new airport now...
Robert Fischman:	Reagan Airport.
Antoinette Fischman:	That's all filled-in land.
Robert Fischman:	We used to go in there and watch them fill in land and what-have-you, we'd catch carp, fish, and all kinds of stuff.
<b>Walking on the Railroad Trestles</b>	
Robert Fischman:	And we had to walk across those trestles. This was the train trestle. Because that's how Alexandria got its coal, is from West Virginia, and it came down Glebe Road, the train tracks came

	down Glebe Road, and all the way through Del Ray, crossed Hume, and the back way, and it went across the trestle, into Alexandria, and then it went through Tunnel Town and came back...
B.M.:	Tunnel Town?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. That's down off of, what is it, Wythe Street?...no, not Wythe.
B.M.:	Wilkes?
Robert Fischman:	Wilkes. It's a tunnel. You can walk through it now. But they used to have tracks.
B.M.:	And you walked on the trestle. That sounds a little dangerous. [laughing]
Robert Fischman:	Oh, it's very dangerous, because the trains would come. They weren't, they weren't, you know, really flying, but we'd have to climb out on the telephone pole until they'd pass, and then we could get back on the trestle. They wouldn't stop. I mean, they'd just keep on going. But we'd go across the trestle that way, walking across the, oh, what do you call it, the train, not the tracks, but, the wood, the...
B.M.:	The ties?
Robert Fischman:	The ties. Yeah. And of course there was nothing, it was down, all the way. One of my friends, in fact he's dead now, Bobby Lunsford, he was a policeman for many years, and he drove a motorcycle, and we dared him to drive his bike across the trestle, and he fell off and broke his leg...
B.M.:	Oh my goodness.
Robert Fischman:	...and went down on the, down into...
B.M.:	Did he fall all the way down?
Robert Fischman:	Oh, all the way. He went all the way down. So he [inaudible]...
Antoinette Fischman:	He has the spike, the original spike that...
Robert Fischman:	I have a couple spikes.
Antoinette Fischman:	Yeah, you should show her that. That's the old railroad spike. He has that.
Robert Fischman:	They're from Glebe Road. Spikes...
Antoinette Fischman:	They're interesting.
B.M.:	Oh, that's wonderful.
<b>Art School and Robert's Award-Winning Dress Designs</b>	

B.M.:	I do want to get to talking about your business. You started when you got back from the war, or?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, I went to art school, and I took up...
B.M.:	Was that in Alexandria, or?
Robert Fischman:	No, in D.C. National Art School, on Massachusetts Avenue. 20 <sup>th</sup> and Massachusetts. And I was taking dress designing. And we first opened up a studio at Dupont Circle. Just a dress designing studio.
B.M.:	When you say "we"?
Robert Fischman:	A group of a couple students and the teacher. And that didn't last too long because they dug the underpass through Dupont Circle. And it just killed everything in the whole circle. Nobody could get in, nobody could get out, so we just left it and took off. And I knew a lot about tailoring, and so...
B.M.:	From that school you learned about it?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, I learned tailoring and patternmaking. And I won a scholarship for Magda School of Design in D.C., 20 <sup>th</sup> and, what was it, 20 <sup>th</sup> and I Street. 20 <sup>th</sup> and I. And I couldn't learn anything there, so I knew more than anything else, so they asked me to teach. So I was teaching patternmaking and...
B.M.:	At Magda.
Robert Fischman:	At Magda. And then I left there and...
Antoinette Fischman:	His designs were on the original Capitol Stage in competition with artists and designers from all over the area...
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, [inaudible] fashion shows...
B.M.:	These were dresses.
Robert Fischman:	Dresses.
Antoinette Fischman:	And he won the top prize, and all his designs were displayed on the old Capitol Stage on F Street in D.C.
B.M.:	Oh, that's wonderful.
Antoinette Fischman:	Then he became a Professor of Design at the Magda.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah.
<b>Robert's, Ltd., Opens on King Street</b>	
B.M.:	You were still pretty young at this stage.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, yeah. But I wanted to do something, you know, and it was like being stagnant. So anyway, a friend of mine was opening a

	custom shop in Alexandria. And he called me. A boy I went to school with. Bill Mashburn. And there was a friend of his which was backing him, a Jimmy Mickleback—Mickleback's Furniture Store in Alexandria on King Street was there for many, many years. In fact, they—there was Hayman's Ladies' Wear, and Jimmy, they backed this fellow. And I was there to do the tailoring. So he called me and asked me if I wanted to do it, and with a perfect setup, I said, "Yeah, I'll do it." So about a year or so later I went across the street for myself, I said, I'm not gonna stay...
Antoinette Fischman:	That was 711 King Street. Second floor.
B.M.:	711 King Street.
Robert Fischman:	Second floor. I first opened up...
B.M.:	Oh, was that—what was the name of your store?
Robert Fischman:	Robert's. Robert's, Ltd.
Antoinette Fischman:	L-T-D.
<b>Buying the South Royal Building and Losing It to Urban Renewal</b>	
Robert Fischman:	And then after that, I was looking further, and I bought this building from...
Antoinette Fischman:	Fowler.
Robert Fischman:	Henry Fowler, on Royal Street. 107 South Royal.
B.M.:	South Royal Street.
Robert Fischman:	And I stayed in there for a few years.
B.M.:	And Henry Fowler was...
Robert Fischman:	He was the Secretary of Treasury at the time. And so then Urban Renewal come out, and they took my building, and I had to move.
B.M.:	And when you said they took your building, what's...
Robert Fischman:	Eminent domain...
B.M.:	This was a federal program?
Robert Fischman:	No. Alexandria.
B.M.:	Or was this was something the City of Alexandria was doing, it was like a City Council decision?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah.
B.M.:	And what was—their intent was that they were going to rebuild, that?



