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**John Nicholas Brown Center For American Civilization,
Benefit Street, Providence, Rhode Island**

Interviewer: Scott Middleton

Narrator: Richard Worrell

Middleton: This is Scott Middleton on March 6, 2009 interviewing Richard Worrell about his experience with the Fox Point neighborhood of Providence, RI as part of the Fox Point Oral History Project to be archived for posterity at Brown University. Our legal agreement will be signed at the end of the interview. Mr. Worrell, I thought we might start at the beginning, were you born in Fox Point?

Worrell: No, no. I grew up in the Wayland Square area.

Middleton: Did you move to Fox Point at some point?

Worrell: I moved there in, when I came back to Providence following education and military. I lived the Benefit St. area, South Benefit St. area beginning in about 1960. And then when I got married we moved over to, well shortly, a year or so after we got married we moved over to John St. between Governor and East.

Middleton: Um so where did you go to school before you left Providence.

Worrell: I went to primary, and I guess and secondary, primary school John Howland, which was a public school up on Luzon Ave. off of Cole St. Which is now, which is since been, went there through about the sixth grade, then went to Moses Brown School for the rest of my undergraduate education, graduate education, you know, what do you call it? Primary, secondary yeah.

Middleton: How would you compare your education to what you know of the education in Fox Point in the schools there.

Worrell: I really don't have any way of judging that, so that's not really a good...

Middleton: So once you moved into Benefit St, and later John St, you said? What were your first impressions of the neighborhood.

Worrell: Well I loved the Benefit St. area, I've always really like the area. I had been living in the Georgetown area of Washington, D.C. in the late 50s and then in the Beacon Hill area in Boston during my law school days. And, uh, the old, then beginning to be preserved neighborhoods in the Fox Point area really appealed to me. I liked the old houses and I liked the colonial atmosphere there and I had a great appreciation for preservation having lived in some of the... Georgetown and Beacon Hill.

Middleton: What was your first house on Benefit St. like?

Worrell: Ha ha. Let's see. First house on Benefit St. actually was... I lived in a basement apartment. Uh, right at the corner of Power and Benefit, which was a great area. You had to come in from the street and go through an old bathroom and then into a little one room area which had a little cute garden apartment to it. So it was a pretty nice, uh...

Middleton: Were you living by yourself.

Worrell: Yeah, yeah.

Middleton: Were you a renter?

Worrell: I was a bachelor, renting sure.

Middleton: How was your, how were your landlords?

Worrell: Landlords were great. But, uh, unusual. They were members of a Bahia cult, religious cult, which is a Middle East cult. You've heard about in Iraq recently.

Middleton: Um, were there are a lot of them in Fox Point?

Worrell: No, no. They were unique. They were unusual. There were not many of those people around, although there was a great diversity of people in the Fox Point area.

Middleton: And, um, can you describe the diversity.

Worrell: Well, at that time, my, this was in 1960, and I was, I was not really involved in the community all that much. Because I tended to affiliate with graduate students at Brown or RISD and, and recent, young arrivals in Providence who were really not mixed in the community. And so in fairness to what you're trying to accomplish, my days as a bachelor, say '60 to '64, were, I was not really part of that community of, in general. The diversity I observed in those days was that there were, there was really three parts to that area. One was, uh, some fairly wealthy people living in the John St., Arnold St, Williams, Power St, closer to Benefit St. Many of whom I had known, some of whom I had known when I was growing up. And that was one end of the group that was in existence there. Another element that you saw was kind of all the people connected with the University, which included undergraduate students sprinkled throughout the area. And then the third element, which during the early part of my time down there, I didn't have much exposure to. I had some exposure, but not a lot. And that would be the group, that, the ethnic mix that by now I'm sure you're familiar with. The Portuguese, the Portuguese from the Azores primarily, the Cape Verdean people, and a lot of the Irish who were beginning, at that point, were beginning to move out to other parts of the city as they became upwardly-mobile. And then there was a smattering of a kind of others, Lebanese, that kind of thing.

Middleton: So were your neighbors primarily students?

Worrell: Yeah, yeah. My neighbors were primarily students.

Middleton: And when did you move to John St?

Worrell: I moved to John St...

Middleton: And why?

Worrell: ...in, I had, I had gotten involved with, uh, then Governor John Chafee. He was governor or he was candidate for governor, I don't remember. And he became a good friend of mine and I used to play squash with him. And we talked about politics and I told him I was interested in politics. And he said, well if you're interested what you oughta do is run for office. Which I thought, had some sense to it. And he said, I tell you what you oughta do, you oughta buy a house in Fox Point area and run for city council. And that was in maybe 1963 or something like that.

