



THE ALEXANDRIA ORAL HISTORY CENTER
OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA
CITY OF ALEXANDRIA



Oral History Interview

with

Gant Redmon

Interviewer: *Kerry James Reed*

Narrator: *Gant Redmon*

Location of Interview:
510 King St, Alexandria, VA, 22314

Date of Interview: *2/7/2024*

Transcriber: *Kerry J Reed*

Summary:

Gant Redmon reflects on his life since moving to Alexandria in the 1960s, including campaigning for Republican candidates in Alexandria, working as an Attorney in the city, volunteering and chairing various city committees and community organizations.

Notes:

Disclaimer: This interview contains an instance of relic hunting per Mr. Redmon's recollection (see 00:46:41). The Office of Historic Alexandria encourages those with buried history on their property to reach out to Alexandria's City Archaeologists at archaeology@alexandriava.gov. Relic hunting is not permitted on city property per the [Alexandria Code on Metal Detecting and Digging on City Property](#).

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General	Urban Renewal; Law; Lawyers; Volunteer; Civic Clubs; King St; Politics; Republican Party; Campaigning; Childhood; Career; Real Estate; Urban Development; Leadership; Inaugural Balls; Chamber of Commerce; Rotary Club
People	Gant Redmon; Fran Redmon; M. Lee Rice; Til Hazel; Bertie Birtwell; Steve Hartwell; Joel T Broyhill; Marlee Inman; Bob Calhoun; Carlyle "Connie" Ring; Wiley Mitchell; Bill O'Neil; Bill Vosbeck; John O. Goddin; Shawn McLoughlin

Places	St. Louis, MO; Belle Haven; Landmark Shopping Center; Seminary Hill; King St; Duke St; Edsall Rd; Collinsville, IL; Washington, D.C.; Waterfront; Richmond Highway; Shirley Highway
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Gant Redmon: [00:00:01] Gant Redmon, age 86. Today is February the 7th, 2024, and we're at 510 King Street, suite 301, in Old Town Alexandria. [00:00:12][11.5]

Kerry James Reed: [00:00:14] My name is Kerry James Reed. I am 26 years of age. It is February 7th, 2024. We are at 510 King Street. So, thank you so much for agreeing to do this, Mr. Redmon. It's been an absolute pleasure getting to know you over these past few weeks. This is going to be an absolutely fascinating interview. We start with some basic stuff. Where were you born? [00:00:30][16.0]

Gant Redmon: [00:00:31] Born in St. Louis, Missouri. [00:00:32][1.0]

Kerry James Reed: [00:00:33] Saint Louis, Missouri. [00:00:33][0.7]

Gant Redmon: [00:00:34] But I grew up across the river. [00:00:35][1.2]

Gant Redmon: [00:00:36] Oh, really? [00:00:36][0.2]

Gant Redmon: [00:00:36] Just like Alexandria is across the river from Washington, DC, my hometown of Collinsville, Illinois, was up on the bluff overlooking East St. Louis and St. Louis. After we left, they built the Arch, and on a clear day, you could see the arch from our town. [00:00:54][18.0]

Kerry James Reed: [00:00:56] What was that like growing up next to such a nationally renowned landmark, the Arch? What was that like? [00:01:01][5.4]

Gant Redmon: [00:01:02] Well, the arch, of course, came right after we left. [00:01:04][2.2]

Kerry James Reed: [00:01:04] Oh, of course. [00:01:05][0.3]

Gant Redmon: [00:01:05] My wife and I went off to college and then they started building the arch about that time. [00:01:10][4.4]

Kerry James Reed: [00:01:10] What was it like to miss out on that? I guess you could say. [00:01:13][2.4]

Gant Redmon: [00:01:13] Too bad, and I've never been up in it. [00:01:14][1.5]

Kerry James Reed: [00:01:18] Could you describe what growing up in Collinsville was like? [00:01:20][2.1]

Gant Redmon: [00:01:21] Collinsville was a typical small Midwestern town. When my wife Fran and I were there, there was a population of 8500, but it was really somewhat of a bedroom community for St. Louis. There were a number of folks that worked in downtown St. Louis. A lot of industrial workers worked in East St. Louis. East St. Louis had what they proudly call the “world's largest hog market.” My father worked there. He was the head hog buyer for Swift and Company. [00:01:58][37.0]

Kerry James Reed: [00:01:59] Oh very interesting. What were your parents like? What were their names? [00:02:02][3.6]

Gant Redmon: [00:02:03] Gant. I was a junior. And, got rid of that when I was in law school. But, Charles Gant Redmon was my dad. He was born in 1915, in East St. Louis. My mother was born in 1917, and also in East St. Louis. Then after they married and I came along as the first of three children, they bought a little place in Collinsville. [00:02:35][31.9]

Kerry James Reed: [00:02:37] Very nice. So, you mentioned your father was the head hog purchaser for Swift and Company, I believe you said, did your mother work? [00:02:45][7.8]

Gant Redmon: [00:02:47] Yes. She really worked around home until dad went into the insurance business right after World War II Worked for State Farm. And, she was right there with him and worked in the office. Probably all the time until he retired. [00:03:08][21.5]

Kerry James Reed: [00:03:10] Fascinating. When you were growing up, did your parents emphasize communal work? Working with the community, volunteering at all? [00:03:18][8.0]

Gant Redmon: [00:03:18] A bit, but not too much because it was a tough existence. We lived out on the edge of town. We had, six acres and a lot of it was either in livestock or gardening. And then when we moved into town. Why, it was still a busy time. And really, it was the involvement with their three children that dragged them into the communal work, if you will. And dad was a proud member of the Lions Club and, did an awful lot of work with them. [00:03:55][37.1]

Kerry James Reed: [00:03:57] You said Lions Club? [00:03:58][0.8]

Gant Redmon: [00:03:58] Lions. [00:03:58][0.0]

Kerry James Reed: [00:03:59] What is that? [00:03:59][0.5]

Gant Redmon: [00:04:00] Lions is like Rotary. Rotary is the grandparent of all of the service clubs that was founded in Chicago in 1905 by Paul Harris and a number of his friends. The Lions came along later. The Optimists came along later. Civitan [International] came along later. So, there wound up a number of, civic service clubs really is what they're called. And, each has a chapter here in Alexandria. [00:04:30][30.6]

Kerry James Reed: [00:04:32] Really? I wasn't aware of that. [00:04:33][1.5]

Gant Redmon: [00:04:34] Yes. Very much. [00:04:36][1.5]

Kerry James Reed: [00:04:37] That's interesting. So, when you first moved to Alexandria then, were you aware of all the service clubs that were in Alexandria? [00:04:44][7.7]

Gant Redmon: [00:04:45] No, but we moved to Alexandria after one year in a duplex in Arlington when we first moved to the Washington area from Illinois. And we lived in Belle Haven. And we bought a fixer upper. To give you a little bit of an idea, our annual real estate taxes on our current home are several thousand dollars more than the purchase price of our entire home in Belle Haven in 1962. [00:05:17][31.3]

Kerry James Reed: [00:05:19] Wow. Come a long way. [00:05:21][1.6]

Gant Redmon: [00:05:23] Well, inflation has done all kinds of things. [laughs] [00:05:25][2.0]

Kerry James Reed: [00:05:26] Absolutely. That's funny. Where did you attend university? [00:05:29][3.2]

