

THE AREA OF BURLEITH

John Burke's Talk to the Burleith Citizens Association General Meeting
(Retaped Wednesday, May 15, 1985)

Last night, May 14, 1985, I gave a little talk to the meeting of the Burleith Citizens' Association. I'd been asked to do this and to talk about the area that is now Burleith before it was Burleith, and to tape this. Part way through my talk, however, the tape deck malfunctioned. What I'm now doing is to try to repeat as far as possible what I had to say last night. Of course I have more time now and maybe I'll add some things that might be appropriate that I neglected to comment on last night.

Now, just visualize yourself in Gordon High School listening to these comments You're now sitting in the deep right field of the Georgetown "Holler". It's pronounced "Hollow" but actually it should be called "Holler" because that's what the local people called it. It was the home field for the Georgetown Knickerbockers, the sandlot ball team that played in this natural stadium. You'll notice that the hills around Gordon High's playing field form a natural stadium and on Sundays the people would come from great distances to watch the baseball game. They'd sit on the sides of the hill or stand up on the top of the hill.

Now the Georgetown Knickerbocker team was financed by passing the hat. Apparently they did very well, because the team had nice uniforms and they hired professional umpires who wore the customary blue serge suits. Of course it attracted a lot of people because in those days there was no TV or radio. As far as we were concerned, on Sundays it was a nice entertainment to go out and watch the ball game played.

Moving down on the east side of 35th Street the next building was Decklebaum's grocery store. My recollection of Decklebaum's was first of all that it was a very dark store, with only one window in the front. Luckily this was apparently not good enough and they subsequently moved to the corner of 35th and T where you will find still there a building with a sort of diagonal entrance. This was subsequently Burleith Market, but at that time it was Decklebaum's grocery store.

Getting back to the original store, I remember going there and getting cigarettes for my uncle, who was staying with us. He was a veteran of World War I, and so he would send me to get him a pack of Sweet Capital cigarettes. Well, Sweet Capitals were just one of the brands that were popular at that time. But I would always take a note because anyone who bought cigarettes had to be 16 years old or bring a note from an adult.

I also remember that in Decklebaum's they sold coal oil - we called it coal oil then, but we all call it kerosene today. Then we used it in our homes extensively. As a matter of fact at one time - prior to my time --- the only light we had was from coal oil lamps. By the time I got here gas had been installed.

But the coal oil I remember had to be bought in the daylight; you could not buy coal oil in the dark. I suppose the reason was because the tanks were down in the basement and there weren't any flashlights. Any light you could get would have to be something with a flame and they were just afraid that there would be a fire.

Now I mentioned we had gas in our home, served by the Georgetown Gas Light Company. We did not even have the Washington Gas Light Company service that early; we had our own little company here. You never got a gas bill from the Georgetown Gas Light Company because it was a sort of fuel vending machine. In the meter in your basement there'd be provision for putting in a coin, so you'd put a quarter in the gas meter and use up a quarter's worth of gas and then the gas would stop and you'd go down and put in another quarter. And periodically a man would come and collect the quarters. I shudder to think of what might have happened if the gas stopped and you

put a quarter in and neglected to turn off the jet when you came back upstairs. But anyway I have never heard of any problems in that regard.

Also the street lamps were all gas lamps and I remember a particular family that used to have a sort of monopoly on lighting the gas lights. They'd go around and pull a lever each night and turn on the gas and then they'd come around in the morning and turn off the gas. Every gas lamppost had to be turned on individually.

Going on down 35th Street there is an apartment house next to where Decklebaum's store was, and built about the same time Burleith started. Then we get to Filmore School. We were sort of isolated back at 3611 R Street, and one day I was wandering and I saw a lot of little boys playing in the school yard at Filmore. So I went down and joined them on the swings and the seesaws and so forth. And then when the time came to go into the school, I just went in with them. I don't know how long it took for the teacher to discover that this unregistered student was there, but at any rate she learned who I was. She went and saw my mother and told her I was too young to be in the school. But anyway Mother talked her into letting me stay. So I was the unregistered student in the kindergarten in Filmore School.

Now when my younger sister Pat came along she went to kindergarten in Filmore also, and she had one of our dogs who was her constant companion. The dog was a collie called Lady and Lady would accompany Pat to school, and the kids got to like Lady so much that they invited her in and every day Lady'd come in and sit down in the corner in the kindergarten classroom and wait there until Pat was ready to go home, and she'd accompany Pat home again.