Middleton: Now why was it that you had to move to run for office.

Worrell: Well, because in the process of this conversation I was having with him I was in the process of getting married, in 1964 I got married. And I guess we lived in a little, a little tiny apartment on Benefit St. on the corner of James St. I can't remember, the number was 38... something. 386 I guess. And, you know, I knew we couldn't, we knew we wanted to live in that area, and continue to live in that area. So he said what you oughta do is buy a house down there. And I said, a house! You crazy? There's two kinds of houses down there, one of them I can't afford, which is where all the people, you know, on Power St. and Williams St. area. You know, cuz I was at the time I was practicing law but I wasn't making enough money to afford much of a house. And, so he said well just find a house down there. So, I did. I looked around, found a house and bought one for \$4600 in 1964. And that was down on John St. in what I call the, I used to call to ends John St. – the “richy end,” where the rich people used to live down near Benefit and the “welfare end,” which was down near Governor St., which is where we bought the house. So for \$4600 bucks.

Middleton: How did that cost compare to your neighbors on that side of John St? Similar?

Worrell: No, that was even then, that was pretty low. That was 1964. Prices weren't that cheap. But this house had not been lived in for, since probably 1943 or 4. And it had been boarded up since 1943 or 44. It was a wreck. There were holes in the roof. The first day I walked in the place I sank through the floor. Just about broke my crotch because my whole leg was dangling down in the cellar. But I had a sense for restoration. I had lived in a restored house in an old part of Georgetown in Washington for a couple of years and I knew what could be done. So I had an eye for that and I really liked the idea of restoring the city rather than bulldozing.

Middleton: So how did you meet your wife? In Providence?

Worrell: Yeah, she's the sister of a good friend of mine from college.

Middleton: So how would you describe your neighbors on John St?

Worrell: Well, the only ones who weren't on welfare moved out before we moved in and the rest of them were, had, on some variety of welfare or public assistance. A lot of them, I mean not all of them that's not fair, but, you know, a number of them were on some, some form of public assistance. And they were mixed ethnic, racial bag. In the neighborhood, I mean, clearly at that time on John St. we were the only professional people.

Middleton: So where were your neighbors employed, generally, if they were employed?

Worrell: If they, if they were employed. Some of them were longshoremen. Others weren't employed at all. But several of them were longshoremen I know, were involved with that kind of work.

Middleton: Given your interest in preservation and restoration what was the movement like in the area?

Worrell: Was really just beginning to get some headway. Mrs. Chase had done a lot of really great stuff on North Benefit St. Happy Chase. And there were some beginning ins 1964, there were clearly some beginnings in the, kind of, I would say the western end of those streets, on over to Benefit St. maybe from Hope St., no, maybe from Brook St. over to Benefit St. There was some beginnings of restoration going on. Antoinette Downing was really, just terrific leader both locally and nationally in the restoration movement. But that was early on still. There was a woman named Mrs. Allen (sp) who lived a couple of doors away from the Hope Club, Betty, Betty Allen I think. She was involved with that and encouraging and identifying houses that had real architectural value in the city, but as far as anything east of, of, east of Hope St. clearly there was very little. Restoration. Maybe even east of, yeah east of Hope St. I would say, almost none. When we took that old house and we did restoration on that house, that we, had to be totally restored. There was no central heating in it. There was one toilet down in the corner of the basement and that was the only plumbing in the whole house. There was no, it had never been electrified. There had never been electricity in the house.

Middleton: So was this house more dilapidated than the other houses in the area?

Worrell: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. It was a wreck.

Middleton: Do you have any idea how it became such a mess?

Worrell: Sure. It was the, it was a family, one family lived in that house. Oh no, two families that lived there, but one family lived there essentially from the time it was built

shortly after the, just before the Civil War. One family lived in the house for a period of, up until the early 40s, when there was, then became one reclusive old woman who lived in one or two of the rooms and everything else just was boarded up and was let go totally. There hadn't been anybody living in that house when we moved in, or when we bought it. There hadn't been anybody living in that house for a period of probably about 20 plus year, 22, 23 years. [interruption] Where were we?

Middleton: You were talking about your involvement with the reclusive, old woman.