Gant Redmon: [00:05:31] I attended the University of Illinois. Both undergraduate and law school. And my wife Fran, we were classmates, of course, in, well, grade school and high school. And then, she went off to Southern Illinois University at Carbondale on a teacher's scholarship. And I went to the University of Illinois on a football scholarship, which I gave up after three days. Why did I do that? Because I got down across the line at 17 years of age from a 23-year-old ex-all-Far East Marine. And I said, 'wait a minute, I don't think this is the league I signed up for.' And so I wrote a check, gave them back what they had given me and, played a lot of intramural football after that. [00:06:19][48.3]

Kerry James Reed: [00:06:21] That's really funny. What position did you play? [00:06:23][2.0]

Gant Redmon: [00:06:24] I was a center. I was an all state center and a kicker. Place kicker, kickoffs and extra points. [00:06:34][9.6]

Kerry James Reed: [00:06:34] Was Illinois the only school that gave you a scholarship, or did you just go there? [00:06:38][3.1]

Gant Redmon: [00:06:38] Well, interestingly enough, I was offered a scholarship to Dartmouth. But being a midwestern fellow and wanting to go to my home state university, never thinking that I would ever wind up on the East Coast. I wanted to go to the University of Illinois, and did so. [00:06:55][17.1]

Kerry James Reed: [00:06:59] When you gave the check back, did you know at that moment you were going to study law? What was your plan after giving up the scholarship? [00:07:08][9.5]

Gant Redmon: [00:07:09] I did know. Because I had concluded, while I was attending Boys State, which is a nationwide program sponsored by the American Legion. After my junior year in high school, I decided I wanted to go to law school. And so, I knew that most of the fellows that were out on that practice field when I was there were all in P.E., physical education. They weren't in pre-law, and I knew where I wanted to go, and I figured that that was time to make a decision. I did, and I've never regretted it. [00:07:53][43.7]

Kerry James Reed: [00:07:55] Did you know what type of law you wanted to study right away? [00:07:58][2.6]

Gant Redmon: [00:08:00] No, didn't really have any idea as to any particular specialty. That's the kind of thing that really you develop over the years because you're more comfortable. And the things that really get your attention and give you gratification personally as well as professionally, that's what I think governs which areas of the law you eventually move into. And in my case, I loved real estate. I loved the subject matter in law school. And it's been in my life all the time. It's either for our client. In several cases, it's been on my own behalf. And, you know, I never meant to be a developer, but, I was one for ten years, and so, you learn an awful lot. Didn't make much money on the deal, but my clients have benefited immeasurably. [00:09:02][62.3]

Kerry James Reed: [00:09:05] What do you think it is about Real Estate law that fascinates you so much, that makes you drawn to it? [00:09:11][5.5]

Gant Redmon: [00:09:11] To me, it's a building process. I love the constructive side of the law as opposed to what I call the repair side of the law. And, I really enjoy being able to put something together. And with real estate, you can see it. It doesn't move usually. And as a result, it's very rewarding. [00:09:35][24.0]

Kerry James Reed: [00:09:36] Absolutely. So you mentioned just a little while ago that you never thought you'd end up on the East Coast. So how did you and your wife come to move to Belle Haven? [00:09:44][7.1]

Gant Redmon: [00:09:45] Well, we wound up on the east coast through the fickle finger of fate. It had to do with the military. I had an enlisted in the Jag. And, I got turned down because of my eyes. My draft board had said for years, "you never have to worry about being drafted because your eyes are so bad." And so when I asked them to send me for a physical, they said, "we can't do that. You're on a deferment." I said, "well, reclassify me 1A and I'll go take the physical, and then we'll all know and we can make some plans." Well, I went to St. Louis to the examining station and the fellow at the eye examination part, I frankly don't think he could have cared less. This was at the time 1960, and if you were a warm body, they were going to take you. So, when he said, "what do you see down there?" And I said, "I'm sorry, I really can't see anything down there on the chart." And he must have thought I was not being truthful. Anyhow, he wrote something down. And when I got through, they said, "you're E4." "Well what's that?" "That means you're acceptable." "What?" So, that then started the Odyssey. And, I enlisted in the Jag and, they turned me down because of my eyes. And so I went back to the draft board, and told them I had taken the management intern option of the FSEE when I did it and passed and

most folks didn't. So I wound up with a lot of offers from here in Washington. So armed with those offers, I went back to the draft board and said, "I want you to give me another year's deferment and I'll go to Washington to participate in the program with Uncle Sam." And they, they agreed. And so instead of telling the mover to take our goods from our apartment to the West coast to San Francisco, where I'd already paid the fee to take the California bar, we told them go east. And we'll let you know where to drop them off as soon as we locate something. So they did. And I came here with the Department of Labor and participated in that program, took me ten out of the 12 months I had to work out the military situation. Got it done. Exited the program. Went off into a private, not private practice, but private business. For two years, I was associate counsel for a missiles and rockets firm here in Alexandria. Actually it was at Shirley Highway and Edsall Road, which was not exactly in Alexandria at that time, but it had an Alexandria Post Office address. So I spent two very wonderful, eventful years at Atlantic Research. And did all the legal work on the first overland missile launch site at Green River, Utah, for the Air Force. [00:13:09][203.7]

Kerry James Reed: [00:13:10] Very interesting. [00:13:10][0.2]

Gant Redmon: [00:13:11] Right. So, then after those two wonderful years, I went into private practice because I wanted to be on the front lines. [laughs] And, the morning after I made that decision, the president of the company called me in, and I thought, 'he's going to give me trouble.' This is Lee Rice. M Lee Rice, wonderful man. He said, "I understand you're going to go into private practice." "Yes, sir." He said, "Congratulations. Let me be your first client." So he gave me a problem having to do with land. And, I worked on that matter for some time and this was representing 11 homeowners around a lake. There were a couple of developments upstream and every time it rained more mud would come down and silt into the lake, eventually kind of filling it up. And I then litigated with the three developers and the matter was resolved with one of the giants of the legal profession and the development business in Northern Virginia, Til Hazel. Til and I had a great time and we got it all solved. [00:14:42][91.0]

Kerry James Reed: [00:14:44] Excellent, excellent. So then moving into Belle Haven was just luck of the draw then? [00:14:49][5.6]

Gant Redmon: [00:14:51] It really was, yeah. Fran and I were looking for a place and we had no idea that Belle Haven was, had such a wonderful reputation or anything of the sort. And that it was one of the very first platted subdivisions in Fairfax County. So we drove by on a Sunday afternoon and looked at the place. And we had no money; we had to have a fixer upper. And so this definitely was a fixer upper. To give you an idea, the vines, this is in May, the vines had grown up and over the garage all the way over the gable. And so the place was so overgrown. The lady who had owned it since it was built in the 30s, Bertie Birtwell, was retired and she had passed away. And the neighbors were, one neighbor was the lawyer for her estate, and the other neighbor was the executrix. And I worked with them. And so we looked at it in the afternoon, and by 6 or 7:00 that night we had written a contract. And we had bought our first home. [00:16:14][82.5]

Kerry James Reed: [00:16:18] Terrific. So, when then did you start to come into Alexandria? [00:16:21][2.9]

Gant Redmon: [00:16:24] Well, living there in Belle Haven, even though it's Fairfax County everybody thinks of it as Alexandria. And so, we were very much here locally; we didn't move into the city until '74. Lived in Belle Haven for 12 years and very active there. I was president of the Citizens Association when Fairfax County announced that we were going to be paying for street lights, whether we had them or not. And so we, I got enough people to agree that we should put in street lights. And so when the power company, then known as VEPCO, laid out the plan there were 312 street lights in the subdivision. There was a little bit of pushback and an uproar over that. When I got through, we had about 112. And, we had spaced them so that they wouldn't be shining in people's eyes and bedrooms and so forth. We were pretty successful. We only had two residents that really weren't happy with that. And I counted that as a huge victory. And so, people could walk their dogs at night and not trip and so forth. So, yeah, we moved in '74 and we moved onto Seminary Road, and we've been there ever since. [00:18:07][102.4]