In the summer at Filmore they had a regular supervised playground. They had three instructors there and they taught crafts and they had all sorts of equipment for playing there and baseball and other games and it was a nice place for us children to congregate.

In front of Filmore there was what we called a pump. But actually it was just a hydrant. In the winter, in the cold, we would squirt the water out of the pump. It made a wonderful place for sliding.

Now let's continue on down 35th Street. There were three apartment houses there before R Street, in between Filmore and R. They were built at about the same time as Burleith was started. Going down 35th Street, across from the high school, now Duke Ellington, we had what we called "flats". They were really two storey houses, apartments upstairs and downstairs. I don't know whether they are two family houses still, or made over into one family houses - I just don't know. Anyhow, we called them "flats".

Then getting to the corner, we came to Mr. Baker's store. In those days there were many, many corner grocery stores throughout Washington. In our area here there was Bakers at 35th and Reservoir and then at 34th and Reservoir Mr. Hilary's store, then down at Dent Place and 34th there were two of them, Spaulding's store and then another. I think that other makes quite a story. The family consisted of two boys and their father. They were Russian immigrants. They first emigrated to Brazil and then for some reason came up to this country and established this store at Dent Place and 34th Street. And I remember distinctly how they would get into their Dodge open car - Dodge touring car - and go to the Central Market, which was down at oh, approximately where Constitution Avenue and 12th to 13th Streets are today - and there was a mammoth market down there where they'd pick up their produce. Then they'd go to a wholesale grocer and pick up their groceries, and come back and put them on display and sell them.

It's my understanding that subsequently they got into a lot of small corner grocery stores, had practically a chain of them. Then they switched to other businesses. They were in the moving picture exhibiting business, and real estate, and a lot of things.

They became very successful. It's my understanding that subsequently they got into a lot of small corner grocery stores, had success in practically everything they got into. And the last news I read about them was that they were regarded as highly respected philanthropists in the Washington area..

Well now, there were the two boys and their father. And the father was creative in that he created a new number. He had a very thick Russian accent, and when he would count your change he would say "nine, ten, eleven, twelveteen, thirteen, fourteen. S he created "twelveteen," an entirely new number.

Going down on Dent Place toward 35th Street, we find the firehouse. And that was a very interesting spot in those days. When an alarm would come in the firemen who were upstairs would come down, sliding down the brass pole. The horses would be brought out in back to the shafts of the engines. The harnesses were suspended up above the horses. The firemen pulled a string and the harnesses all fell right down on the horses and the firemen buckled them up, and they would take off with much clanging of bells to wherever the fire was. And of course there were brush fires in what is now the Burleith area and they'd come and take care of the fires. At that time we had fire alarm boxes around the city that I didn't realize until I was preparing this material are no longer there. In those days on many of the corners, not every corner, but on many of the corners, there was a fire alarm box that was part of the lamppost. And the box was a red metal box with a glass front that you would break in order to open the door, then pull the alarm. Electronically it was connected with the firehouse and they would be alerted to where there was a fire but not precisely where they should go. And so it was incumbent on the person sending the alarm to stand there at the firebox until the fire engine came so that the firemen would know exactly where the fire was.

OK, now we go on over to 35th and Reservoir where we have the Visitation Convent. This is a large operation there -- thirty-five or forty acres which remained relatively unchanged for many, many years. There was some temporary housing there during World War II, and it's kind of interesting -- it's the only place I've ever seen where you had a piece of land, then houses built on it, then the houses removed and it looked exactly the way afterwards that it had before.

Now there's a little house at the corner of Reservoir and 35th Street, and that is now a real estate office, but in those days it was the home of the caretaker of the Visitation Convent property. A family by the name of Tennyson lived there, and I understand they were related to Tennyson the poet. Possibly so, because Dick Tennyson, one of the family, was a writer on the Washington Post.. But the Visitation had a big farm there. They had cows and gray horses and they planted crops to take care of the girls in the school and the Sisters.

We seldom had a chance to socialize with the girls in the school -- they were quite sheltered there. But there was one time of the year when we had snow, and they were allowed to go out and sleigh ride. And luckily they did not have a chaperon. So we boys would climb over the fence and hobnob with the girls. They were very interesting people; the Visitation was a boarding school, and the girls came from many different countries.