Worrell: Yeah well she lived there from about 1940, 1, 2, 3, something like that. Then it was boarded up the rest of the time and for the probably ten years she lived there nothing was done on it. It was a wreck.

Middleton: So after 1964 how did your political career develop?

Worrell: Well, I ran for the city council right off the bat. And I was, that had been a Democratic stronghold. The Democrats used to win down there 8 or 9 to 1, 10 to 1. And the, so, anyway. And I ran as a Republican with a connection with John, you know Senator Chafee, who by that time was governor I believe, pretty sure he was governor. And, you know, I won the election. And just, so, which was good. So I was elected as a Republican, that was the year Barry Goldwater. That was a little bit of a difficult walk-around, back in those days trying to explain how come I wasn't one of those whacked-out conservatives like Barry Goldwater, but anyhow. So I stayed in the Providence City Council for six years.

Middleton: From 1965 to 1971?

Worrell: Yeah, 64 to 70.

Middleton: Uh, can you speak a little bit about your campaign. I know Lou Costa was your campaign manager.

Worrell: Yeah, I, some I met Lou once. Lou was stationed aboard a submarine in the Providence Harbor in those days and he was a Fox Pointer and I was giving a talk at the Fox Point School one night early in the, very early in my career. And he came up to me afterwards and said, and he was on active duty, and he came up to me afterwards and said, I like what I hear you talking about. I'd like to work with you. I'd like to help you out. I think I can help you with a lot of the Portuguese people in this area, which was an understatement because I didn't know anybody. So Lou and I hooked up and he had, was instrumental in helping me become known in the Portuguese community. He took me around to all the different, there were two Portuguese clubs that we used to go to all the time. The Social Club on Sheldon St. and the Sporting Club on Gano St. And Lou, you know, would just walk in with me and he would demand that those guys pay attention to me. And, you know, they were receptive. You know, if I had tried to walk in there myself, I'd have been, you know, I never could have pulled that off without him. So that was, that was part of the campaign. The other part of the campaign that Lou was terrific

on was we would go door to door. And this had never been done in Fox Point, the Democrats always figured they had a shoe-in. You know, they were, the candidates were people really from the community and integrated into the community and long-term community people. And Lou and I would go door to door so that these people could get exposed to me and I could get exposed to a lot of the people otherwise I just wouldn't have known. And they all knew him and they knew them all because he came from a pretty good sized family and had lived in the Point all his life. With the exception of his military I think he went, I think he joined the Navy was about 15, 16 years old. He was away a fair amount, but he loved it here and he was very much involved with the community, with the Boys' Club. He used to teach swimming and, and he knew everybody. And, you know, not just the Portuguese people, but also the Cape Verde and Irish.

Middleton: You said that he liked what you were saying is why he started associating with you. What was it about your message or platform that he liked?

Worrell: I don't know. One of the early platform things that I had going on was, was the use of India Point as a park in, and it may have been that, it may have been that. I was very strong on that by that time. Mary Elizabeth Sharpe had begin, had begun to do some funding for surveys to see if that area could be made into a park and she was, she had really got the thing started. At the time there was a major feature down there was the big scrap heap that was a terminal for scrap iron right smack in the middle of that area and ships would come in and trucks would come in and bring all the scrap metal, pretty much iron and steel, and drop it off at the, right where the park is now. And then, the ships would come in and they'd load up with this scrap and take it someplace else. To me it was, it was a working waterfront it those days. No question. It was a lovely area. I would ride my bike or go running down there and hang around just 'cuz I thought it was a wonderful place. I thought, boy this would be great for a park. So that was one of the things I was pushing pretty hard when I was candidate. I don't know if that's what appealed to Lou or what, but I think, and the other thing I think, you know I think there was just a natural chemistry with us from the get go.

Middleton: If we can go back to India Point for a minute, construction began right after you left office, is that correct? Right around the time you left office?

Worrell: Yeah I would say it was somewhere in the late 60s, early 70s. I don't recall exactly.

Middleton: When you were in office what was your involvement with the creation of the park.

Worrell: I did everything I could to, you know, help get financing, get any changes, road directions and I did a lot, you know I was always talking about, so people became – and I was always pushing it – trying to get people to have the vision. So I suppose that was my role as much as anything. And the funding, where I could have an impact.

Middleton: Now I understand that 195 was completed or constructed during your term as well, right?

Worrell: Yeah I think so. Yeah I think so.

Middleton: Did you have any involvement with that project?