Kerry James Reed: [00:18:08] How did you come to be involved with the Citizens Association of Belle Haven? It seems like, you know, you immediately moved here, by the fickle hand of fate, as you called it, and then did you immediately come to be involved in the community or how did that come about? [00:18:24][16.1]

Gant Redmon: [00:18:25] Well, Belle Haven is a wonderful place, and it's a close-knit group. When we moved in, we had so much work to do on the house, and, regularly, fellows would stop on their way home from work and see what we had accomplished in the last day. Because my wife and I literally worked every night, we'd stop and get a hamburger at McDonald's on the way, out on Duke Street and work out there. Oh, we kind of acquired 175 new sets of parents. [laughs] We were the first of the young reforestation of Belle Haven. Everybody else was much like our parents. So, we immediately became involved. So, for instance, when we have a heavy snow, we were at the foot of the hill. And so when we had a heavy snow, the mailman couldn't get up there to deliver the mail. So he left it at our house. People would come by and they'd pick up their mail at our house. We just had a great time. And, Belle Haven always had a Santa event up at the Fort Willard Circle. We became active very quickly. [00:19:46][81.2]

Kerry James Reed: [00:19:47] Excellent. So you mentioned that you would come down to Duke Street to get McDonald's, what did Duke Street look like when you first moved into the area? [00:19:55][8.5]

Gant Redmon: [00:19:56] Duke was not nearly so wide as it is now. And, of course, with the current plan to do Duke Street, what was done with the area of what is now known as Richmond Highway up in the Potomac Yard area. Why, it may be even wider. I remember that this was before the Beltway. And so when I left Belle Haven and went to my office at Shirley Highway and Edsall Road at Atlantic Research, I had to go through 23 stoplights. When the Beltway went in, I had one stoplight at the corner of Ford Hunt Road and Richmond Highway; no more. Yeah, it was amazing. [00:20:46][49.1]

Kerry James Reed: [00:20:50] What are the process of the of Beltway construction look like? Because I've interviewed a fair amount of people who remember that, and they all have their varying opinions on it. What are your memories of the beltway construction? [00:21:01][11.3]

Gant Redmon: [00:21:01] Well, the last section was the area between Shirley Highway, as 395 was then known, and Route one. And once that opened, that was it. That was like, like 1964, I think. No, I'm not sure about that exact date, but, it was magnificent, quite frankly. Yeah. Because, and that was long before they redid the Wilson Bridge and so forth. So it was nice. [00:21:37][35.9]

Kerry James Reed: [00:21:38] Very cool, very cool. So I know you've been very politically active throughout your life. When you first moved to Alex Alexandria, were you very politically active as well or was that something that developed later on? [00:21:51][12.3]

Gant Redmon: [00:21:51] Well, one of the first things, when I moved to Belle Haven, I went up to vote and, they said, "you pay your poll tax." I said, "certainly." "Where did you pay it?" "Arlington County." "Well, you're going to have to go get a receipt from Arlington County and bring it here and show it to us before you can vote." I said, "you mean my cancelled check isn't going to be adequate?" He said, "nope. You gotta go get a receipt." I said, "I'm going to go get that receipt, but you're going to rue the day you did this." At the time, there weren't many Republicans because, we were still in the area at the time of massive resistance and so forth, and everybody was a Democrat. So I went and got the receipt and brought it back, and I voted. By 1967, which was five years later, we had a majority of Republicans in that precinct because I was precinct chairman. So did I get active? Yeah, I did. Right. [00:23:04][72.8]

Kerry James Reed: [00:23:05] Seems like that experience, really, really motivated you to, well, you did say rue. [00:23:12][6.6]

Gant Redmon: [00:23:13] That's right. Well, and in 1969, when I was involved in the first of five presidential inaugurations, why, some of those very people that were up there and had, forced me to go to Arlington, came to me and said, "Gant, you think you can get us tickets to the inaugural ball?" I said, "sure, I think so." [00:23:36][22.8]

Kerry James Reed: [00:23:40] How many inaugural balls have you helped organize? [00:23:43][2.9]

Gant Redmon: [00:23:44] I've been involved in five. Nixon, Agnew. Both Reagan, '81 and '85 and George H.W. in '89. [00:23:55][10.6]

Kerry James Reed: [00:23:56] That's very cool. Which was your favorite? [00:23:58][1.7]

Gant Redmon: [00:24:00] Gosh, they were all good. There are stories, of course, everywhere. Probably the most outstanding was, in 85 when it was so cold that we had to cancel the parade. And had to refund, several million dollars in ticket sales. Seats in the bleachers along the parade route. And the question was, did we have insurance for that? And so they asked me the question and I was counsel, and I asked them, "well, did you pay the premium?" They said, "no, we thought that was too much." I said, "I'm sorry, you have no recourse." So they refunded the money. But that was the night when it was so cold, people at the convention center had to wait sometimes for hours. And a lot of them never got their coats. And so in 1989 I wrote the contract for the coat check operation. It was for a half million dollars. The man walked out of the

headquarters just after Thanksgiving with a check for a quarter of \$1 million. But he delivered. He was from Richmond. He delivered. He recruited college students from out in the valley. And one of the requirements was they had to speak, understand and speak English. Because that had been a major problem in '85. In '89 we had no lost coats and everybody was able to get out in a timely fashion. [00:25:54][114.1]

Kerry James Reed: [00:25:57] Very interesting. So that experience at the polling station seems to have, you know, set off your political activism in, you know, the early 60s. As you mentioned five years later, that that precinct had turned mostly Republican. So what happened in between, you know, that experience you had and '69? What did you do to change the precinct? [00:26:20][22.4]

Gant Redmon: [00:26:25] Precinct. Well, there hadn't been any active Republican activity out there. So when there was, it definitely drew people in. Then in 1967 I chaired my first campaign. That was for the Mount Vernon district supervisor. [00:26:45][19.8]

Kerry James Reed: [00:26:48] What was it like to share a campaign for the first time? [00:26:50][1.7]

Gant Redmon: [00:26:51] Daunting. [laughs] But we figured we had to have a gimmick. And we also had a candidate who was terrifically qualified, Steve Hartwell. He had been chairman of the Planning Commission of Fairfax County. And, I thought we really have to get some name recognition. Well, what we need is a large campaign vehicle. And I then set about to acquire a bus, and we were able to buy a bus with the help of our good friend and Congressman Joel T Broyhill from Arlington. And, we arranged to buy a 31 passenger GMC from DC Transit, which was owned by O. Roy Chalk, and was the predecessor, of course, of Metro. And so, we bought the bus. I had never driven a bus, but I certainly learned that day how to drive one from the lot over at Bladensburg Road in Northeast Washington, back to Belle Haven. And, pulled it off and parked it on Belfield Road right beside Woodmont and then set about transforming it from what it was to a good campaign vehicle. Painted it red, white and blue at the car barn down here at Glebe Rd and Route one, then owned by the A, B, and W Transit Company. Privately held. And, we transformed it into a rolling campaign headquarters; put a PA system on it so that we could cover a shopping center in ten minutes. [laughs] That bus lasted, well, who knows? It may still be lasting somewhere at the Bus Museum in Hershey, Pennsylvania, but I had that bus for 40 years. Never meant to be a bus mechanic, but certainly had to become one, and had a great time with it. That bus has many stories of its own. It attended the opening gala of the Kennedy Center. It was at the 10th anniversary in 1981 of Wolf Trap. And it participated in the 1968 presidential campaign as a listening post down at the Willard Hotel at 14th and Pennsylvania Avenue. We primarily had high schoolers and younger folks who would love to campaign with us. And so, we would all get together and do our thing. The night after the election in '68, the president-elect and Mrs. Nixon were coming through on their way to Key Biscayne. They wanted to stop and see Ike, who was in Walter Reed hospital. And so, we were called and said if we could get out their way we could see them. So, we hustled the crew together and went our way, but we didn't quite catch them when they came in. But the fellows there said 'not to worry, they'll be back. So follow us.' And they took us out onto the tarmac next to Air Force One. And

when they came back through, they stopped in front of the bus. And the president-elect signed autographs for all the kids on the bus. [00:30:34][222.9]