Well now let's move over to the block occupied by the Sisters of the House of Good Shepherd, at 36th to 37th Streets, Reservoir Road to R Street. That was a home for wayward girls. It's kind of interesting to note that also at the other end of Reservoir Road was the Florence Crittenden Home for Unwed Mothers. Now I don't know what conclusion you can draw from that but these are the facts.

Now the girls who were inmates at the House of Good Shepherd were not all wayward girls put there by the courts. They were orphans also and the Sisters there taught them skills. They got into many different things. They would learn typing and they were particularly good at needlework. And some of the pieces that they did were absolutely

beautiful. And they sold these pieces. They also ran a laundry which serviced mostly the institutional places around Georgetown.

The girls used to play softball during their recreation period and as you can imagine when forty or fifty girls were very enthusiastically playing and watching a softball game, the noise was a terrific din. The excitement around the House of Good Shepherd was when one of the inmates, the wayward ones who were put there by the courts, would decide that she'd had enough of this confinement and wanted to leave. It was not a very difficult task to climb the fence – it was not like a prison, it was simply a wooden fence with chicken wire over the top, so the girls even in their uniforms that went down to their ankles could easily climb it. They would climb the fence and run down the street, but rarely ever get more than a few blocks away before the police were telephoned and they'd come and pick up the runaway and bring her back. The girls were very obviously inmates of the school; they wore long dresses that were sort of a uniform.

Now it was also a time I can think of Sunday mornings in the summer with the windows open, with no airplanes flying over your head, no cars racing up and down Thirty Seventh Street because there just weren't many cars on this street. It wasn't much of a street – it was a dirt road at that time. And with the bees buzzing and the birds singing, it was a nice, quiet area. You could hear the girls at the House of Good Shepherd singing their liturgical music and the harmony was absolutely beautiful, of course. They had lots of time to practice and so they developed a very nice choir. It made for a very peaceful and tranquil Sunday morning on a summer day.

Okay, now let's consider the area from R Street to T Street and 16th Street to 17th Street. First of all, the streets were all dirt streets. There was no paving at all. Undoubtedly there had been a plan to develop these two blocks at one time which apparently aborted. The curbs were in, the trees were in. around the periphery of these two blocks, the water mains and fire hydrants were in. Another clue was the fact that the blocks S to T, 36th to 37th, were called Apple Orchard by the local people. There was certainly not an apple orchard there in my day, which indicated that whoever was going to develop the land had cleared it but just had not built the houses they'd originally intended to build.

Now here's an interesting thing about R Street. My mother told us that Teddy Roosevelt used to ride out R Street frequently to the woods – Cox's Woods – and his great delight was to be going along and spur his horse and take off at a great speed and try to run away from his Secret Service men.

My sister Mary told me that she had heard somewhere about an incident involving a Sister at the House of Good Shepherd who at that time was just a novice. And because this is a cloistered order she was not to have any communication with the outside world. She was standing outside looking out at R Street and Teddy Roosevelt came by and waved to her. And so she was in a dilemma – she didn't know what to do, so she went to talk to her Superior. She said "Teddy Roosevelt came by and he waved to me. Should I be allowed to wave back?" So the Superior said "Well, since he's the President of the United States you may wave back."

Okay, now let's talk about our block. What I call "our block" is the block on which our house is located, 36th to 37th and R to S. Our family built the house and moved in in 1907. My sister Mary was one year old when she moved there and has never lived anywhere else since. That's 77 years (1907-1985). And don't tell her I told you. There was one other house on the block, a frame cottage on the corner of 36th and R, occupied by a family by the name of Wilhelm. Between their house and our house was a garden, and in fact anybody else who had a plot of land raised a garden at that time.

I think that our house was meant to have been part of a row of houses, simply because of the fact that it has good face brick on the front and common brick on the side. And

there are several things that indicate that it should be part of a row of houses. I suppose my family simply took plans that had already been drawn up rather than have new plans drawn and in the interest of economy just used those plans. One of the things was that the house is built right up to the building line, which is characteristic of the row houses around Washington.

I was told that my parents hired a particular bricklayer and paid an extra dollar a day to get this particular bricklayer because he did such excellent work. If you look at the front of our house as you walk by sometime you'll find that it is very good brickwork. The bricks themselves are very high quality and much smoother than other bricks that you might find on some other houses, including the Burleith houses. And the mortaring between the bricks is very delicate, and at the top of the houses there was a decorative arrangement of the bricks that shows that a real good craftsman did the work.