Robert Fischman:	They were going to redo the downtown area. City Hall area. And so Judge...
B.M.:	Okay. There was like a few blocks in that whole area, and everybody had to go?
Robert Fischman:	That's it. Yeah. Everybody but certain people. Like certain—like the banks, they didn't go. Certain things had to stay, but everything else was wiped out. Mostly all the—there was a few attorneys and a few real estate brokers, and little shops...
B.M.:	Did they tear down the building that you had?
Robert Fischman:	They tore down everything.
B.M.:	The building that you were in?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah.
<b>Treasures and a Walk-Through Attic in the South Royal Building</b>	
B.M.:	Is that where this vase came from? [Robert has brought to the interview a vase with the Alexander name on it—verified as Alexandria's original Alexander at the Alexandria Archaeology Museum—that he found on this property at an earlier time]
Robert Fischman:	Yeah.
B.M.:	During that process of tearing down?
Robert Fischman:	No, no, I found it down there before that.
B.M.:	While you were there.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah.
B.M.:	So it looks quite a bit different now than when you were there.
Robert Fischman:	Well my building is the rear end of the Holiday Inn. [laughs]
B.M.:	Of where the Holiday Inn is now?
Robert Fischman:	That's right. Where the Holiday Inn is now.
Antoinette Fischman:	Tell her the age of your building.
Robert Fischman:	Oh, it was, it was old.
B.M.:	I don't know if it's, it might be in here. This is a... [Interviewer has brought to the interview a book published in the [19]70s of photos of historic buildings in Alexandria.]
Robert Fischman:	I doubt it.
B.M.:	This was from the [19]70s. She did a wonderful job taking pictures of a lot of the buildings. But we can look later.

Robert Fischman:	It was 107 South Royal. And it was old, I'll tell you that, because there was a marble stair right in the front, and it was like that [gesturing with his hands]. I mean, it was old. I know, because...
Antoinette Fischman:	Tell her about the attic, how it went from one house to the other. We discovered that.
Robert Fischman:	You know, I never did go up on the third floor. I was so busy all the time, and then it was cut off. And then one day, we got ladders and we went up on the third floor. It was all wallpapered with the <i>Alexandria Gazette</i> —turn of the century. And they used it, they used it as insulation, because, you know, paper is good insulation. But it was the <i>Alexandria Gazette</i> . And somebody said, "Well you know why that it was the <i>Alexandria Gazette</i> ? Because the <i>Alexandria Gazette</i> originated in back of that building and another building on King Street." And I said, "Well I didn't know that." And he said, "Well, he took all that newspaper and everything, and brought it in, and used it." And then the <i>Alexandria Gazette</i> was on King Street, in the 300 block of King Street. That's the way it always was.
<b>Receiving the <i>Alexandria Gazette</i> Abroad in World War II</b>	
B.M.:	We're talking now about the [19]50s, or, is that what we're talking about, or are we talking about much earlier than that?
Robert Fischman:	Let me see. [19]50s I bought the building. In the [19]50s I bought that building. In the [19]60s I had the retail business on Washington Street. So it was the [19]50s. But the <i>Alexandria Gazette</i> I used to get daily when I was in the service. They used to pile up sometimes.
B.M.:	You received it where you were?
Robert Fischman:	I received it. My mother used to send it to me.
B.M.:	Was it different than it is today?
Robert Fischman:	Oh, yeah, it was strictly the Alexandria—the oldest daily newspaper in the country. At the time.
B.M.:	What type of things were in there? Was it like local gossip, or...
Robert Fischman:	Everything local. Well, some outside stuff, you know, but, the big things, somebody got hit on the head or something, that was a big thing, but yeah, sometimes if I reached—get into a port, and all of a sudden I'd get a couple dozen newspapers! [laughing] Yeah! It would follow me around! And they would do that at that time. But...
<b>More About Treasures and the Attic On South Royal</b>	



*Vase/jug Fischman found in the attic on S. Royal*

B.M.:	So the attics went through? Is that it? They went from your...
Robert Fischman:	We went up there, and I found an old, you know the big wheeled bicycle, and the little wheel in the attic, I found a lot of parts to old bicycle, and I found two right boots. And somebody told me, and they were, they had a what-do-you-call them in it. A...
B.M.:	A bootjack?
Robert Fischman:	A boot...yeah, it was a thing that you had to pull out, it kept the boots straight. But they said they didn't have right and left boots at that time.
B.M.:	Oh, is that right?
Robert Fischman:	I said, "My god, that must have hurt!" You know? But...
Antoinette Fischman:	Talking about the boots?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. But that's what the guy told me. He said they didn't have, they were always straight. And it was just two of them. And I gave them to somebody. I don't know what, who they were.
B.M.:	And where did you find this object? The vase, pottery...[pointing to the vase that Robert brought to the interview]
Robert Fischman:	I found that one down in the basement when we were getting what was it, oil one time.
B.M.:	It was just sitting...
Robert Fischman:	It was converted into oil. And, because they had a coal bin in the front, too. Everyone in Old Town had a coal bin, a chute going into the basement. But they all seemed to have a way out of their house. Now like, this attic, you could go all the way down the end of the block. They was just little attic, like that, you could go

	and get out that way. I don't know why, or who or where, why...
B.M.:	Interesting. So these were like, these buildings were like row-house-type buildings, all together, but you could go all the way across in the attic.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. I got up there and I— my god, people could go and, into somebody else's house! You know, and [inaudible]
B.M.:	And you didn't even know it!
Robert Fischman:	I didn't even know it! I mean, they could steal from you, you know, you don't know.
<b>Tunnel in a House on Captain's Row</b>	
Robert Fischman:	And then I, years and years later, well, when I got out of the service, not only did I get, I had to go to work, but I was selling real estate. This was in [19]50, 1952.
B.M.:	This was in Alexandria?
Robert Fischman:	In, in Arlington. And I had this old house in Captain's Row for sale. And I went down in the basement, down in the cellar. And there was a tunnel all the way out. A tunnel, all the way out, that a person could escape. And this was a captain's house! So people were always after people, it seems like. They always had to have an escape route.
B.M.:	A way to get out.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah.
B.M.:	Or [inaudible], maybe, too, I don't know.
Robert Fischman:	I don't know. Bootlegging, or something. You don't know what, if they wanted to come in or get out. It's like the immigration thing. You dig a hole and a tunnel to get out. But, or, somebody's coming in that's not supposed to be there! [laughing]
<b>Robert's, Ltd., Stores on South Washington and Quaker Lane</b>	
B.M.:	I have a feeling this tape is probably about to run out and I'm wondering, do you want to go on a few more minutes? Are you— this, we usually just go for an hour, you know. [inaudible]
Antoinette Fischman:	Well, he has a lot more.
Robert Fischman:	Well, I don't know, what? That's about it, I mean...
Antoinette Fischman:	Well, South Washington Street.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, I opened up a retail store on South Washington Street, 6-0...