Worrell: Well, one of the areas, one area that I did have an involvement was as part of the 195 construction, there was talk of funding a connector from the Henderson Bridge along the west shore of the Seekonk River and connecting up with 195 down in at India Point. That would have blown out the Gano St. Park and taken away the Engineers Field, which was the softball field right behind Hoisting Engineers Headquarters on Gano St. We put a stop to that. We felt it was unnecessary to destroy that strip along the west side of the Seekonk River.

Middleton: How did you put a stop to it?

Worrell: Well basically we both encouraged and we encouraged a lot of public opposition to it, supported the public opposition to it, and, you know, essentially killed the federal funding for it, killed the city planning efforts to do it at the city council level.

Middleton: What are your feelings on how 195 changed the neighborhood since you, I think you saw it before and after?

Worrell: Yeah, you know I don't have, I was not in a position where I was intimately connected with the neighborhood before 195, so for me to answer that question I think would be unfair. I don't feel qualified to answer that question. I know there were some changes, you know, and there was some demolition of a lot of houses, which hurts any neighborhood. You know, I firmly believe that. I hate to see the demolition of any houses, demolition of neighborhoods where you can avoid it.

Middleton: So, um, who, while you were in office, who were your largest supporters and detractors, if you had any?

Worrell: Well, I had a lot of support from the old Yankees, that WASP-y Brown University community because they perceived me, you know, I think they perceived me as an educated person. I was a lawyer at the time and practicing law and, you know, belonged to couple of the right clubs, so that segment of the population, I think, was always very strong, was always very strong supporters. And then, you know, I got a lot of support through the Portuguese community thanks to Lou Costa and his family and then I got the Cape Verde community. I had a couple of interesting relationships with the Cape Verde community that I think were very helpful to me. One of them I recall, included a couple of [interruption]. Anyway what was I talking about? Oh yeah, in the Cape Verde community I developed a couple of allies, one of them was a guy by the name of Jerry Alves and the Alves Family was a big family in Fox Point, lived on Pike St.

Middleton: It's Alves Way now, right?

Worrell: I'm sorry?

Middleton: It's Alves Way now, right?

Worrell: Yeah, right. And Jerry was kind of a sporting life character if there ever was one. More damn fun than a barrel of rubber-legged monkeys, he'd been a semi-pro football player and was a neat guy. He, I think Jerry's life got off track somewhere along the line and we parted and Jerry, I think, died a number of years back. But in any event, Jerry was tireless, I mean he'd come and pick me up and take me around to all these families, introduce me and push my cause and he was just great. And then, and he was one of the guys there. The other guy that became a really good friend, and, was we met, I met through, when I went into there used to be a place called Manny's, Manny Almeida's Bar on the corner of Brook and Wickenden St., where there's now a place called ZBar. It used to be in those days, a club called Manny's and the, I won't say it was a blacks-only club, but cuz white guys could go in there, but almost no white guys went in there, so I walked in there one day with my, another one of my good campaign guys, a fellow by the name of Wilkinson, who was a guy that was interested in real estate, had a big, natural bent for, had been a professional soldier, had been one of the early Green Berets, had been a World War II, Korea, Vietnam with the French and then two more tours Vietnam with the Americans, and he was, at that time, had just gotten, was recovering from a broken back. He was in airborne. But he was about 6 foot 8, and he and I walked into Manny Almeida's one day, first time around I figured, well, you gotta face up to this juggernaut here where they don't, where not too many white guys go in there. And Jerry was helping me out a lot, so Jerry and I and Bob Wilkinson walked into this place one day and, of course, everybody's eyeballing this 6 foot 8 professional soldier with this little Ivy League guy with, you know, the pointy-toed shoes and the white shirt on and "who are these characters and what are they doing here?" So, after about half-an-hour in there, it turns out that my friend Bob Wilkinson, the big guy, the former military person, was sitting next to a guy by the name of Roger Alves, Roger Valles, I'm sorry. And it turns out those two guys had been, not in the same time, but had been in the same special forces unit, had a number of friends in common, became instant buddies, and then Roger Valles hooked up with us and he couldn't do enough for us. He came, and he was one of the biggest families in the Fox Point area, the Valles family, very well-respected, and Roger and I and Bob Wilkinson became, you know, very good friends personally as well as in, you know, as time went on. But we, Roger Valles would take me around to everybody. Everybody I hadn't met through Jerry Alves I had met through Roger Valles. He was very well-connected, very well-respected. He was an interesting, thoughtful, very bright, and very fun guy. There's a footnote to that, Bob Wilkinson subsequently married Roger's sister, Susan, and I can't remember. OK, so, anyway they got married and lived together until Bob died 18 months ago. So, anyhow, that was part of the political stuff that got going. One other quick little story about Bob Wilkinson, there was another bar on Wickenden St., you hate to call 'em a black bar, but you know, the fact is that the clientele was almost exclusively Cape Verde guys, and Wilkinson and I walked