Now we had no sidewalks at that time. When my father built the sidewalk that ran from our house to the corner of 36th and R it was a brick walk that he put in himself. He was a great guy for doing things around the house and liked to do things with his hands. He in fact built our cellar – he dug the thing out with his own hands and finished it off and we're still using it.

Now our house occupies just one third of the property that my parents bought. The other two thirds is the side yard. In those days it had trees. There were two wax cherry trees; the yellow cherries were fine for eating. Then there was a tree with sour cherries that were excellent for pies that Mother used to make – yum yum – and then we had two apple trees, a pear tree, and a very sizeable grape arbor running along the fence. So we had a more or less fruit salad right there in our yard.

Then from the border of our property on down towards 37th Street we rented – my father rented – some land and put in a truck garden. Now this had all the usual things that a truck garden has – pole beans, lima beans, string beans, corn, tomatoes – well, all those things. So we had the vegetables out there, we had the fruit in the other yard, and we actually had sort of mini-farm, because we maintained at all times two cows on the property. We had a barn in the back of the house and we had two cows back there. In addition to the cows we had chickens and pigs. Now we didn't have the pigs on the property, but by arrangement with the House of Good Shepherd we kept them down at the corner of 37th and R Street. Then we had the usual domestic animals, dogs and cats, so there was plenty of animal activity around our home.

So we really were more or less self-sustained when you come down to it. We had the vegetables, we had the fruit, we had the dairy products from the cows – milk, cream, butter, certain types of cheese. And then from the chicken yard we got our eggs every day, and we killed a chicken now and then, and we slaughtered a pig every now and then. So we didn't have a Safeway nearby but we didn't have any need for one. Also I remember the fact that we had so much cream from our cows that we would make ice cream every once in a while and that homemade ice cream over the top of a cherry pie that Mother made ---- I'll tell you it was real good eating.

In addition to our own animals, at different times we boarded other animals. We had horses, kept horses for some people at one time. We had dogs – we kept two beautiful collies for a party who lived downtown. We had german shepherd dogs, and I remember one of the german shepherds had pups and we had I think twelve german shepherds around our house at the same time. So maybe you're lucky you didn't live nearby at that time with all that racket.

Best of all, we boarded ponies. And one of the ponies we boarded at one time had a cart along with it, and you can imagine how much fun it was for a young boy to be riding around Georgetown in the pony cart. It was wonderful!

There was a very interesting situation when at one time we boarded pigeons. A man came to us and wanted us to take care of his pigeons, so we built a very elaborate coop for them. There were quite a number of pigeons. In fact the coop took up all of what had previously been our chicken yard, with the wire all around the sides and over the top too, and we kept the pigeons for a while. And then the man had a change of heart and decided to take the pigeons away. Well, moving a pigeon is like trying to throw away a boomerang. Pigeons have that homing instinct, and they came back. And so we had a lot of pigeons hanging around our place that didn't belong there. I'd like to say they were delicious, but we didn't kill them, and we called the man. He finally came and took them away.

Now we kept the cows in our barn, and they were staked out. Of course there were no fences, and you can't just let a cow run wild. So we would put them on a chain and they would be staked out on the pasture, which would be the block that we lived on. And they would eat the grass and when that grass was well eaten we'd move the stake to another place. And sometimes when the grass wasn't growing well or because of lack of rain or something like that, my father would find some other place to graze the cows. I remember the fellow who was taking care of the cows would put me up on top of a cow and I would ride up to Montrose Park. Can you imagine someone riding on top of a cow being led up R Street to Montrose Park today? It's hard to visualize.

I was too young to take care of cows. By the time I would have been old enough, Burleigh was well underway, and we had to get rid of the cows. But we had had several boys who would come, teenagers who would take care of them. The last one was Lewis Keys, and Lewis after he finished high school went off to college and got his degree in education, and became a teacher. The one before him was Abelard Brault. We called him Brault, but the proper French pronunciation was beyond us. They were French people who came down from Waterbury, Connecticut – the father, I think, to take a job in the government. He put Abelard to take care of the cows. But before him his brother, whom we called Frenchie, took care of the cows. Well, Albert Brault became Judge Albert Brault, and Abelard became an attorney and also a senator in the State Senate of Virginia. The cow carer before them was my first cousin Henry Trilling, who with his father subsequently ran the leading catering company in Washington back in the late thirties and forties. So our cowboys did very well for themselves after they finished doing their chores for us.