Antoinette Fischman:	600, 6-0-2, 6-0-4.
Robert Fischman:	I had three buildings there.
Antoinette Fischman:	South Washington.
Robert Fischman:	And I bought the buildings. And right across from Demaine's Funeral Home.
B.M.:	What was the name? Across from Demaine's. And what was the name of your...
Robert Fischman:	Robert's, Ltd.
B.M.:	Robert's, Ltd? Okay, same thing.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Uh-huh. And then I opened up a branch at Fairlington. I opened up another store...
B.M.:	Is this where the Fairlington Shopping Center is?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Mm-hmm, on Quaker Lane.
B.M.:	Was this in Arlington, or Alexandria at the time?
Robert Fischman:	Alexandria.
<b>The Corner on South Washington Street</b>	
B.M.:	This is tape [side] 3 of the interview with Bob and Toni Fischman. Okay, and, where were we? We were talking about you, your businesses...
Robert Fischman:	Oh. I had the retail business on, in Fairlington, as well. And I stayed in there until in the [19]70s. We sold the retail business, and I just went into tailoring. And I've been doing that ever since. You know, I started in Alexandria, and so it's been...almost 55 years in Alexandria.
B.M.:	And Toni was mentioning about a house with, a [inaudible] house...
Robert Fischman:	The house that we bought, it, all the small houses were on the east side of Washington Street. It seemed like...
B.M.:	This house? [pointing to one of the clippings]
Robert Fischman:	No, no. No. These [in the clippings] were Del Ray and Russell Road. I'm talking about where I had the business.
B.M.:	Oh, I'm sorry. Yes.
Robert Fischman:	When we had the business...
B.M.:	On Royal Street?
Robert Fischman:	On, no, on Washington Street. The bigger houses were on the

	west side of Washington Street. If you ever, well you wouldn't go down there, you'd go down and see, but it was on the east side, it seems like...
Antoinette Fischman:	This is a picture. [showing a plastic bag printed with a picture of the building and the address]
Robert Fischman:	That was on the corner.
B.M.:	Ah-ha. It's a bag from the store.
Robert Fischman:	What is it? That's when somebody else—I rented it out to somebody. This was on the corner. I put this window in and everything. But, yeah.
B.M.:	So Robert's had put this, this window in...
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. I redid this whole building.
B.M.:	...this bay window, or whatever this large...
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. This was a house at one time, and I converted it over into a store, and I owned two buildings on this side of it. [pointing to the side of the store on the bag]
<b>Mr. Baltimore</b>	
Antoinette Fischman:	But Baltimore was the name of the man that he bought this corner from...
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Mr. Baltimore. He did all the...
Antoinette Fischman:	...and he was an old-timer there.
Robert Fischman:	He was a black man, and he owned a television repair store next to it.
B.M.:	Okay, on Washington Street. South Washington Street.
Robert Fischman:	On this side. In...[pointing to the side of the store on the bag]
B.M.:	It would be like 700 South Washington, or something like that?
Robert Fischman:	No, it was on Gibbon Street.
B.M.:	Gibbon Street. Okay.
Robert Fischman:	His store was on Gibbon Street.
B.M.:	Oh, South. I'm thinking North instead of South. Yeah, okay.
Robert Fischman:	He was on the side street. And he did all the sounding, I hear, in old Alexandria City Hall. He did originally, did the sound, all kinds of amplifiers and stuff that went into City Hall.
B.M.:	Oh, the entire sound system?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, into City Hall, as I remember, because he was very good in

	electronics.
B.M.:	And what was his?
Robert Fischman:	His name was Baltimore. Mr. Baltimore. And what I paid for that building there he built himself a beautiful home [all laugh] in back of it on the other side.
B.M.:	Still in that same area.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. I was looking here, and it showed, where was it, Odell, but I had something here.
Antoinette Fischman:	Roberts Memorial Church is next to [inaudible] Robert's here...
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, there's a black church next to it...Roberts...black...
Antoinette Fischman:	...and that's an old church, black church.
Robert Fischman:	Roberts Memorial. It had to have the same name!
B.M.:	Good advertising!
<b>Hume Spring and the Calvert Estate</b>	
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, and I wanted to tell you about the Hume Spring. We used to go there as kids, this friend of mine, Douglas Drake. He and I used to go up there and it was where Warwick Village is? Okay. There was no houses...
B.M.:	That was called Hume Spring at the time?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. There was no houses there at all, it was just woods. And there was an old, there was a mansion up in there. And it was, you know, the ladies owned a painting in there, it was of Lord Calvert, of Calvert Whisky? And the Lord Calvert, they had a painting in there that was supposed to be worth a million dollars at that time. And we used to go up there and they used to have cannonballs and all kinds of stuff we used to roll down the hill and...
B.M.:	Now, do you mean you just found these things around or they were...
Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah, they were piled up in front of the...
B.M.:	Just lying around [inaudible...]
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. And...just up there and then we would go up there and get them, and they were heavy, too, extremely heavy. But they had a caretaker and they used to chase us off. But right at the corner of Hume Avenue and Mount Vernon, there used to be big gates. There were big gates to go up into that house.
B.M.:	Oh, to go into that house. So all those houses that are there now