Kerry James Reed: [00:30:37] That's a fantastic experience. [00:30:38][0.5]

Gant Redmon: [00:30:39] Well, a lot of those so-called kids now are in their early 60s, and they still remember it. [00:30:48][9.4]

Kerry James Reed: [00:30:49] Yeah. I would imagine so. [00:30:50][0.8]

Gant Redmon: [00:30:52] When we get together it's enjoyable. Very enjoyable. [00:30:55][3.5]

Kerry James Reed: [00:30:57] What did it feel like to facilitate a moment like that? To, you know, be led down to the tarmac, meet the president-elect? [00:31:03][6.7]

Gant Redmon: [00:31:04] Little did we realize that that was going to happen. And when it does, you just live with the moment. [00:31:10][5.6]

Kerry James Reed: [00:31:10] Absolutely. [00:31:10][0.0]

Gant Redmon: [00:31:12] You bet. [00:31:12][0.2]

Kerry James Reed: [00:31:15] So the GOP bus, when you were campaigning around Belle Haven and Alexandria, what stops did you frequent the most? Like, where did you think there was the most foot traffic for the bus? [00:31:31][16.5]

Gant Redmon: [00:31:32] We would normally do shopping centers. [00:31:33][1.6]

Kerry James Reed: [00:31:34] Shopping centers. [00:31:34][0.3]

Gant Redmon: [00:31:34] Right. Because that's where most people were. And you could get the biggest bang for the buck at the time. And so, the bus was the subject of cartoons from the opposition. [laughs] But it's been in many a parade here in Old Town. [00:31:55][20.5]

Kerry James Reed: [00:31:59] Very interesting. Besides, of course, for meeting the president-elect, are there any memorable moments with the bus? Did it ever break down during a parade or anything like that? [00:32:09][10.3]

Gant Redmon: [00:32:11] Fortunately it hasn't broken down and didn't break down during any parades, but it certainly broke down a number of times.[laughs] And I'd have to go and, you couldn't very well pick it up and tow it. I mean, we didn't have that kind of equipment, so we generally would fix it wherever it was. Probably the most challenging was when the radiator had a leak and we would carry water in, you know, gallon milk jugs to just keep putting the water in the radiator so that it wouldn't get too hot. [00:32:47][35.7]

Kerry James Reed: [00:32:49] That's funny. So Arlington and Alexandria, they traditionally have been known as a very liberal enclave, I guess you could say. So what was it like campaigning in an area that's traditionally been so dominated by Democrats? [00:33:07][17.7]

Gant Redmon: [00:33:08] It's difficult. And one has to have a little bit of a thick skin. [00:33:15][7.4]

Kerry James Reed: [00:33:16] Yeah. [00:33:16][0.0]

Gant Redmon: [00:33:17] So, we got used to that a long, long time ago. In the 70s, the Republican Party had three members of City council. Marlee Inman, who, lovely lady. I was her finance chairman. She was the vice mayor in the mid-70s. And then, of course, the vice mayor is the council person candidate who gets the most votes. And so Marlee was there. But we also had Connie Ring Carlyle, known as Connie Ring. Connie was on, and Bob Calhoun was on. Bob Calhoun eventually became our state senator and replaced another Republican, Wiley Mitchell. So there are a very goodly number around. But, the numbers are such that Alexandria has been dominated by Democrats and, certainly in the last 20 years, it's been unchanged. [00:34:32][74.9]

Kerry James Reed: [00:34:37] What was being, I'm sorry, you said chairman of her campaign, did you say? [00:34:43][6.1]

Gant Redmon: [00:34:43] I was finance chairman. [00:34:47][3.4]

Kerry James Reed: [00:34:47] Finance Chairman. Right. [00:34:48][0.7]

Gant Redmon: [00:34:48] Right. [00:34:48][0.0]

Kerry James Reed: [00:34:49] What was that like, being the finance chairman for a non-dominant party in Alexandria? [00:34:54][5.1]

Gant Redmon: [00:34:55] Well, again, there were a number of folks who were very, very loyal. And Marlee really was, she was not hyper party political. She was very moderate and worked across the lines. And frankly, the ones that do work across the lines are the ones that do the best for the city. Wiley Mitchell was the same way. And, Connie Ring, we had very, very, I would say moderate, candidates, and that worked out very, very well. [00:35:38][43.0]

Kerry James Reed: [00:35:46] Where were you when the city began its urban renewal phase in the 1970s? [00:35:51][4.8]

Gant Redmon: [00:35:52] We were... [00:35:53][0.4]

Kerry James Reed: [00:35:55] You're on Seminary at that time, right? [00:35:57][1.4]

Gant Redmon: [00:35:57] We moved to Seminary Road in '74. And urban renewal had been underway since the early 60s. And there were four phases of urban renewal. The first was the

city hall, where the, you know, the city square and the parking beneath it was constructed. And then it was the two blocks to the west of that, from Royal to St Asaph. And that was, you can see the difference in the architecture. And then the third phase was the block between Fairfax and Royal on the south side of King. Commonly known as the Kay building and again underground parking. And then and I believe the hotel may have been part of number three, between Royal and Pitt. The fourth phase was the courthouse and the building that we're in here in front of the courthouse. Phase four. And in retrospect, you know, phases one, three and four fit in very, very nicely. Phase two struggles, architecturally, in my opinion. And it's too bad, but, phase four was very, very good. The courthouse itself was dedicated in 1981. We moved into this building that we're in, in November of 1980. And, at that time, Thomas and Fiske was the initial tenant in the building occupying the second and third floor on the east side of the building. And then we moved in, Bill O'Neil, as ardent a Democrat as I was ardent a Republican, and I got together and formed a firm: O'Neill and Redmon. And so, I'm still in the same office that I moved into in November of 1980. [00:38:18][140.5]

Kerry James Reed: [00:38:21] So why did phase two stick out to you so much? [00:38:23][2.0]

Gant Redmon: [00:38:24] It's a totally different architecture. Different kinds of exterior, particularly. Not so much interior, but this is primarily the exterior and I'm sure some folks love that kind of architecture, but it certainly is not consistent with the other three phases. And I suspect that Bill Vosbeck was one of the architects there, perhaps Saunders. Saunders did four, but I suspect that the Vosbeck firm did a good bit of this. More than just one phase. [00:39:08][44.2]

Kerry James Reed: [00:39:11] So you mentioned that you moved into this building on King Street in 1980. What did King Street look like when you moved into this building? [00:39:19][7.6]