in there one day just the two of us, one night, one afternoon, late one afternoon. And the next thing I know, Wilkinson's going head-to-head with the biggest guy in the place, who was about, just about his size, and they were having a, one of these [claps hands], "Hey who do you think you are? What are you doing, coming in here?" And, Wilkinson was not about to back down and this guy wasn't about to back down and I sat over there in the corner saying, "Oh, god what's gonna happen next?" And as it turns out, that guy was a longshoreman, as it turned out two years, either two or four years later, that same guy was elected to Providence city council from the South Providence area and that was Lloyd Griffin. He's had a very interesting career in Providence politics, Lloyd Griffin.

Middleton: Now, you said that Fox Point was a solidly Democratic area in 1964, did that change at all? I mean, I know...

Worrell: Not much, they used to vote for John Chafee because they liked him and they voted for me in the two elections that I ran. But my running mate in the '64 election was beaten in the '66 election by a guy by the name of John Murphy, who was a wonderful man a great person and obviously an Irish guy. John could almost, has become a very successful business man and a founder of a company called Home Loan and Investment and, at that, so John and I, he was a Democrat and I was a Republican, we served together for a time. And I would say that the major Fox Pointers changed ethnically and demographically significantly since the '60s. Much of that whole area has been now been gentrified. Much of the area we lived in on John St. has been gentrified. You know, John St, I like to say this, tell this story when people ask me, "What was it like being on the city council back then? What was it like living on John St. then?" Well, you know there were three murders on our street in a relatively short period of time when I lived there. And of course I knew all the parties involved. We had three murders, so it was not exactly a sweetheart of a place.

Middleton: Since you mentioned gentrification when, what was the first sign you noticed of that, that process?

Worrell: It was beginning to go on, I mean Brown had bought up a number of, it, Brown would move, well. I suppose the first sign when I realized just how serious a movement preservation was as it a result of my getting to know Antoinette Downing, who is a giant nationally in the preservation movement to this day. And she was a one-man army, what she did to promote preservation of all those old homes, and you know the triple deckers that people turned their nose at in the 1940s. Antoinette Downing would see in them some real architectural beauty and promote the creation. Antoinette Downing forced Brown University over and over again whenever Brown was expanding to take the houses that they would've torn down otherwise and have 'em moved someplace. And there were a whole bunch of houses for example on John St. that were moved lock, stock and barrel to the locations on John, not necessarily while I was on the council, but over the years.

Middleton: And what effect do you think that gentrification had on rents in the area?

Worrell: They finally, they, you know, relatively lower-earning people were essentially forced out. And that's one of the downsides of gentrification. It's a downside of gentrification. They're forced out and moved elsewhere.

Middleton: Was this happening while you were in office?

Worrell: It began to, but yeah.

Middleton: But did it reach the extent that you could see the demographic change in the area?

Worrell: Not while I was in office.

Middleton: Not while you were in office? And how did your political career come to an end and why?

Worrell: Well I realized that you had to, that I had to make a decision that I was either going to become a full-time politician and give up my practice and the business I'd had had, I was beginning to get involved with another business at that time. I realized that I had, by 1967, I had gone to work for one of the big national accounting firms as a tax lawyer and I realized that you can't be in elected politics and be in business unless you happen to have significant family wealth, which I did not. So I knew I either had to give up my business career, my professional career, or my political career as an office-holder. One of them had to go. You know, by that time I had had two children and a pregnant wife and I had to make some decisions and I just decided that I could not maintain both a business, I couldn't grow a business and grow a political office-holding career.

Middleton: Did you stay in Fox Point after you left office?

Worrell: No I did not. We bought a house at that point we had, by that time, we had three children and the little house on John St, was great for when we had one or two children, but for three children it was getting pretty crowded, so we moved over to the area where I had grown up, University Avenue. Irving Avenue area. I had bought a house over there, a much bigger house.

Middleton: So, well then, have you lived in that area since?

Worrell: Yeah, yeah.

Middleton: So living on the East Side in the past thirty or forty years, what changes have you seen in Fox Point?