	just didn't exist.
Robert Fischman:	They weren't there. There was woods.
B.M.:	Those row houses and all that, that did not exist at this time.
Robert Fischman:	Nothing was there. Only...
B.M.:	It was all woods and this one house.
Robert Fischman:	It was from that point all the way over to almost Russell Road. All the way, it was nothing but woods. It was no houses.
B.M.:	We're talking—what time frame are we talking about here?
Robert Fischman:	In the [19]30s.
B.M.:	[19]30s. Okay.
Robert Fischman:	Parkfairfax wasn't there.
Antoinette Fischman:	Warwick Village was not there.
Robert Fischman:	No. Nothing in Warwick Village. And you see, that's the reason why they put that, the title the Calvert Building there on Mount Vernon Avenue, is because of the Calvert Estate. You see?
B.M.:	I see. So is this like the Calvert Restaurant or something...
Robert Fischman:	That's right, exactly. And it coincides, I mean, let's see, I just wanted you to know about that.
<b>Livestock in the Neighborhood</b>	
Robert Fischman:	Oh, and Mrs....we were the last ones, I told you, that, to have chickens?
B.M.:	Yes.
Robert Fischman:	Mrs. Dyson on the corner of Clyde and Custis was the last one to have a cow.
B.M.:	Oh! [laughing] So there were cows in the neighborhood, around the neighborhood, when you were growing up.
Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah. Oh yeah.
B.M.:	Pigs and things like that?
Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah. Everybody had...
B.M.:	A lot of people had livestock, right in their yards.
Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah. I mean, you lived on your own property at that time. I guess people slaughtered their own.
B.M.:	Yeah, meaning, you had a lot of your livelihood on your property. Your food, and your animals [inaudible]



Robert Fischman:	Yeah. My grandfather had corn and everything. I mean, there wasn't anything that he didn't grow, it seemed like. But we had chickens, and some ducks and what-have-you, but a goose...but, and I remember when they filled in the, either the well area, in back of the house, because it always would go down.
B.M.:	The water?
Robert Fischman:	The earth! It would go down, and have to fill more dirt in it, you know? It kind of settled down, and the back steps in off the porch?
<b>Robert's Grandmother's Beer</b>	
Robert Fischman:	But my grandmother used to make beer...
B.M.:	Oh, she did?
Robert Fischman:	In the [19]30s, from that house, and, and I...
B.M.:	She made her own beer?
Robert Fischman:	Oh, yeah. You could make it for your own consumption.
B.M.:	Not for sale, it was for your own...
Robert Fischman:	...consumption. Yeah.
B.M.:	Do you remember any of that? [inaudible]
Robert Fischman:	Oh, yeah. I used to put the tops on. I used to put the tops on.
B.M.:	You did?
Robert Fischman:	Oh, yeah. We'd have a block of wood.
B.M.:	Kegs? Barrel or something?
Robert Fischman:	No, we used to have a block of wood, and with this little instrument that put the bottle under it and I put the top and I'd pull the top down and make the top, you know the, when you'd open it up with the opener? It wasn't any cans, but it was just bottles that she'd scald and put new beer in. "Always back the bottle," she'd say! But her biggest—they weren't customers, it was for their own consumption, and she'd always have an icebox on the back porch, and we'd have an iceman would come by from Mecca Ice Company, across that bridge. I think they still sell ice.
B.M.:	Really?
Robert Fischman:	They must, because they fill ice cars, trains, they used to fill them full of ice, and it was Mecca Ice Company. And they used to come by a couple times a week to see how much ice you wanted, and you'd have it in your window, if you wanted five pounds or ten pounds, you'd have a little arrow. And they would come and

	put it on the back porch, and, and that was it. But the police used to come on our, would drive up and park their car, they would get out of the car and come on our back porch and get a couple beers and sit out there in the car and have a beer, and there was a little sign there, "Please bring back the bottle!" [all laugh] And they'd drink it and they'd leave. But...
<b>Robert's Mother's Death</b>	
Antoinette Fischman:	His mother died in that house.
B.M.:	Oh, she did?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. And you know when she died? Today, 30 years ago. Today, 30 years ago.
Antoinette Fischman:	October 31, Halloween, is when she died.
Robert Fischman:	She died on Halloween night, my father's birthday. And they're both buried in Arlington. And it was the oddest thing, because she fell down the steps in that house, and I think she tripped over the dog, and landed face down, and, and she died, right there.
B.M.:	That's very sad.
Robert Fischman:	And, because we were called in the following morning. We tried to get her all night, and the phone was busy. She tried to get on the phone. And, but, like I said, she died in that house. And it was...
<b>Making Ends Meet During the Great Depression</b>	
Antoinette Fischman:	And they raised canaries in that house.
B.M.:	They did? To sell, or?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Yeah. They did everything to make a dollar during the Depression.
B.M.:	That was everybody...
Robert Fischman:	Everybody did everything. The man up the street made pies. Everybody made something, or did something to sell to get an extra...
Antoinette Fischman:	One man made potato chips, and sold them.
Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah, yeah.
B.M.:	I heard there was a potato chip factory in Del Ray at a later time. This was probably later than that, right?
Robert Fischman:	Well, well, this man, I can't think of it, but he also made potato, not only potato chips, but he used to buy the kosher pickles by the barrel. And he would wrap them up and...

B.M.:	Louis? Louie something? Somebody was talking about this...
Robert Fischman:	But he has a place between Bellefonte and Howell, in back of that Mexican restaurant. He, he went in business there.
Antoinette Fischman:	Los Amigos. In back of that.
B.M.:	In back of where that is today.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. But he did everything. But it was on Oxford Avenue, originally.
Robert Fischman:	He had a...I remember it because this girl, see back in that day, children weren't, it wasn't compulsory to go to school at a certain age. Some kids were—then all of a sudden, they had to go to school.
B.M.:	Do you remember when it started, when they suddenly had to?
Robert Fischman:	I don't know, but it was about the same time I started going to school, because, because all of a sudden there were...
Antoinette Fischman:	That would be 19, 1930, I would expect.
Robert Fischman:	...12-year-olds in the second or third grade, you know, that had just come into the school system. And then...
B.M.:	That's interesting, you went to school with, in your same class there were kids who were...
Robert Fischman:	Older. Yeah. And there was one boy on the Patrol, and he must have been 12, 13 years old, and here we were all 6 and 7 years old, but they got him because he was a big boy and he could guide you across the street. But he was in the same grade. But then all of a sudden they would catch up. They would find out how smart they were, and then they would put them in a different grade, you see, to where they were, but they were just coming into the system, you see?
Robert Fischman:	So this girl, that I remember working in that potato chip place. She was a beautiful girl, I mean she was, I mean in her teens. And she worked for this guy, potato chips, and wrapping pickles and everything, and we would always stand outside and get the burnt ones. [all laugh] Yeah! It was right there at Oxford and Mount Vernon, behind the bank there. But they would shave the potatoes and everything, and have, the grills are going, and he'd package them, and staple them in himself, and just sell them for 2 or 3 cents.  Everybody had something going, you know? And it was good. I mean, they didn't have to, no tax problem, because that's all they'd have to do, is get into those little people, you know? But