Gant Redmon: [00:39:20] By that time, this being the final phase of the urban renewal in this area, it hasn't really changed all that much. And, now that the bank has moved out of the building on the north side of King in the 500 block, right opposite our building. That had been a bank ever since that building had been built. And then when SunTrust and BB&T merged and became Truist, then they closed that office over there. And now we have a new restaurant, the Tatte Bakery and Cafe on the corner. I don't know what they're doing with the rest of their space over there, but it's primarily law firms and other businesses. And what's really different is the area toward the river. The area along Union Street particularly, and the north end. Everything I say from, you know, 4 or 5 blocks north of King, on north all the way to, yeah. And when they redo the area for the power plant, which is about 23 acres, that's going to be significant. Big deal. [00:40:55][95.5]

Kerry James Reed: [00:40:58] Do you think that change is going to be for the betterment of Alexandria? Or what's your opinion on it? [00:41:01][3.3]

Gant Redmon: [00:41:01] Oh, I think it will be for the betterment. Yeah. Just like so much of the development there at the north end of the city and the south end of Potomac Yard. Big, big

difference. And of course, with all the things that have now developed with regard to Virginia Tech and the Innovation campus. And whether or not the arena comes to pass, one never knows. We went through that much of this very same issue back in the early to mid 90s when there was thinking of putting a stadium on that same property. And so this sounds to me like it's going to be a much broader usage of the acreage. And of course we didn't have a metro station there either. [00:41:59][57.8]

Kerry James Reed: [00:42:18] What was it like to move into this building in 1980 just before the courthouse was completed? What was it like to be a part of, not the new Alexandria, that's the wrong term, but... [00:42:18][0.0]

Gant Redmon: [00:42:18] Oh, but you're right. It was exciting. [00:42:20][1.8]

Kerry James Reed: [00:42:20] Yeah. Absolutely [00:42:21][0.0]

Gant Redmon: [00:42:22] Definitely exciting. And to be able to be literally next door to the courthouse offered just wonderful opportunity. So convenient. So great for law firms. And that was pretty much what we had aside from the fifth floor which you had a financial group up there. Now that's all McEneaney, McEneaney real estate. [00:42:49][27.8]

Kerry James Reed: [00:42:52] Interesting. So you said you were partnered with, O'Neill at this time? [00:42:57][4.9]

Gant Redmon: [00:42:57] Right. [00:42:57][0.0]

Kerry James Reed: [00:42:58] Ok. [00:42:58][0.0]

Gant Redmon: [00:42:58] Yeah. Bill was magnificent fellow. If you sent out to Central Casting and said, 'send me an actor to play a Supreme Court justice,' they would have sent Bill O'Neill. Just the finest, finest fellow. And governor Baliles obviously thought the same thing, because within a couple of years he appointed Bill as chairman of the Industrial Commission, which is the Supreme Court of Workers comp. And workers comp was Bill's specialty. So it fit in very, very nicely. [00:43:36][38.2]

Kerry James Reed: [00:43:41] Where there are a lot of firms operating in Alexandria during the 1970s and 1980s? [00:43:44][3.9]

Gant Redmon: [00:43:46] Not that many, no. There were several larger firms. There was, what we always called the Booth Firm: Booth, Pritchard and Dudley. And then it was Booth, Pritchard, Blankenship and Stump. And then there was the Fingleton firm, and several others that were over on, North Fairfax Street. Andy Clark, who had been a state senator, had a firm over there. And there were a few others, but those were the major firms. And, I'd say that after maybe 1975, things kind of opened up a little bit. And of course, now, there are any number of firms. [00:44:38][52.0]

Kerry James Reed: [00:44:42] So, you're practicing real estate law at this time when you moved in? [00:44:46][3.7]

Gant Redmon: [00:44:46] Right, right. [00:44:46][0.3]

Kerry James Reed: [00:44:49] Were you involved in urban renewal then, in any capacity, since this was your specialty? [00:44:53][4.4]

Gant Redmon: [00:44:53] No. No, I wouldn't say I was. All that had really occurred by the time that I came in here after the fact. My development activities were primarily then in Fairfax County. Beacon Hill for an office building and then, the Mount Vernon on the Potomac subdivision of 117 homes, midway between Mount Vernon and Woodlawn. [00:45:19][25.0]

Kerry James Reed: [00:45:21] So in an area like Alexandria, a lot of times when people want to develop something they call in archeology. Because there's so much, you know, history quite literally in the ground. So, while you were developing, various properties on Beacon Hill or Mount Vernon on the Potomac, did you ever have to use historical documents or, stumble across any historical material while you were developing those properties, those places? [00:45:55][33.5]

Gant Redmon: [00:45:55] Well, indeed. We did archeological studies, particularly down at Mount Vernon. And we were able to locate hearths and other artifacts that were there from pre-colonial days. And those are all documented with Fairfax County. [00:46:19][23.5]

Kerry James Reed: [00:46:22] What was it like, to unearth those things, to see them for the first time? [00:46:26][3.3]

Gant Redmon: [00:46:27] You know, I wasn't there. So, the crew that would be doing the unearthing, they took the things with them. And just turned them into the office of Fairfax County. I heard about them, I got the reports right. [00:46:47][19.7]

Kerry James Reed: [00:46:47] Really didn't see them? [00:46:48][1.0]

Gant Redmon: [00:46:49] No. [00:46:49][0.0]

Kerry James Reed: [00:46:49] Oh, that's incredible. [00:46:50][0.3]

Gant Redmon: [00:46:51] Well, the things that I have seen, of course, come out of our yard on Seminary Road. Because I've had any number of relic seekers who have been there. Have a good friend, John O. Goddin, who wanted to do that. I said, "sure, come ahead. But I got to tell you, I think that they probably found everything there is to be found." Wrong. He was able to come up with any number of things. And primarily it's the bullets, and we found, somebody must have dumped his pouch at the base of a cedar tree, because there must have been 10 or 15 that were right there in one clump. [00:47:40][49.3]

Kerry James Reed: [00:47:41] Oh, wow. [00:47:41][0.2]

Gant Redmon: [00:47:41] Right. [00:47:41][0.0]

Kerry James Reed: [00:47:42] That's really cool. [00:47:42][0.4]

Gant Redmon: [00:47:43] Unbelievable. Yes, absolutely. [00:47:44][1.2]

Kerry James Reed: [00:47:44] What's it like to hold that history in your hand? [00:47:46][1.4]

Gant Redmon: [00:47:46] Well, yeah. Very interesting. No question about it. And of course, the whole Theological Seminary was a hospital. Well, it was practically hospitals everywhere. So, yeah, that was, had no idea that we would find things still. I mean, we've been there almost 50 years. So maybe it's still there. [00:48:11][24.4]

Kerry James Reed: [00:48:13] So, you moved to Alexandria proper in '74. Did you join another citizens association right away? Or how did you come to be involved in volunteering in Alexandria with Alexandria groups? [00:48:28][14.2]

Gant Redmon: [00:48:28] Well, certainly. And I became president of the Seminary Hill Association. I was president of Belle Haven, you know, in the late 60s and then, Seminary Hill, probably, I don't know when that was, but I was president of that also. And we had the usual battles, you know, at that point the hospital wanted to expand and do some things that the association was not keen on. So, we sat and negotiated and we worked it out. And, that's why the cancer center is where it is and not on the east side of Howard Street. So, it's much closer to the main building. And of course now it'll be very interesting when iNova moves from the Seminary Road location to the landmark location. And what is to become of the acreage that the hospital currently occupies. Interestingly enough, I recall when landmark was built in the early 60s. Yes. And the main movers on that were Gerald T. Halpin and Tom Nicholson. And I recall that they had their office in the house that was up on the hill to the south side of Duke Street, and all of that area to the north side where landmark was built, was then developed by them. And the idea of having the anchors own their share, the land beneath their buildings, was novel at the time. And unfortunately, when it came time to redevelop, that was a problem. But fortunately, the Hughes company got that all squared away. And now you see what's going on. [00:50:39][130.6]