Then we shared this block we live on with a makeshift baseball field. We would play baseball down at the corner with the homeplate being at 37th and S Street and we would just use a rock for a base and so forth. One day a man came along on a horse while we were playing there and said "Now you boys I see like to play ball here" and he added "it's perfectly all right with me. I'm Colonel Heidekooper and I own this property. But if you'd like to make a real baseball field out of it you have my permission to do it.." There were four teams at Holy Trinity Parochial School: The Trinity Seniors, The Trinity Juniors, The Trinity Midgets, and the Trinity Insects. And so we got all these boys together and they brought tools from home and we made a real baseball field out of it. We put in base pads and a regular home plate and we put up a good substantial backstop. And the field was used extensively. All four teams and visiting teams would come in and use this facility. And of course when you are a baseball player and you share a field with a place where cows are grazed, you have to be very alert..

Now let's move over to the lot occupied by the high school. That was Western High School in those days. That beautiful front lawn has remained unchanged over the years. What I remember first is that the building was about half as big as it is now. There was an addition put on and if you go along R Street you'll find an indentation in the building which indicates where the old building ended and the new building started. The area now occupied by the addition was the track where they ran track.

Western had a cadet corps at that time and the cadets used to march up and down the streets – the paved streets. And even after Burleith was developed they used to march and practice their drills throughout Burleith. And frequently there'd be some small fry following them with broomsticks over their shoulders imitating the cadets. And there would be an irate sergeant who would be running them off.

Now, Western also had a course in surveying, and you'd see these lads out there with the transepts surveying the area that is now Burleith. I guess it is the most surveyed area that you could find because year after year these fellows would survey the same area.

Next let's go to the block 35th to 36th, R to S. On that block there were three houses, and two of them are still there. One was a frame house that at that time was at the corner. Now it's the second house in. Then there was a nice frame house up above a stone wall. Those were the only two houses on the block. Then the other house, which has long since gone, was Grandmother Holt's house. Grandmother Hold was an older lady who had lived there in that frame house, and had cows and a garden, as we did too. But by the time I came along she had gone to live with one of her many relatives throughout Georgetown. She was a lovely old lady and used to come and visit my mother quite a lot.

The rest of the block was just clay and honeysuckle and trees. In fact, we used to call the corner of Thirty-sixth and R the clay hill because it had exposed clay all over – the red clay that I'm sure you're familiar with if you've dug down through the topsoil in your yard. Then we used to dig caves into the hill and we had a project: we were going to dig all the way to China. But after about a foot and a half that program was abandoned.

The house that Grandmother Holt had lived in became a clubhouse and in some way was associated with the high school. There were tennis courts there, and the students used to go up there and play tennis. Now over just off of S Street and 35th there are two columns – cement columns, hollow interiors, and the legend was that if you threw a tin can into one of those hollow columns it would explode. And I don't know whether it was faulty aim on the part of the participants or faulty legend, but we've never heard of any explosions at that point. And in the meeting of the Citizens' Association I learned that these two columns are outlets for a subterranean aqueduct that goes from the reservoir out at Reservoir Road and MacArthur Boulevard to another reservoir at another part of the city. So I learned something at the meeting.

Okay, now let's go over to 35-36th, S and T. On the 35th Street side there were four free standing houses. This included the corner house. Then up 35th Street every building lot was occupied except one which was at the head of the alley. It was very convenient to walk through the alley and cross this lot and go over to Decklebaum's store. There's a house – a little house at 1812 35th Street, and it sits down below the ground level. It's a cute little place, probably the smallest house in the area. But that was a store at one time. Of course Decklebaum's new store was the focal point of the community, the only store really nearby, so this is where the young people used to hang out, on that corner.

Going down T Street on the south side there were just a few houses. There was one row of four or five houses, then there was a lot, and then another row of three houses right about at 35th Place. That was all there was on that block – it was just overgrown except for the houses I have enumerated.