	<p>everybody was trying to make a nickel. And the man down the street...</p> <p>But that's when Mount Vernon Avenue was, was something. We used to, when we were kids, we would go into the, we used to call them Holy Rollies. You know? They would put up tents, and they would do it for money, I know they would do it for money.</p>
Antoinette Fischman:	Where was that?
Robert Fischman:	<p>On, well on Mount Vernon Avenue, right there, there's a car lot there now, I think, but on, at, Mason Avenue. Mason and Mount Vernon. Used to be a big lot there. And they used to put up tents. Like on Terrett Avenue. Down on Terrett Avenue, they had a big vacant lot down there and they would always put tents up and do some preaching.</p>
B.M.:	Like a revival type of...
Robert Fischman:	<p>That's right, and they would sing and everything, and these guys would go around and get the money, you see? And it was a money-making thing, let's face it. And we used to get underneath the tents and listen and watch them, and see if anybody was going to drop any money. [all laugh]</p>
<b>Dance Marathons in Washington, D.C.</b>	
Robert Fischman:	<p>Oh, and we went, when we were kids, my grandmother and mother would take my brother and I to the marathons. And that was at Riverside, in D.C.</p>
B.M.:	Are we talking about running—people running?
Robert Fischman:	No, dancing.
Antoinette Fischman and B.M.:	Dancing marathons!
Robert Fischman:	They would dance until they would drop.
B.M.:	Oh yes, and this was called the Riverside, that was the name of it?
Antoinette Fischman:	Riverside.
B.M.:	And is this where [inaudible]...
Robert Fischman:	You know where the Watergate is, in D.C.?
B.M.:	Yes.
Robert Fischman:	Right there.
B.M.:	That's where it was. And you went to that. You went to...
Robert Fischman:	We went to that. My grandmother used to take us over there on

	the streetcar.
B.M.:	You traveled by car, you went on the streetcar?
Robert Fischman:	We went on the streetcar.
B.M.:	And you watched people dance, or did you dance yourself?
Robert Fischman:	Until they...oh no, no. We'd just watch them until they just dragged each other, and then they'd have sprints. And poor people, I mean they'd just do anything for a dollar. And...
B.M.:	So that was for, they were hoping to win a prize. That's what that was.
Robert Fischman:	Yes. Everybody that was doing it had numbers on them, you know, and, and the one who could last the longest got the five-dollar prize. And that was, they just put them through so much. And then people would throw money. And then my brother and I would, and then there was the dance hall and there was out areas, money would roll out, and my brother would, would pick it up and then we'd go get a hot dog. [laughing] You'd do anything as a kid then. But it was a funny thing, you had to do it at somebody else's suffering, you know, this marathon business. But that's what somebody started. And it was big in those days. They were all over.
B.M.:	This was in the [19]30s.
Robert Fischman:	In the [19]30s. Mm-hm.
B.M.:	Fascinating.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah.
<b>Prescription Counter from Creighton's Drugstore</b>	
Robert Fischman:	And we, I owned, you might know or heard of Creighton's Drugstore.
B.M.:	No, was that in...
Robert Fischman:	That was on the corner of South, I mean North Royal and King Street. And it was one of the oldest drugstores in Alexandria. There's a couple of others that are older. But this was a hardware store originally. This guy's father, Dr. Creighton's father, had a hardware store next door. But Dr. Creighton owned this drugstore when he started it, and when Dr. Creighton was going to retire, he, everything in there was for sale. And we bought the prescription counter. Everything that went with the prescription counter, I bought. And I put it in my store.
Antoinette Fischman:	Almost as big as that wall.

Robert Fischman:	It was 15 feet by 8 feet.
Antoinette Fischman:	Pressed glass...
Robert Fischman:	It had stained glass...
Antoinette Fischman:	Stained glass, and marble...
Robert Fischman:	It was good. And I'll tell you where you can find it, where you can see it.
B.M.:	Yeah, that's wonderful. Where?
Robert Fischman:	Because I sold it to a fellow, I said, "It has to be on King Street. It's got to be there." He said, "Oh yeah, oh yeah, it's going to be there, it's going to be in a restaurant." And so, and I sold this guy when we were living out in West Springfield. What was the name of the...
Antoinette Fischman:	Portners.
Robert Fischman:	Portners.
B.M.:	Portners. Oh, yeah!
Robert Fischman:	It's upstairs. And it's somewhere up there. I've never been, I never did see it. It's got a plaque on it.
Antoinette Fischman:	They invited us down to see it but we never [inaudible].
Robert Fischman:	And it was built in Baltimore, and I owned it for many years.
B.M.:	And that was from that drugstore.
Robert Fischman:	It was from the drugstore, and I told Dr. Creighton, I said, "I'm going to take care of it. Don't worry about it." And I sold it, and I, because I couldn't bring it in here or anywhere, I didn't know what to do with it. I put it in the house! I had it rebuilt into a...a...
Antoinette Fischman:	...rec room...
Robert Fischman:	...in my...rec room. [laughing] But it had a beautiful cut mirror in the front, and stained glass where the doctor would look through a porthole...a little crystal...
Antoinette Fischman:	A little peephole, a crystal...
Robert Fischman:	To see if somebody was coming in...
B.M.:	When it was a drugstore.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah.
B.M.:	The drugstore was probably a little different than drugstores now.
Robert Fischman:	Oh, yeah. This was, he didn't have a soda fountain or anything