Kerry James Reed: [00:50:41] What a landmark looks like when it was first completed? [00:50:43][1.8]

Gant Redmon: [00:50:45] Was very, very nice. Sears, Woody's, Hecht's, those were the main anchors in there. And for years and years, it was the main place to go shopping. And then, Pentagon City, it was built, whenever that was. And then that started siphoning off some of the business. And unfortunately in the latter years, why, it didn't look that great. One of the major differences in this city, aside from what has happened along the waterfront and here along King Street, is the whole Carlyle project. I mean, that was a junkyard. [00:51:38][53.1]

Kerry James Reed: [00:51:39] Yeah. [00:51:39][0.0]

Gant Redmon: [00:51:39] And now look at it. I mean, high rise buildings all over. That should do great, I'm sure. And done great deal for the tax base of the city. [00:51:50][10.4]

Kerry James Reed: [00:51:51] Absolutely. What was it like seeing the junkyard get replaced by all these high rises? [00:51:56][5.2]

Gant Redmon: [00:51:57] I thought it never would happen, but it surely has. And it's amazing to me that they're able to build that much height on those areas because, I don't know how deep they had to go. You can't get good basic stability, but it's good. [00:52:15][18.4]

Kerry James Reed: [00:52:16] Absolutely. So why did, when you were President of the Seminary Hill Citizens Association, why the resistance to the cancer center across East Howard? [00:52:30][13.9]

Gant Redmon: [00:52:32] It was felt that that was too much of an encroachment on the single family character of the neighborhood. Pretty much commercialization. Right. There was a time when Goodwin House wanted to do a facility near what is now the middle school campus of St. Stephens and St. Agnes, located in that lower area there at the intersection of Braddock Road and Van Dorn. And the Seminary Hill Association rose up and said, 'no way. No more high rises on this side of 395.' And were successful in resisting that. [00:53:22][49.9]

Kerry James Reed: [00:53:26] So, aside from the Seminary Hill Association, what other volunteer organizations have you been a part of in Alexandria? [00:53:32][6.3]

Gant Redmon: [00:53:34] I've been active in Chamber of Commerce. I was chairman of the chamber in about '89. Just, either before or after I was president of the Rotary Club. And my wife has been equally active in the arts. And so I support her in all those endeavors. And she served on the Virginia Commission for the Arts from '98, I believe, until about 2003. And during that time she advocated for the organizations that were here, in getting them grants from the Virginia Commission. And during that time, why, we became involved very much so in the Alexandria Symphony. And remain active to this day. And I was on the Industrial Development Authority in the early 80s when we were very active in attracting national trade associations to the city and to get them to own their facilities rather than rent downtown. And I chaired the hearings on the waste energy plant that is now out on Eisenhower Avenue. And we issued industrial revenue bonds in order to finance that, along with the national headquarters and so forth, as a means of financing. [00:55:19][104.5]

Kerry James Reed: [00:55:22] When did you first get involved with the Rotary Club here? [00:55:24][2.1]

Gant Redmon: [00:55:25] 1973. [00:55:25][0.0]

Kerry James Reed: [00:55:27] 1973. [00:55:27][0.0]

Gant Redmon: [00:55:28] Right. [00:55:28][0.0]

Kerry James Reed: [00:55:28] Very interesting. So since then, what do you think Rotary's biggest accomplishments have been? Or has the Rotary Club done anything particularly memorable since you've been part of the organization? [00:55:44][15.4]

Gant Redmon: [00:55:44] Oh, yeah. Well, the most memorable is what had gone before and still exists today, and that's the Alexandria Children's Home and Day Nursery. During the 30s, Alexandria, rather rotary, worked with the city and provided daycare for children whose mothers worked and had no way to have their children taken care of. And then by and by some of the children didn't have parents. And so that's where the children's home portion of this comes in. And to this day, they had a home a house on Princess Street. And through World War II when the ladies were working at the torpedo factory and then after World War II and the city became more involved in that sort of effort, the home was sold and the proceeds were invested, are still invested and throw off revenue every year. And from that revenue, grants are made to various preschool organizations, for the care of the youngsters that they take care of, and there are quite a number. [00:57:29][104.8]

Kerry James Reed: [00:57:30] Oh yeah, I'm sure. [00:57:30][0.2]

Gant Redmon: [00:57:30] A lot of church affiliated. [00:57:32][1.6]

Kerry James Reed: [00:57:32] That's a fabulous program. [00:57:33][0.6]

Gant Redmon: [00:57:34] You bet. [00:57:34][0.2]

Kerry James Reed: [00:57:34] Well, what is it like to be involved in something that's so foundational to so many children? [00:57:39][4.4]

Gant Redmon: [00:57:40] It's very rewarding and it's very worthwhile. That's why Rotarians support it so much. One of the main things, our primary fundraising, is our Taste for Giving that we do each fall. And my participation in that is generally as the auctioneer for the live auction. We have a good time. [laughs] [00:58:01][21.1]

Kerry James Reed: [00:58:03] Yeah, absolutely. What sort of items are usually auctioned off at that event? [00:58:06][3.3]

Gant Redmon: [00:58:06] Well, we auction off all kinds of things. Everything from barbecue operations to trips. One of the most popular is dinner at the Inn at Little Washington. And it's always a challenge to see if I can get a little bit more for it each year. [laughs] [00:58:25][18.9]

Kerry James Reed: [00:58:25] Yeah, absolutely. That's really funny. That's good food over there. [00:58:30][4.3]

Gant Redmon: [00:58:30] You bet. [00:58:30][0.2]

Kerry James Reed: [00:58:31] It's really good. Well, while you were on the Chamber of Commerce, what sort of projects did you work on? [00:58:39][8.7]

Gant Redmon: [00:58:42] Oh, boy. Good question. The largest one that I worked on, we had any number of committees and so forth, and it was always a matter of legislation. When I became chairman, there was a pervasive feeling in the city of 'it's the residents versus the businesses.' And generally there was quite a tension. And so, I wanted to see if we could bridge that gap. And so, I developed a theme and it included business, residents and government, so that we could get everybody unified and moving in the same direction. And I think we had good results from that. Several years after I stepped down as chairman, Shawn McLaughlin appointed me as chairman of a task force. And, we ultimately named that Task force 2020 and beyond. Or maybe it was 2000 and beyond, but whatever. And we had 25 members of that task force: 12 residents, 12 business men, and I was the chair. And I had been president of Seminary Hill, and I had been chairman of the Chamber. So, [laughs] logical guy to be in between. And so we worked for a couple of years and developed about 58 recommendations that we made to the city. We then captured all of that in a little video. And we made that video available to all the citizens associations, put it in the library. And we had people on that video from both sides of the situation. And it was very effective. Within a year, approximately 30 of those 58 had already been adopted by the city. So I consider that a super success. [01:01:04][142.3]

Kerry James Reed: [01:01:05] Absolutely. Are there any that were adopted that can still be seen in the city today? The impact of those recommendations? [01:01:12][6.9]