Worrell: Oh the gentrification was going on at a very rapid rate. A lot of the old families I knew, where, especially in our neighborhood, were force out because of the economics of the housing. Pure and simple. And the ethnic solidarity of the neighborhood has changed greatwas going on at a very rapid rate. A lot of the old families I knew, where,

especially in our neighborhood, were force out because of the economics of the housing. Pure and simple. And the ethnic solidarity of the neighborhood has changed greatly. You know one, one. If you get into the ethnic solidarity it's, Fox Point's a wonderful place because all of the different, if you were ethnic which is a terrible term and sociologists should probably cringe when they hear me even say that, but you know the blocks of the Irish, the Portuguese, the Cape Verde. The all went to, I'll tell you this as a little sideline, they all went to different churches and, you know, the Irish went to St. Joe's and the Portuguese went to Holy Rosary and a lot of the Cape Verde people went to the Sheldon St. Church and they would compare notes with each other and they'd say, talking about me, they'd say, "Hey does Worrell go to the St. Joseph's?" you know, the Irish shorthand, the Irish church, "Nope." "Well does he go to the Holy Rosary?" "Nope." "Well, he doesn't go to Sheldon St, we know that. He's not, then he must be Jewish. So [laughter], which was of course not the case because I was an old-fashioned Episcopalian, so, you know, there were, at the time and even now, no Episcopal church down there, you know? So, although a lot of the people from those churches still go to those churches, they're coming in from East Providence, they're coming in from Warwick.

Middleton: And since you mentioned the Jewish population. I've heard there was some animosity between Cape Verdeans, Irish, Azoreans, and the Jewish population of Fox Point. Do you have any experience with that?

Worrell: Never had any experience with that.

Middleton: How large was the Jewish population in the area.

Worrell: You know, I wanna say a relatively small...

Middleton: They must have lived in other parts of Providence?

Worrell: Yeah. I mean, sure. I would not say that there were, that I knew any Jewish people in our immediate neighborhood. I'm sure there were, but I didn't know about it. And as far as animosity is concerned, I don't, I never observed any of it.

Middleton: So what do you know about the politics of Fox Point after 1970? Were they different from when you were in office?

Worrell: Well I think the ethnic mixture has gotten really, made into a, whereas it used to be fairly clearly and fairly observable. Now the mix is much more jumbled up and mixed up now than it was. And it's a lot more homogeneous, I think, the general area. I think there's a lot more university people and professional people have moved in. And I think that the great blocks that you used to see of the Irish and the Portuguese and Cape Verde and Portuguese from Azores, that has really mellowed and kind of... All those lines have begun to disappear and have gotten a lot less clear, which is, I suppose is part of the melting pot of America, and maybe it's great, but you hate to see it go in a lot of

ways because there's a lot of very interesting, a lot of interesting clarity with the three different groups of people there.

Middleton: Having lived in Fox Point and outside of Fox Point, how do you think that the rest of the city viewed the area?

Worrell: Views it now or..."

Middleton: Well, viewed it in 1970 and views it today? Is there a difference?

Worrell: I think the Fox Point area had a much clearer identity in 1970 than it does now. Now it's really kind of melded into the greater, quote "East Side." Whereas in 1970 it had a lot more of its individual identity. Would be my take.

Middleton: I've heard it referred to as the "Lower East Side" and I've also seen that old Fox Pointer don't like that term.

Worrell: Oh, I wouldn't like it at all. But I think that's what probably has happened. I think you're right about that.

Middleton: So obviously Fox Point has changed over time. In your opinion, has it changed for the better or for the worse? Or is that not a fair question?

Worrell: Both.

Middleton: Well, OK. Who benefited and who lost from the transformation of the neighborhood.

Worrell: Well that's a hard question and that's a legitimate question. I think that families who had lived there for a long time and were forced to, to disperse elsewhere by the economics of gentrification lost because they lost roots. Perhaps not as dramatically as if the neighborhood had been demolished by a bulldozer, but they did lose, and they lost identity and that is always a loss. Who gained? It's, I think, it's fair to say that the City of Providence on a net basis gained tax base, gained significant tax base. And I think, now one of, I think that's good for any city to get a strong tax base and I think that happened. There's no question about that, that did happen. The preservation movement gained a lot because there were architecturally, architectural preservation has been great on a lot of these old homes. One thing that happened that I think is good, back in the '70s and '60s when I was first there, Brown University's commitment to the neighborhood, quote "Fox Point Neighborhood," was just beginning to become awakened. And Brown since then has done a great job, I think, of helping in many ways in the neighborhood. I mean, Vartan Gregorian's efforts at the Fox Point School have been just terrific and Brown University in general has continued that involvement with the Fox Point School, which has been great for everybody. That's been a win-win all over.