	like that. Everything was drugs. And, Welly Gotten in Alexandria, a friend of mine who is a real estate broker, he bought the shelvings and everything. But he never got them out in time. They tore the building down before he had a chance to get it out.
<b>Some Rough Neighborhoods</b>	
Antoinette Fischman:	All those quaint shops down there toward the river on Washington Street, going down there, was nothing but warehouses.
Robert Fischman:	No, King Street.
Antoinette Fischman:	King Street.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. We went in there just to...
Antoinette Fischman:	They were warehouses.
B.M.:	Warehouses.
Robert Fischman:	Well, that's what the Warehouse Restaurant...
Antoinette Fischman:	You probably heard about that.
B.M.:	Yeah.
Robert Fischman:	The Warehouse Restaurant...
Antoinette Fischman:	It was raw! It was so raw, you wouldn't believe.
B.M.:	Was it a bad area [inaudible], you wouldn't hang around...
Antoinette Fischman:	It was so raw!
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, oh yeah. Well, Alexandria, I mean, you know, certain places in Alexandria, it was rough. You wouldn't go in certain areas. The Dip area, so to speak.
B.M.:	The Dip area?
Robert Fischman:	Well, it's down where the, it's going out of Alexandria, off of Duke Street, it goes down, and it was bad area. I mean, rough area. We had boys in high school from it, they made the best football players and what-have-you, because they were rough and tough, you know?
B.M.:	Yeah...there was a lot of fighting? Crime? Things like that?
Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah. Yeah.
Antoinette Fischman:	It was territorial. Yeah.
B.M.:	Gangs?
Antoinette Fischman:	Territorial.

B.M.:	Gangs, you're talking about?
Robert Fischman:	Well, I don't know about the gangs.
B.M.:	You wouldn't call it gangs.
Robert Fischman:	No. It was...
Antoinette Fischman:	It was just territory. That was their territory.
Robert Fischman:	Santullo's was the Italian store on Duke Street. They had all the Italian food. And that was about it. That was as much as you could get down that end, but now you would never know it! Right where Santullo's was is a hotel! I mean the Hilton Hotel, I mean! [laughing] Or one of them. Marriott, I don't know which hotel it is.
B.M.:	I'm trying to think, on Duke, you're saying Duke Street and...
Robert Fischman:	It's on Duke at West. Or is it West?
B.M.:	[inaudible] West...
Robert Fischman:	No, it's not on West.
B.M.:	Where West comes in, and then there's like Diagonal Street or something like that, that cuts over...right over, we're talking about near the Metro, right?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, yeah, a few blocks down.
B.M.:	Into Alexandria.
Robert Fischman:	Into Alexandria. Yeah. But there's a big hotel there. What's the name of the people that wanted my building, I don't know, and owned the little restaurant?
Antoinette Fischman:	They have a restaurant down there now.
Robert Fischman:	They have a restaurant there now, yeah, nice restaurant. They wanted my building to do it. And the black church next to us wouldn't allow any liquor license to be given so they...then they [inaudible]
B.M.:	On that same block?
<b>The Old Club Restaurant</b>	
Robert Fischman:	And that's why they can't get rid of the Old Club. The Old Club Restaurant?
B.M.:	I don't know that one.
Robert Fischman:	Well, it's on South Washington.
Antoinette Fischman:	South Washington Street.



Robert Fischman:	It's like, Mount Vernon.
Antoinette Fischman:	George Washington ate there.
Robert Fischman:	Well, they say...
Antoinette Fischman:	They have a room dedicated to him.
Robert Fischman:	I don't think he did.
B.M.:	Okay, and that's called the Club.
Robert Fischman:	That's the Old Club.
B.M.:	That's on South Washington.
Antoinette Fischman:	The Old Club.
Robert Fischman:	The Old Club Restaurant.
B.M.:	And you're saying it...
Robert Fischman:	And it's for sale, it's been for sale for ten years...
B.M.:	And they can't sell it.
Robert Fischman:	They can't sell it because they can't get parking. You see, if you own a restaurant on King Street, you can get a permit tomorrow. But if you own a restaurant on a side street, you have to have parking. And you can't, there's no designated parking. Where are you going to get it? And that's the way it is on Washington Street there. They—did you remember the store called Britches? Men's clothing.
Antoinette Fischman:	Or Clyde's Restaurant.
B.M.:	I [inaudible] Clyde's.
Robert Fischman:	Clyde's [inaudible] Clyde's. Well, Britches, the boys that wanted to buy my business, they went into Clyde's Restaurant.
B.M.:	Okay, same people.
Robert Fischman:	It was Britches. And then they sold Britches, and then they opened Clyde's. But then they bought the Old Club Restaurant to make a new Clyde's. And they cannot refix it. They bought it without thinking, without knowing they couldn't get a permit to do anything.
B.M.:	So they couldn't make the Clyde's. They could never make the Clyde's.
Robert Fischman:	They cannot tear up the floors or anything because it's old, old, old.
Antoinette Fischman:	Historical.