Go across to the next block, 35th Street to 35th Place, T Street to U Street. You maybe do not know that what was U Street is now Whitehaven Parkway. U Street then was only half a block long – it just ran from 35th Street to 35th Place. There was no Whitehaven Parkway and no street going in either direction, just this one half-block. On 35th Street there were several houses and one big vacant lot, and then another row of houses

right up near U Street. Turning the corner there on U Street ,there were about four houses and an open lot at the corner where Mr. John Sullivan had his garden.

Mr. Sullivan was a character. He had a beard in a period when only college professors and hoboos had beards. He had been an Indian fighter;; he'd been out in the West fighting the Indians, --not with General Custer, obviously. But he was very mechanically-minded. Anytime the Model T wouldn't run, you'd get in touch with Mr. Sullivan. He could usually fix it. He tried all sorts of things; he liked to do things with his hands and he would repair shoes.

Mr. Sullivan and my father were good friends, and my father insisted that we let Mr. Sullivan repair our shoes, much to the dismay of my sister. Although Mr. Sullivan was a very capable person, he didn't have either the equipment or expertise to do a professional shoe repair job. He'd put very thick soles on Mary's shoes and she would have to wear the thicksoled shoes and was very embarrassed.

Another characteristic of Mr. Sullivan was his propensity to buy anything he could get at a bargain. He would buy up caseloads of things like shoe polish, or a particular type of soup, et cetera. He had a whole basement full of things that he had bought because he was getting a good buy.

In those days very few homes in the area had telephones, but my sister Mary tells me that they used to have code signals from Mr. Sullivan's home where his son and daughter lived. If they were going to do a certain thing that was prearranged they would hang a towel out of the window so they could see it - which is hard too believe today - they could see from what is now Whitehaven Parkway all the way down to 36th Street and R. But anyway they had this signal system they had worked out.

35th Place was very thoroughly built up. On the west side every lot was taken. A row of modest houses was there. On the east side there was only one lot open, and that was down at the corner of 35th Place and T Street. Now there is a house there.

But I must tell you about the other side of what then was U Street. I rode by there recently and I saw that it is unchanged; nothing has been built there. But in the days I'm talking about there was one house there. It was a house built by a family by the name - well, probably the correct pronunciation would be "Friseel", but we all called them the Frizzles. The Frizzles lived up on the side of the hill, and they were squatters. They had built their house on someone else's property, and nobody had put them off. Mary likes to tell the story about how Mrs. Frizzle would call her son. She would get on the front porch of their home and yell "Yo, Ike." And if Ike were anywhere north of M Street he could hear her.. She shouted in pigcalling, stentorian tones. But Mrs. Frizzle had the laugh on the rest of us because she was sitting up; there while we were paying off mortgages or paying rent, and she was up there with the most beautiful view of the area.

Okay, now let's go down to T Street. There were only about three houses beyond Thirty Fifth Place. Then there was absolutely nothing - no buildings at all, all the way to what subsequently became the Archibold Estate. I remember when that house was built and my father, mother, and I went up to have a look at it. That was the last we ever saw of it because it was all enclosed with fence and no one was allowed to go inside. But I must correct myself; there was one house between 35th Place and Archibold. It was occupied by Aunt Harriet. I'll tell you about Aunt Harriet in a minute.

The blocks 36th to 37th, S and T Streets were used only about one week a year, for the Annual Carnival. There was a Carnival that came each year, and it was a big one that ran the whole block, and had the usual things - the ferris wheels, the carousel, various rides and games of chance and side shows and so forth. And it drew people from all over into the area. I remember one year that the carnival inadvertently left behind a big carton of kewpie dolls. After several days the local people decided that the carnival

crew wasn't going to come back and get the dolls. So they distributed them. Everybody's home got one or more kewpie dolls. If you don't know what a kewpie doll is, well, it's sort of an early cabbage patch doll. Kewpies were a fad at that time.

On the Northwest corner of 37th and T there was a city dump. The northeast corner was Aunt Harriet's domain. Now Aunt Harriet was – and I'm sure of this – the self-appointed custodian of the dump. This was her turf, and woe to anyone who ventured onto that dump, because she had – in her mind at any rate – exclusive rights to scrounge that dump and pick out anything that might have value. It was rumored that she was an ex-slave. If she wasn't an ex-slave, she probably was only one generation away from one, because she was quite an old lady. She lived in a series of shacks, each one seeming to have been built on the other. I suppose she sold enough of what she picked up off the dump to earn a living – there was no welfare at that time, and she obviously had an income. What set her apart from everybody else was that she smoked a corncob pipe.