Middleton: Well, when you think about the future of Fox Point, what do you hope for? Where would you like to see it in ten years?

Worrell: One of the things that I'd very much like to see completed is the, and I don't think it's done yet, is the India Point Park, there are two pieces that need attention and I'm hoping that they're going to get the attention. One is the burial of the power lines, seems to be a great positioning now of the finances to do that, and a commitment by National Grid, which I hope they will live up to, to do that. And that I think will be a great help because it will bring the view from the new relocated 195, both the east and west traffic, a wonderful view down the bay and really realize the beauty of the position of Providence at the head of the bay. The other thing that I think needs to happen is that the, there's been some talk now about using the so-called "Shooter's" property, which is located at the west end of the India Point Park between the tug boat company and the community boating facility. Talking about having that as a sort-of high-rise facility for private condominiums or private residences. In my opinion that would be a terrible mistake, it would block, and all the state planning has said that it would be a big mistake to put that kind of facility there. That piece of property needs to be kept in the public domain and hopefully it will be kept in the public domain. There's a move afoot with a lot of concern from community people to prevent that from happening and to have it maintained in the community as a public space. Hopefully that's what'll happen. So those two things, I think are important for the India Point area. I'd love to see Fox Point continue to be able to provide community housing, affordable, low-cost housing there, so that you can have low-cost, affordable housing in the city and I hope the inventory of that kind of property that's left will not shrink any more than it has already. I think it's hit a pretty good equilibrium.

Middleton: What was, what was your favorite memory of living in Fox Point? You can name a few if you can't choose.

Worrell: Well, from a macro point of view, my life was so greatly enriched by all the different families that I got to know, from all walks of life, especially from, you know, the side of life that I hadn't lived in, that is the kind of non-Ivy League, non-Agawam Hunt kind of existence. The people that we lived with in the neighborhood, we came really good friends and live-long friends. They enriched my life so much. So, you know, I think that was probably, and in so many ways, and that was probably the fondest memory that I have. All the sporting life characters and all the guys and now I talk about those as my "Guys and Dolls" days. When I was practicing law, I used to help, where I could, a lot of these characters that I had gotten to know. I remember one day I got a call, they asked to head up to the District Court, which was then on Benefit St. I was practicing law and making about 100 bucks a week in those days and had some time on my hands and so and I did a fair amount of pro bono work for my constituencies, although that began to come to an end after a while. Not surprisingly, a number of people were taken advantage of, but I got a call one day and he said, why don't you come up to the District Court at 9:00. We got one of the... my brother or my uncle or something had been picked up on gambling charges and could you help them out. So I say "OK" And I did I went up there, and not only had these person's uncle or brother

been picked up on gambling charge, but about 8 other guys, all of whom I knew, you know, from longshoreman's unions. And they were all up there, they had been caught in some sort of floating crap game and nailed by the Providence Police, so I was surrounded by these sporting life characters. And I think I can that I was successful in talking with judge and giving them a second chance. That kind of, that kind of stuff. And you know, I used to go to all this kind of stuff – affairs for different organizations throughout Fox Point. And I got involved with the Fox Point Boys' Club, I was on the Board there for a number of years. And that was enjoyable. That's a great organization, had a few battles, some of which I won, some of which I was on the losing side with some of the Boys' Club on the board.

Middleton: How do you feel about the Boys' Club today and it's new location.

Worrell: That is a great organization, yeah, I mean it was the right place to move it to. The old facility on Power St, was just crumbling and it needed... So this new location was great. Terrific. I think.

Middleton: So we've been going for about an hour, is there anything else you'd like to add before we finish?