Robert Fischman:	And they're just stuck with it. They paid a million and a half for it, and. At that time. At that time. That was 15, 20 years ago, and it's been that long, they still can't do anything with it. And they're stuck with it. And they can't tear it down. They put townhouses, it would be something, but they can't do it, and they...they're stuck with it.
B.M.:	That is a shame.
Robert Fischman:	I know it. So that's that.
Antoinette Fischman:	Anything more you want to volunteer? No more. When you leave, he'll think of it!
B.M.:	Well this is really, we've, but we've gone, we've gone over an hour and a half here and this is long, you know, I don't mind staying a couple of more minutes but I don't want to tire you out. This has been very fascinating.
Antoinette Fischman:	Oh no, he just loves talking to you about all of this.
<b>The Palm Theater</b>	
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Well, Alexandria, or Del Ray. Well, let's put it this way. Del Ray was secluded from Alexandria. You lived in Del Ray, you stayed in Del Ray.
B.M.:	Just by distance? [inaudible]
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, you never ventured that far. There was no reason to.
B.M.:	A lot of people, everybody didn't have cars?
Robert Fischman:	We, we had the Palm Theater on Mount Vernon Avenue. And that was the big thing. That was between...
B.M.:	You went to the movies there, and?
Robert Fischman:	Oh, everything. Saturday there were serials, and that was a big thing.
B.M.:	Serials were, what was that?
Robert Fischman:	Bang bang, shoot-em-up. Cowboys and Indians, and all that.
B.M.:	When you say serials, they were continuing, they were continuing sagas so you could come to see what happened the next time?
Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah. Yeah, every single week. That's right. Someone's jumping off a cliff, and that's all.
Antoinette Fischman:	They did something that was unusual. They had birth of a baby.
B.M.:	Oh, my goodness.

Antoinette Fischman:	Yes. I'll never forget.
Robert Fischman:	And people were fainting.
Antoinette Fischman:	And they were fainting in the theater, watching the birth of a baby up on the screen. It was a first in Alexandria.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. But they advertised it, certain, certain age group could only go, and what-have-you, and it was...fainting.
B.M.:	Did they serve popcorn and so forth at those times?
Robert Fischman:	After a while they did. They gave plates away, and gave this away, because they tried to entice you to give your dime to them. I think that's how much it cost. And it was the oddest thing. They had one bathroom in that theater. And it was up in the projector room. For men and women. Isn't that ridiculous? I mean, it was the oddest thing. Here, you go to the bathroom, and you're going through the, where they've got the reels going!
B.M.:	That's funny! Well, interesting, though, you could see how they do the job. Takes a little of the mystery out of that.
Robert Fischman:	You could smell the burning of the celluloid.
B.M.:	I was wondering, you say burning, and I'm thinking of the other kind of burning because I know that some of the older film stocks used to burn very easily. Did you have?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. That's what I'm saying, you could smell that celluloid. Just burning up, or something.
B.M.:	It was burning and...
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, if it stayed there for awhile, it would burn. You'd have to keep moving.
<b>Lipp's Lunch—The One-Arm Lunch</b>	
Antoinette Fischman:	And you were lucky to find a restaurant in Alexandria.
B.M.:	Oh, is that right?
Antoinette Fischman:	Oh, yeah. We weren't...
B.M.:	In downtown Alexandria? I mean, what we would call Old Town today?
Antoinette Fischman:	We just didn't have restaurants, per se. Everybody cooked at home.
Robert Fischman:	No, didn't have, nobody ate out, because no money was...I mean...
Antoinette Fischman:	Lipp's Restaurant on...

Robert Fischman:	Lipp's Lunch.
Antoinette Fischman:	...was on King Street.
Robert Fischman:	In fact, if you...
Antoinette Fischman:	A one-arm lunch, they called it.
B.M.:	One-arm?
Robert Fischman:	L-I-P-P-S.
Antoinette Fischman:	One-arm lunch.
Robert Fischman:	You know these chairs with the little arm?
B.M.:	Oh, okay! [laughing]
Antoinette Fischman:	Like a child's chair.
B.M.:	And you [inaudible] your lunch right there on the...
Antoinette Fischman:	They called it the one-arm lunch.
Robert Fischman:	It's on the, it's up on the, it's right next to CVS. Is CVS still there? I don't know.
B.M.:	On Washington?
Robert Fischman:	People's Drugstore on King Street.
B.M.:	Oh, King Street.
Antoinette Fischman:	On King.
Robert Fischman:	It's in the 700 block of King Street.
B.M.:	Then maybe I don't remember.
Robert Fischman:	And Lipp's is the sign up, way up on the top.
Antoinette Fischman:	And it was a first then, before Schumann's.
B.M.:	And what kind of, what kind of lunch would you get there?
Antoinette Fischman:	Greasy! Greasy spoon...
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, yeah.
Antoinette Fischman:	But everybody would say, "We're going to Lipp's for lunch."
B.M.:	Did they have like, blue plate specials or something like that? What did they...
Antoinette Fischman:	I don't think so. It was just, whatever they had, you ate it! [laughing]
<b>The Company Store and the Company Doctor</b>	
Robert Fischman:	Potomac Yard used to have one-arm lunch over there for the

	workmen, on Hume Avenue. Hume and Number 1 [Route 1].
B.M.:	Okay, so was it actually a restaurant?
Robert Fischman:	A restaurant, and it was a lunchroom.
B.M.:	Do you remember the name of that, by any chance, or did it have a name?
Robert Fischman:	I don't know if that was a part of the railroad or not. I do know this: my father would go over to the store, and it was run by, they would take it out of his pay if he bought something.
B.M.:	Oh—okay, so it was like a company—yeah, a company store type thing.
Robert Fischman:	The company store. [laughing] That's right. Exactly.
Antoinette Fischman:	And they had the company doctor.
B.M.:	Oh wow, they did?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah, and his name was Delaney? Yeah, and he would do anything that the company said. If you had to go to work—my father had his fingers cut off.
Antoinette Fischman:	As a brakeman.
Robert Fischman:	As a brakeman. And, because when two trains come together, they, they have to guide them in and get away real fast, and if you don't get away that fast, your fingers are in there. So he had to stay off from work a week
Robert Fischman:	And they, the doctor said that he'd have to go back to work. And gangrene was setting in. And he said, "I can't." And they said, "You either go to work or you're fired." See, that's the way the company doctors did in those days. Not because of the people, but whatever the company wanted...
B.M.:	Right, not to do with your health, but, yeah...
Robert Fischman:	Whatever the company wanted is what you did. And that's the way it went at that time.
B.M.:	He didn't lose his, the rest of his fingers?
Robert Fischman:	No. They had to cut them off further, but that was it.
Antoinette Fischman:	But he kept his job, and you're thankful to have a job.
B.M.:	Yeah, it sounds as though there...
Robert Fischman:	My father was working for a dollar a day.
B.M.:	A dollar a day.

