

Interview with Christopher Addison

April 18, 2018. Georgetown Public Library. Interviewer: Catherine Farrell

Cathy: I'm interviewing today at the Georgetown Library, Christopher Addison who is the owner, with his wife Silvia, of the Addison/Ripley Gallery on the corner of Reservoir Road and Wisconsin Avenue.

Christopher: Correct.

Cathy: It's midweek. Wednesday. April 18th, 2018

Christopher: Do you mind if I jump back and forth between things that come up as we go?

Cathy: I want you to follow your own memory and whatever direction you feel comfortable going in.

Christopher: Two things. You mentioned that we have this gallery on Wisconsin. I bought that with my wife about 12 or 14 years ago and my mother was still alive and still in the house that we had grown up in on 29th street.

The purpose of getting that gallery, beyond knowing it as a child, was to be able to walk down the street and go visit my mother for lunch or have her walk up to see me and that worked out for a couple of years.

Cathy: How very nice.

Christopher: She died too young but still it planted me in a place where I had grown up. It plants me on a section of Wisconsin Avenue that was very both familiar and very cozy. Just down the street would've been the French market where as a child it would've been exotic to go in and have the brothers make us a roast beef sandwich on a baguette.

It was very exotic in 1960 to take a sandwich up on Book Hill which was very modest back then, not as nice as we've made it now with the steps going up and the little courtyard. Sitting on that hill on the sunlight in spring, I'm reminded of how it was growing up. It was real delight. It was a signature part of being in Georgetown. We spent a lot of time in this park, in Montrose Park and Dumbarton. Dumbarton Oaks was much more open in those days and much more easily accessed.

When I was a child, the building I bought for the gallery had gray curtains and showed oriental antiques. It was impossible to see into the building to know what was inside. We were aware of it, and we were aware of the other iterations that came over time.

We bought that building, and we had known that Tony Childs, for instance, had his decorating shop there.

Cathy: I remember Tony Childs in that shop.

Christopher: Tony Childs would have been one of the people who amused the older set with his slightly off-color jokes and his really beautiful designs. It's sort of a treat to follow in his footsteps. He made us these beautiful doors, which we kept in place when we redesigned the gallery, so they were his design. They're beautiful oversized doors, and they fit perfectly for an art gallery.

I had a friend visit the other day, a guy that I'd grown up with, who lived down the street on Wisconsin Avenue in an apartment over what was then the Audubon Bookshop. That's down at the intersection of Q and Wisconsin. Taylor came to visit and he said, "I want to show you something. You know, I don't think you knew this about this building." He took me downstairs and underneath the stairs to the basement is a big phone board with a hundred lines in it.

He said, "Did you know what this was when we were little?" And I said, "No, I had never been in the building until we actually bought it." He said, "Well, in the 1960s I used to be paid to run things from the people who were down there. They were taking bets. They were betting on horses and numbers."

This really resonated with me, because that was part of the culture here. My sisters and brother and I were all asked to have jobs, there were so many of us. Now, to back up a minute. I had six brothers and sisters, and we lived in a house that had 10 bedrooms, enough so that each of us had our own bedroom, and there was a study room and a room for a maid. Taylor reminded me of this interesting element that I don't think most people in Georgetown were aware of, that numbers were one of the things that the maids in Georgetown bet on avidly.

Cathy: Really?

Christopher: My maid Dorothy, Dorothy Howard, bet on the numbers based on her dream, and she would come in on a Monday, and she'd say, "I, I, I dreamed 646. I'm bettin' 646." I didn't really know how that worked but we'd hear it all the time.

When I started working for the Scheele's Brothers...The Scheele's grocery store on 29th & Dumbarton, Billy drove the delivery truck and I was the person who pulled the groceries and took them to the houses. We would carry a box of groceries into a house and give it through the kitchen door. Sometimes we would pick up an envelope and take it out to Billy. Sometimes, very rarely, we would take a fat envelope in which would be the pay-off for the numbers. The maid would say, "I've hit the numbers!" It was probably \$1,000...

[crosstalk]

Cathy: That was a lot of money.

Christopher: and we would get a big hug. We would get cookies. It would be a big deal. There would be great laughing and celebration.

Cathy: You've got fabulous memories.

Christopher: It was unbelievably fun. We didn't think of it as being illegal. We didn't think of it as being illicit. We just thought of it as part of the ongoing culture. To sort of fill back in, I saw a lot of houses where I vaguely knew who the people were, but I knew the kitchens and the maids much better than I knew the people who owned the houses. That wasn't true of all. We probably delivered hundreds of houses because Scheele's and Neam's were the two grocery stores for the neighborhood.

Cathy: How old were you when you were delivering groceries?

Christopher: Probably 13, 14, maybe 15. No older than that. I think we stopped by the time I was 16 but...

Cathy: ...When you were finally legal to work.

Christopher: I found that we were...

Cathy: I don't think that there were laws in those days, perhaps.