Then, 37th Street was the frontier. There were no buildings between 37th Street and what was the Archibold property. There were no streets. There were two dumps, the dump that I previously mentioned, and then, at about R and S, there was a cinder dump. This is where from the public buildings the government used to bring the ashes and cinders. And of course there was always some unburned coal in an ashheap, and so the local poor people would come and pick the cinders and take the unburnt coal home. Now anybody who lives in the vicinity of 37th and R not only lives on a former dump, but also across the street from where a pigpen was located.

Going on down 37th Street to Reservoir Road, at one time somebody put in, or tried to put in, a professional or semiprofessional football team facility there and they fenced it all in. That didn't last very long because it was right around the time when Shannon and Luchs built the houses there.

Down at 38th Street and up to what was once the Archibold Estate Gate House, there was a pond. Actually it was more like a swamp, but it was called Inscoe's Pond. That's right about the area where the high school stadium is now located.

Beyond the Pond was the house occupied by the Inscoe family. These people had a lot of horses, all work horses that pulled the trucks that were very much in evidence in those days. And there was quite a large family of Inscoes, and all the men that used to drive for them hung about the place. There were always a lot of people there, and to say the least they were not the most socially prominent people in the area at that time.

Across the street from the Inscoes was what was called the Prep Field. That was located where Georgetown University Hospital is now. It was a mammoth field and we all went up there to play baseball, football, and so forth. And I suppose there was a Georgetown prep located nearby at one time, for which this was the field. But even in those days Georgetown Prep was located out in Bethesda.

Now let's talk about the woods. This was that whole area from 37th Street all the way back to what is now the Glover Archibold Park. It was called Cox's Woods, but some people called it the BT Woods. I can't tell you what BT stood for, but the Woods were there, and it was a great place for youngsters to play. I remember there was a great big swing made of cable that was tied way high onto a tree on a very steep slope, and an automobile tire was tied to the end of the cable. You could get on that swing and swing way out. We had a lot of fun there. In fact one of my peers told me that the swing had been there since his father was a little boy.

Then, oh, there were springs in that area, and I remember one day following the usual procedure to get a drink, -- you'd lie down on your tummy and just drink out of the spring. And coincidentally that night I must have eaten something that didn't agree with me at home and had heartburn, and I was sure I'd swallowed a tadpole when I'd been drinking out of that spring.

In these woods we used to get our Christmas tree. Every year y father and I would go back there; there was a stand of evergreens in there and we'd just chop down our Christmas tree.

Now the Burleith office was built at the corner of 36 and R; the house occupied by the Wilhelms was torn down and in its place Shannon and Luchs built their first office. The Shannon and Luchs houses, the first ones, were built on both sides of S Street between 36th and 37th Streets. And I remember how they went about their excavation. The horses – or mules, usually, rather, would pull a scoop – a two- handled scoop that a man walked behind. They'd scoop up the dirt and take it down to the end of the excavation where they would dump it and the steamshovel would pick it up and put it onto the dump carts that were there, and it was hauled off to where they needed fill. And they did the whole block, the whole excavation for all the houses, that way. It was a regular parade of those scoops going around in a circle until they got the excavation down to the level they wanted. This was, I think, an innovation in housing construction and certainly was an improvement over digging out each single foundation one at a time. And another thing they did which I think was an innovation was they put elevators in – they built an elevator shaft out of wood and they had a steam operated device – machine – to hoist the elevator up and as the building proceeded instead of carrying bricks and mortar up as a lot of other people did, having these men then (hod carriers, they called them) carrying the stuff up ladders, well, they just hauled stuff up on these elevators and built the storey for every house on the block at the same time.. They'd take these wheelbarrows up on the elevator with mortar, for example, and they'd have a catwalk up there, and they'd take it down the block to where it was needed.

Now of course these were innovations in construction. The local prophets would come to see what was going on and say 'Oh, these houses will all fall down in ten years.' But the prophets are gone and the houses are still there.