Robert Fischman:	A dollar a day. And to make ends meet, they would work for the City, paving roads, at another dollar a day. You see? So, so many hours. So, God knows whether he'd get some sleep, you know, because he was working. He said that he liked the 12 to 8 at night. That's the only time. You never did see him, you know, because you're always sleeping, and you're going to school, and what-have-you. But everybody was down and out in those days. I mean, it was a rough time.
<b>Shared Values</b>	
B.M.:	It sounds like it was a bit of a shared, everybody was in the same boat.
Robert Fischman:	Everybody was in the same boat. And that's why we got along so well during the war, because we were fighting one thing. Poverty and, as well. And nobody stole anything. Nobody did anything bad. You understand? It, it, well actually, if they did, we'd take care of it, and that would be it. [laughs]
B.M.:	What do you mean by taking care of it?
Robert Fischman:	I think the grownups would take care of it in their way, somehow.
Antoinette Fischman:	They were in control of the situation.
Robert Fischman:	They, they wouldn't allow it, you know?
B.M.:	They didn't have to call in the police, or something like that?
Robert Fischman:	No.
B.M.:	They would just manage the situation somehow.
Robert Fischman:	Exactly. Yeah. You didn't spit in a policeman's face, like you can do today. They did that to this boy Bobby Lundsford. And he lost his job, because he grabbed the guy, and you're not supposed to touch them, you know? And here's this guy who spit in his face. And he's a policeman, this guy. See? So everything's just turned upside down, see? So in those days, you...
Antoinette Fischman:	Families took control. They wouldn't allow the children to do anything out of normal.
Robert Fischman:	The families, well, the way it was, I grew up with a lot of the city fathers. I was in the Jaycees with the boys whose father was the judge, and this one owned the store, and this one...and, like, if we did something wrong, they'd say, "You can do anything with me, but just don't tell my father." You see? And that's the way it was. I mean, he would come down on you more than they would. And a neighbor would come down on you.
B.M.:	Everybody was looking out for the kids? All the kids?

Robert Fischman:	Yeah. As close as Del Ray was, if a neighbor saw you do something, boy, they'd come down on you. They'd really tell you what they're thinking. And your mother and father took it, too. But today, you couldn't look at them cross-eyed, you see? It was a different thing. When we went in the service, we understood it. You know? And that's why we got along so well, I guess. But today's it's, it's a little backwards.
B.M.:	Sounds like a big loss.
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, we understood right and wrong. One time—there was a druggist on Mount Vernon Avenue, it was Bowman's Drugstore. It was on the corner of Del Ray Avenue and Mount Vernon. And they went into a new building, they'd just built that building, it's a brown building, it's real...
Antoinette Fischman:	It's that way today.
Robert Fischman:	It's a beautiful building, and I mean, here's this boy that we used to pal around, had his own bath. I mean, of all things, you know. Clayton, Clayton had his own bathroom. We'd just go up there and look at it. But we had that drugstore, and Clayton, and there was a bowling alley there on Mount Vernon Avenue, and he hit the machine, the Coke machine, and God, all the nickels come out. You know, he wanted his Coke! He put in a nickel...
B.M.:	He was just trying to get a Coke, and...
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. And man, the nickels come out. Well, the guy that owned the, or, the manager of the bowling alley, oh, he knew all of us. Because we used to set pins. I used to set pins for hours, at 4 cents...
B.M.:	...a job when you were...
Robert Fischman:	4 cents a game. Yeah. And...
B.M.:	This is when you manually would go down to pick up the pins?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Yeah. I would be back there...
Antoinette Fischman:	Where was the bowling alley?
Robert Fischman:	It was underground. But it's no longer there. It was on Uhler Avenue, and right next to where Barnes and Kimmel was. And it was underground. And Palladian, Harry Palladian's father, built it. And the police came, and we all had to go down to court. And there was four of us. And Clayton Bowman, which was the druggist's son, of course, he could do no wrong. We were, you know, we were the little scum-dirties of Del Ray. And so his mother kind of segregated him over to her, "My son wouldn't do anything like that." But he did it. We wouldn't tell on him. And

	my father got up there. "If one did it, they all did it. Now, you point your finger to anybody here that did it. If one did it, they all did it. Take them all in." And they said, "Get out of here!"
Antoinette Fischman:	Scared them to death!
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Well, the idea was that they couldn't put it on anybody, so they had to do something, and that's the way it is with murder today, you know, and [inaudible] over a few nickels, but my father was used to that because he grew up in New York City, and he knew that, they were always in some kind of Dutch, but, and he knew the policemen too.
<b>Robert's Mother and Ms. Acheson, Poker Players</b>	
Antoinette Fischman:	Their entertainment was playing cards.
Robert Fischman:	Not ours, but our friends.
B.M.:	Oh, your...
Antoinette Fischman:	Their family.
B.M.:	What games did you?
Robert Fischman:	Oh, poker.
B.M.:	Poker...did you play for money or...
Robert Fischman:	Oh yeah. They played for money. My...you know who's mother was the big one, Ms. Acheson was my...
Antoinette Fischman:	Tipper Gore's...mother.
Robert Fischman:	Mother. Tipper Gore's mother was my...
Antoinette Fischman:	Close friend of his mother's.
Robert Fischman:	...my mother were real buddies, and they used to play poker. She was over at my mother's house playing poker.
Antoinette Fischman:	She attended our wedding.
B.M.:	Did she?
Robert Fischman:	Yeah. She...Acheson was fuel and oil. Acheson Fuel and Oil Company. Everybody was in the fuel oil company, you know, the business. They had some trucks, like Fannon Oil Company, everybody would go down and get their fuel for so much, and then they'd sell it for so much, and everybody was in business. But Acheson was pretty big at that time, and that was Tipper's mother and father. They got divorced early. They used to go to GW High School.
B.M.:	They did too?



Robert Fischman:	Yeah. Her father did. Yup, that's it.
B.M.:	Well this has been fascinating. I guess I'll stop the tape now. Thank you very much. [End]