Worrell: Let's see. Yeah just that, I hope, one thing is clear that the statute of limitations has run on Lou Costa's being involved with the political campaign at a time when he was on active duty in the United States Navy, because he was, by the law, and I trust that, trust that nobody's gonna try to prosecute Lou at that point, I would add that, you know, I was reminiscing with my wife. I was telling my wife that I was going to be talking to you this morning and one of the things you might wanna mention is that at one point, when the dedication of India Point Park was made, she, my wife, was dressed up to represent Betsy Williams, and she arrived at India Point Park in a canoe with a my little son dressed up like an Indian, and he must have been about 4 years-old at the time and he was dressed up as a little Indian boy, so Betsy Williams and this little Indian boy floated around and landed at the opening of India Point Park, which was kind of a nice thing. You know the, another thing that I might add is that some of the families that we knew when we lived on John St. went through stages of being in trouble with the law, seemed to be altogether too often, but out of that there seemed to be some success stories because at least one of those guys, I can say, I can remember when he went to jail and I can remember when he got out of jail. And he came over and he said to me, he said, "Mr. Worrell. I've learned my lesson. I'm never going back in there." And he had been in trouble with the law since he was 10 years-old. He served a year in jail when he was about 19 or 20. He came over afterwards and he said, "Mr. Worrell, I've learned my lesson and I'm never going back in there." And that man has been in the same job for 30 years, never had a lick of trouble since then. Another guy that I knew, we used to have another family. One of the most, you know, one of the most-accomplished athletic house-breakers and you could put him up against anybody. He got caught soon enough, went to jail, served his time, got out, he's been straight ever since. So getting to know people like this and sympathize with 'em and understand 'em, for me, has been enriching.

Middleton: Do you think that trend is particular to Fox Point?

Worrell: No, I'm sure it's not, I'm sure it's anyplace. But for me, Fox Point was my window into a lot of people's lives, which was great. I mean it was wonderful, so enriching. And I could've been doing a ton of other things, but I just happened to choose that path. And I've no regrets. And I have a lot of very, very happy memories from that kind of experience. And, and, you know, to talk about Costa family for a minute. Lou Costa's wife Judy, got a master's degree at Brown in I'm not quite sure what. Chemistry? Lou, you know, dropped out and got thrown around at school or whatever it was when he was 15 or 16 years old and joined the Navy. And his dad and mom, whom I knew, who were not at all educated, but Lou, I think, all of Lou's kids, most of Lou's kids, not all of them, but several of Lou's kids have gone through undergraduate degrees and some with graduate degrees. The great story, I think is, over and over, Lou and I would say, I would say to him, "Who the hell ever thought a bust-out like you would have so many bright kids." Kidding him, of course, because Lou is very, very bright guy and would, by the time he finished his formal schooling, had a, you know, a 10th grade education while his wife has a master's degree and you would think, you know, what's the percentages of that? And that's worked very well, although, because Lou was out of school at an early age, he's got kind of a great intellect, a great mind. His son, Michael I think it's Michael, was accepted anyplace he wanted to go to college and including, I think where he wanted to go was Stanford. So Lou called me one day and said, "Geez, I hate to see him go all the way out to Stanford, wish he'd go to Brown." But, I don't know if he even applied to Brown. And I think he applied to Brown and was accepted, I guess, at Brown and Stanford and every other place. I think he wanted to be a Classics major, so I happened to know the head of the Classics Department at the time, Allen. So I called up Allen and I say, "You got one of the brightest guys right here who's gonna go to Stanford. Would you please meet this kid?" Which he did, talked him into going to Brown. I think Michael got one B at Brown. All the rest were A's. I look at that and see a great sense of America. Immigrant, father drop-out kid, because they're able to, because they're able to get access to these opportunities, look what can happen. Did, has Lou talked to you about his relationship with Foster Damon?

Middleton: No.

Worrell: See if you can get him to talk to you about that. Write that down. Foster Damon was a professor of literature, I think, at Brown. And Foster Damon made a, he had a big thing on Halloween and he would invite all the neighborhood kids to his house on Halloween. And Lou started going there when he was a little kid and developed a great relationship with Foster Damon. Now that's another example of how everything mixed in at Fox Point and an example of how Brown was really, you know, doing a lot for the neighborhood. Although, you know, I don't know who else besides Foster Damon was doing that. So Foster Damon lived, I think it was around Thayer and Williams, right around that neighborhood.

Middleton: Where did Brown faculty typically live in that time?

Worrell: Oh they lived kind of, you know, down where I live now. Irving Avenue, the East Side area, all throughout there. And some lived in Fox Point, but don't forget in those days the housing in Fox Point was either pretty upscale towards, you know, the John, Williams, Power St. down towards Benefit on the west end or it was kind of downscale where I ended up living. So there weren't too many of them over there, now they're all throughout that area. They're all over the place, the faculty. And RISD, as well. So, that's some stuff to chew on.

Middleton: All right, thank you very much. I'm gonna turn the recorder off.