Another innovation was just in the way Shannon and Luchs positioned houses. They gave everybody a front yard, which was unusual for row houses that time. They did another thing in their construction I think was probably new. Of course at that time there was no mechanical refrigeration, particularly not in homes, and everybody used ice, so with all the new Burleith houses there was a pass-through whereby the iceman could come and just put the ice into the icebox from an outside door. I remember the procedure for ordering ice: the lady of the house would hang a sign out and all the icemen had these signs and it was a square piece with various numbers on each corner They'd be let's say 15, 25, 35, 50, and this was the cost of whatever size piece of ice the lady wanted. So whatever number was uppermost was the size piece of ice that the lady wanted. There were lots and lots of icemen around Georgetown at that time and it was all individual businesses, but an awful lot of ice had to be used because there was just hitch rides on the back of the ice trucks – horse-drawn ice wagons – because they were ideally constructed for hitching. The man driving could not see what was going on behind him because the cab – the box – had to be enclosed so that the ice didn't melt, and also in the back there was a step that he had to step on in order to get the ice and so that made a wonderful place for us to ride. Not only could we sneak a ride that way but we could also get a little piece of ice and chew on it as we went along. Of course most of the icemen didn't want you to ride on their wagons, so you had to kinda sneak on. But we got a lot of good rides that way. One man's weapon against us boys was tobacco juice. He had pretty good aim; you had to be careful when you got on the back of Mr. Perry's wagon.

There were other horse drawn carriages around at that time. What was fascinating was the milkman and his horse.. Of course milkmen delivered milk to the home at that time. Their horses were so trained that the man would take two containers with say six quarts of milk in each container, and he'd go along the rows of houses and drop off whatever quantity of milk was required by each. The horse would walk along and stop

at the corner where he knew the man would finish delivering those two baskets of milk. And then without even saying a word or giving any signals the man would get on the milk wagon and the horse would take off. The horse knew the route as well as the milkman did.

Then we also had hucksters. These men would go down to the central market and get produce and then come up and go through the neighborhood hawking their wares and the ladies would come out and buy whatever they had to sell. And they'd announce whatever they had that particular day. Usually on Fridays they had fish.

Back in those days Georgetown was not the popular residential area that it is today. Actually, particularly the area west of Wisconsin Avenue was pretty much blue collar. But Georgetown was also considered to be the area all the way up to the intersection of 35th Street and Wisconsin Avenue. So really Burleith was part of what in those days was considered Georgetown. But I think because of the blue collar character of Georgetown, Shannon and Luchs wanted to be sure that their new community was not confused with or associated with blue collar Georgetown, and therefore gave it its own name.

At the meeting last night there was a discussion of what the original price of the houses was. The brochure indicates that prices started at \$8,950, but I seem to remember that they were around \$7,500 with a premium of another few hundred dollars for the corner houses. At the meeting, one lady said that she paid only – well, less than \$7,000 for her house. However, she did not buy it from Shannon and Luchs, but from a previous owner.

Earlier, when I was talking about Cox's or D T Woods I neglected to talk about the oaks. There used to be a stand of oaks that we used quite a bit. It was a wonderful place for picnics; we often had family picnics up there. I was curious, and the other day I drove up into the area where they would have been, and sure enough there were probably six or seven of those mammoth oak trees there when I was a lad, and two of them are still there. They are back of some houses between 38th and 39th Streets, between T Street and S Street.

Where these oaks are located is where the gypsies used to camp. They didn't stay very long but every once in a while a band of gypsies would come by and camp in the area of those trees. And of course we were admonished by our parents not to go anywhere near the gypsies because they would steal little boys and girls and take them away, and they'd never see their parents again.

I'm proud of the fact that actually I was one of the builders of Burleith. When I was about twelve or thirteen years old I applied for and got the job of water boy for the houses on T Street between 38th and 39th Streets. I would get my bucket of water from a barrel that had ice in it and I would make my rounds where the carpenters and the tile setters and the plumbers and so forth were working and they would dip some water out of my bucket and refresh themselves. I also was paper boy in the Burleith area prior to that time. When the houses were built I delivered the Washington Post to them and subsequently the Washington Herald.

Earlier we talked about the cost of the houses back in the beginning of Burleith. To give you some idea of the cost of labor, when I was the water boy, I got seven dollars a week, for working six and a half days. When I delivered the Washington Post I got ten dollars a month for doing that. So you can see how they could build and sell houses at the prices cited.

Well, so much for all this nostalgia. I've certainly enjoyed putting this material together. It's been a great source of enjoyment for me and I hope whoever reads it will enjoy knowing what this area was like before there was a Burleith. Thank you.