Gant Redmon: [01:01:12] You know, there probably are, because it was very, very detailed. It wasn't anything that really, really stood out. It was just things that should have been. We did report one thing that we thought would be a good idea, but we couldn't get unanimity on. And that was a depressed, below the surface type, roadway between the railroad tracks that would run from the Beltway to the 14th Street Bridge with an exit for national airport. You couldn't get unanimity on that one. But it's unfortunate, because it would have really, really helped take some traffic off of the city. The through traffic, you know, they don't stop anyhow. So it would have been, I think, very, very good. It's too bad. Now the opportunity for that is gone and so be it. So, we work on something else. [01:02:17][65.0]

Kerry James Reed: [01:02:19] Was there a big push when you were on the visionary task force and The Chamber of Commerce to sort of bring the community and business together to be more, harmonious, I guess you could say. Were things very disharmonious beforehand? [01:02:36][16.8]

Gant Redmon: [01:02:38] There was a big push and I think that that has been accomplished. I think there is not near the gulf that there used to be. I think we were very successful in that. [01:02:49][11.3]

Kerry James Reed: [01:02:50] Absolutely. So, you mentioned being involved with the Alexandria Symphony because of your wife's activities. [01:02:58][8.1]

Gant Redmon: [01:02:59] Right. [01:02:59][0.0]

Kerry James Reed: [01:03:00] Have there been any significant events over the years? [01:03:02][2.6]

Gant Redmon: [01:03:04] Yeah. [01:03:04][0.0]

[01:03:05] Because when I think of an organization like that, I think a lot of, you know, charities and galas and things like that. So what sort of work did you do with the Alexandria Symphony? [01:03:14][9.8]

Gant Redmon: [01:03:15] Well, what I did was I would participate each spring in the SOLA: Symphony Orchestra [unintelligible] league auxiliary [Symphony Orchestra League of Alexandria, supporting the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra]. It's a related organization, primarily of the ladies. And they would hold fundraisers. The big fundraiser was the gala in the springtime. And part of the gala, of course, was a live auction. And there I was. [laughs] And then, I figured that, needed to train a successor. So Shawn McLoughlin became my successor. And now I think that they've gotten away from that as a result of Covid primarily, you know, those kinds of things just didn't happen anymore. And so, I don't know that they'll continue that, but the major event for the symphony was when it became fully professional. In other words, the players on the stage are all paid. They are not volunteers. And therefore, it definitely requires sustenance. And so, I'm currently involved in that effort. [01:04:42][87.0]

Kerry James Reed: [01:04:44] When did that change occur? [01:04:44][0.7]

Gant Redmon: [01:04:46] That, I think, probably occurred, probably in the early 70s. Yeah, it's been quite a while. [01:04:54][8.5]

Kerry James Reed: [01:05:03] Do you have any input on, like, what pieces they play or anything like that or? [01:05:05][2.7]

Gant Redmon: [01:05:06] Well, now, of course, the music director and conductor, Jim Ross, he's a professor, and he is a little more experimental. So, the old classics are still there but he also introduces a lot more with regard to other organizations, dance groups, other singing groups, the soloists, the featured soloists, he really has covered it. And in addition, the symphony sponsors a program called Sympatico, which is training young elementary school children in music and playing instruments and just very basic type things, but introducing them to music. And it has been demonstrated that that's extremely helpful and productive. And helps in the math. [01:06:17][71.2]

Kerry James Reed: [01:06:22] So you mentioned that you would auctioneer for the symphony as well. This story seems a common thread in a lot of your volunteer work, the auction side of things. Is that a position you actively sought out? [01:06:36][14.6]

Gant Redmon: [01:06:37] No, it kind of happened naturally. It started when I was president of the dad's club at St. Stephen's. And then it was just Saint Stephen's, that was before the merger with St. Agnes. And our first auction was held in the wrestling room, and we auctioned off all kinds of things, and that really was the first time I had done it. And it kind of grew from there because somebody would hear and 'oh, yeah, you do that.' Well, and I of course, I felt like you had to. And it had to be something different. You always have to have a little gimmick. Well, my

gimmick is that for every item, I wear a different hat. And I have quite a hat collection.
[01:07:26][48.8]

Kerry James Reed: [01:07:27] Yeah, I bet. [01:07:27][0.4]

Gant Redmon: [01:07:29] [laughs] So, you may have seen recently, there was a shot in this month's *Zebra*, as a matter of fact, from the Taste for Giving last November. And that's a particularly good hat that's in there because it not only sings plays, but it flops the hat and back and forth and blinks the lights. So. [01:07:56][27.3]

Kerry James Reed: [01:07:57] Absolutely. [01:07:57][0.0]

Gant Redmon: [01:07:58] Yeah. And the more ridiculous the hat, the better it is for the item.
[01:08:01][3.1]

Kerry James Reed: [01:08:04] So you mentioned a gimmick with campaigning, for the Republican Party in the 70s with the bus and now the gimmick with the auction hats. What is the importance of the gimmick in your mind? [01:08:15][11.0]

Gant Redmon: [01:08:16] It has to get people's attention. To me, it's a little lighthearted, right? It's good for whatever is going on. [01:08:30][13.1]

Kerry James Reed: [01:08:34] So you mentioned the first time you got into auctioneering was at St. Stephen's right before for the merge. Why did they merge? When did that happen?
[01:08:47][13.1]

Gant Redmon: [01:08:48] Well, that was in the mid 80s. And, there was some, I think financial considerations. As far as I was concerned, I thought the sociological considerations overrode all that. And I was all in favor of the merger. Primarily because, it's more real world. I think the guys benefited more than the girls, because I think they got their comeuppance, if you will, in a number of respects. [01:09:34][45.7]

Kerry James Reed: [01:09:34] Right. [01:09:34][0.0]

Gant Redmon: [01:09:35] Particularly, academically. And so I think that was good. It's also, sociologically, I think it's much better. [01:09:46][10.7]

Kerry James Reed: [01:09:47] How so? [01:09:47][0.2]

Gant Redmon: [01:09:48] I think they're a little more respectful. I think they mind themselves a little better that way. [01:09:56][8.1]

Kerry James Reed: [01:09:59] Makes sense. Very interesting. So have you done any other volunteer work with the city or with, organizations within the city that we haven't mentioned thus far? [01:10:09][10.4]

Gant Redmon: [01:10:13] Yeah, there are several others. I'm secretary of the Ivy Hill Cemetery, and the preservation society for Ivy Hill. There may have been others over the years, but those are the ones. [01:10:31][17.6]

Kerry James Reed: [01:10:31] Absolutely. [01:10:31][0.0]

Gant Redmon: [01:10:32] Yeah. And Ivy Hill is an asset that not a lot of people know about. Ivy Hill is a nonprofit organization started initially in 1854. And over the years, it actually had to be kind of reorganized by the circuit court in the city of Alexandria to clarify exactly what the situation was and is fortunately still is today. And we are very, very fortunate to have the support and the backing of the families that have been involved literally for decades. Centuries. Yeah. Common thread. And it's a very worthwhile endeavor as far as I'm concerned. Strictly volunteer. [01:11:39][67.7]

Kerry James Reed: [01:11:40] How did you get involved with the Ivy Hill Cemetery? [01:11:41][1.3]

Gant Redmon: [01:11:46] At the request of a friend. [laughs] And frankly, I'm not sure who. [laughs] [01:11:53][6.9]

Kerry James Reed: [01:11:55] That's all right. Very interesting. Are you aware of the stuff going on with the Douglass Cemetery right now, by any chance? [01:12:01][5.9]

Gant Redmon: [01:12:01] Yes. Yeah. [01:12:02][0.5]

Kerry James Reed: [01:12:04] It's really cool stuff happening. [01:12:05][1.1]

Gant Redmon: [01:12:06] Right. [01:12:06][0.0]

Kerry James Reed: [01:12:08] That we've been talking for about an hour and 15 minutes has been an absolute pleasure. Before we move on to our closing series of questions, is there anything I haven't asked you yet that you would like to discuss or talk about? [01:12:20][11.4]

Gant Redmon: [01:12:21] I think we've covered the waterfront pretty well. [01:12:23][1.8]

Kerry James Reed: [01:12:28] So what are your fondest memories of volunteering in Alexandria? [01:12:32][4.5]

Gant Redmon: [01:12:41] My fondest memories are when everyone is having a good time and trying to make life better for those that are not so fortunate. And there are a multitude. Not one that really stands out. [01:13:01][20.5]

Kerry James Reed: [01:13:05] So why do you think you're so drawn to this kind of work? You know, you mentioned that, you know, you weren't really involved in stuff like this as a child. And then you move to Belle Haven, and you've become very involved with the community in which you live. Why do you think that occurred? [01:13:22][17.1]

Gant Redmon: [01:13:23] I think it's in the DNA. I've been that way, I would say since high school. In the mornings, we would have the bulletin read from the principal's office, and I did that most of the time. And the idea of public speaking has always been interesting to me. To me, to the extent that you possibly can help other people, that's what I'm here for. That's why I practice law. People ask me, why did you go into the law? I went into law to help people. Long as I can help. That's what I'm happy doing. It's very rewarding. [01:14:08][45.4]

Kerry James Reed: [01:14:12] So I guess along that same vein, is there a particular instance where you have helped someone within your practice that you're most proud of? [01:14:22][9.8]

Gant Redmon: [01:14:27] Well, I currently do some, pro bono, trying to help an employee of Goodwin Living who is having difficulty. And, that's the current situation. [01:14:44][17.0]

Kerry James Reed: [01:14:45] Absolutely. [01:14:45][0.0]

Gant Redmon: [01:14:46] And, the BAR is always hoping to get more pro bono activity, and in a very organized fashion. I do it in the not-so-organized fashion and, but if I see that somebody needs some help, I help them. [01:15:06][19.9]

Kerry James Reed: [01:15:06] That's terrific. So what do you think the biggest change you've witnessed in Alexandria is since you've lived here? [01:15:15][8.4]

Gant Redmon: [01:15:16] Alexandria has opened up. Alexandria, I'd say before the 70s was a very, very closed shop, socially and professionally. And I think it has opened up considerably. And it's been for the betterment of the city and certainly for the betterment of the residents. [01:15:46][29.8]

Kerry James Reed: [01:15:48] Could you be a little more specific when you say opening up? Like, in terms of different businesses, in terms of different, you know, like residents, like how have you seen it open up? [01:15:58][9.7]

Gant Redmon: [01:15:59] I think all of the above. I see it in the legal profession. I see it in the various businesses, certainly in residences, the condominiums. You know, condominiums really were unheard of before the early 70s. There were a lot of cooperative apartments in New York City, for instance. But that concept never really, the only co-op that I'm familiar with around here is River place, which is in Arlington. That still operates as a co-op. But condominiums, you look at Alexandria House, and Bill Thomas and his colleagues really were the founders of condominium in the Commonwealth of Virginia. And to this day, David Mercer and Pia Trigiani, whose firm is right over on Alfred, right across the street from the Friendship Firehouse, they represent a lot of condominium associations. And it's now called Common Interest Properties. And so, that represented a major shift and opened things up to home ownership and a lot of other people that otherwise we wouldn't have here. Same deal with regard to the Torpedo Factory. And that was a major event too, you know, in the 70s when the Torpedo Factory became available. And the artists stepped up and the city stepped up and hasn't always been a smooth ride, but it's been a very interesting ride and certainly one of the largest tourist

attractions that we have and has really, provided some vibrancy to Old Town that otherwise we wouldn't have. [01:18:18][139.4]

Kerry James Reed: [01:18:19] Absolutely. So in line of the Torpedo Factory in the waterfront, I know that there have been several changes to the Torpedo Factory over the years, in terms of commercial development along Union Street and things like that. You know, the Torpedo Factory is such a big draw, what do you think commercial development around it does to the appeal of the Torpedo Factory? [01:18:45][26.7]

Gant Redmon: [01:18:47] Well, I think it'll help. I think it's complimentary. First of all, and there isn't, aside from the one or two office buildings to the north, there isn't much in the way of commercial development to the north. There's been a bit more to the south and the situation with regard to the Yacht Club, which was a battle for so many years, I think the result has been magnificent. And Donnie Simpson is certainly to be complimented on the building that they put up there for the club. And so, a lot of that. And, of course, the residential development toward the south all the way down to Ford's Landing. That's a big, big difference. [01:19:37][49.4]

Kerry James Reed: [01:19:42] What are some hopes you have for the city of Alexandria moving forward? [01:19:45][2.7]

Gant Redmon: [01:19:47] I think the hope moving forward is that eventually we will come to a little bit more of what I call the center of thinking. And there will be, a little bit more give and take with regard to the operation of the city politically. And I hope that the traditions that have flourished for so long a time are maintained. And it provides, I think, the basis for the popularity of the city. [01:20:26][39.7]

Kerry James Reed: [01:20:28] When you say traditions, what do you mean by that? Do you mean the focus on, you know, the founding of the nation, what do you mean? [01:20:36][8.3]

Gant Redmon: [01:20:37] For instance, you know, we make a lot of George Washington's birthday celebration. The Masonic Memorial, and all that the Masons have done over the years. I know that Masonry has declined in popularity. It still maintains, I think, its popularity in a lot of the smaller towns. Our diversity has not contributed to that, maintaining that. So, my hope is that we will continue to be able to operate the city as well as we have. Our bond rating is good. You look around and you see all of the capital projects going on, and particularly with regard to the schools. Schools, my gosh. If you look at the new MacArthur school and all the other new schools that we've had in the last ten years, and of course what's going up behind Bradlee Shopping Center now, it's unbelievable. So, yeah, bodes well for the future. [01:21:55][77.9]

Kerry James Reed: [01:21:56] Certainly. In a similar vein, what are your hopes for the volunteer organizations that you've been a part of in the future? [01:22:06][9.7]

Gant Redmon: [01:22:07] Well, I hope that people will take time to volunteer. It's very important. And the more that they volunteer, the more they'll be involved, the more they will participate in making good decisions. [01:22:25][18.0]

Kerry James Reed: [01:22:27] Absolutely. And then lastly, if you could hold onto one memory forever what would it be? [01:22:32][5.3]

Gant Redmon: [01:22:35] That memory is immortalized in a photograph in the Alexandria Gazette. When I moved my office from the Beacon Hill building, which we had sold and moved into this building, into this suite. And I'm still in that same office that I moved into 44 years ago. And the view of seeing the base of my bookcase come in through my window with a crane I'll never forget. It was a wonderful moment and one that I will always cherish. [01:23:10][35.1]

Kerry James Reed: [01:23:11] Yeah, absolutely. Well, thank you so much, Mr. Redmon. This has been absolute pleasure. Yeah. Thank you so much. [01:23:20][9.1]

Gant Redmon: [01:23:21] Thank you. It's been a pleasure. [01:23:21][0.0]

[4629.3]