Christopher: I'm sure nobody cared. It wasn't abusive. We worked on Saturdays. We probably worked at 8:00 in the morning until 6:00 at night. We probably got paid a reasonable salary. It was fun. We got to know where people's house were and who liked golden delicious apples.

It was a big deal to have Pepperidge Farm's bread instead of Wonder bread in those days. Who had Pepperidge Farm's bread? Who liked their ground chuck twice ground or who had...?

Cathy: You knew all these little intricacies for the families?

Christopher: Yeah. It was all part of an oral tradition of who knew what about whom. It wasn't mean spirited. It wasn't malicious gossip. It was just part of knowing.

There were fewer kids around so we weren't seen so much and the kids came from our...I just had this wonderful conversation with someone whom I grew up with here. Georgina Owen, who's down the street from me. I think she's going to do an oral history as well. We grew up with a group of people who came from a number of different countries and spoke a number of different languages. Where my school peers played baseball, football, and whatever, we played soccer and volleyball. We played with kids who spoke Spanish, who came from the Caribbean, or they spoke French.

It was a mixed group of people. We were not all the same age. We didn't all go to the same church or school. There was something very pleasing about that. It was very signature for my later interests.

Now you have a question here about, "Why did I get interested in art?" I think I got interested in different cultures before I knew I was interested in art.

Cathy: Interesting. That was the nature of the neighborhood and the children you played with in high school or organized situation? That was just the pickup?

Christopher: Very much so. It wouldn't have been that way if my friend base had been part of "Just a school" to which I went. It would have been much more conscious and it would have been much more predictable.

Cathy: Living in Georgetown gave you a diversity that you wouldn't have fathomed?

Christopher: It did. We benefited by knowing journalists. We benefited by knowing politicians. We benefited by sitting at the tables with many, many well-known people soaking that up, maybe not so directly and maybe it took a while for that to take.

I used to sit at the table with my friend, Stevie Graham and listen to his mom learn to run a newspaper. I don't think we knew that. I don't think we appreciated that. I don't think we talked about that, but it was there.

We were very much aware of it. We would talk to one of the Pearson brothers or we would talk to one of my neighbors in the alley. He was former Secretary of State, Dean Acheson. I knew him because he would yell at us to get off the roof of his garage.

Cathy: [laughs] What were you doing on the roof of his garage?

Christopher: It was great fun to stay on the roof of the garage and throw old chestnuts at my sisters. Whatever you did, you played pirate.

Cathy: I played on the roof of my garage as well.

Christopher: We made noise. It was fun. You climbed the trellis to get up there. It was a great commanding view of the block itself. A lot of Georgetown has a lot of alleys. Alleys were the perfect place for kids to play, play soccer, or run up and down, or chase your bicycle up and down.

I think one of the things that stays with me is, in the enduring memories, the backs of houses, not so much the front, but the backs, the way you see it from the alley. Almost every block that we played in had an alley of some sort, gerrymandered in weird ways. They weren't simple vertical and horizontal axis alleys.

Cathy: Your entire childhood from birth on was spent in Georgetown.

Christopher: I had one year where my parents lived in an apartment and did not live in Georgetown. Other than that, until I grew up, I was in a house in Georgetown on 29th Street. My grandmother lived next door. My grandmother bought the house next to hers so that her son, her only child, could and would live next door to her.

When I was 13 or 14 my parents tore down that house that was built for the slave seamstress Forever Ma, and built a much larger brick house in its place. That would have been a wood framed house covered in pebble stucco. It was drafty and weird.

When I was 13 or 14, we were allowed to take sledgehammers and open up the walls of this house, in which we found artifacts and period newspapers, first quarter 19th century newspapers, and all sorts of fascinating things. It was just wonderful. Then we got to live next door, watch that house be torn down and a new house be built step by step in its place.

Cathy: Amazing.

Christopher: It was lovely. It was a really lovely experience and having lots of siblings made it a wild and noisy house.

Cathy: Did you understand the value of the artifacts in the walls of that house?

Christopher: I think we were more curious. I don't think that we had yet arrived at a museum, no. Nothing was in great shape. We didn't find golden doubloons. We didn't find complete costumes. We found bits and pieces, mostly newsprint kind of things. They were mostly behind mirrors. They were stuffed. The old plaster walls had plaster, a sub base and then lath. It was really wonderfully built.

I spent a lot of time running around Georgetown completely carefree. We did not lock doors. People invited other children in to have cookies and over for dinner as you wished.

Cathy: Adults did not supervise your play all the time?

Christopher: Never.

Cathy: Never?

Christopher: Never. Never supervised by adults. It was a great, really wonderful experience. I came here to this library because it was very noisy in a house full of seven children.

Cathy: I can imagine.

Christopher: I would sit upstairs here and do my homework. I'll tell you a funny story. Not very long ago, we rented a house on Long Island in a little town called Sag Harbor. While we were there one of our friends invited her friend, a fellow poet to come over, and she had a memorable name. She came over and I recognized her as being this slightly older girl whom I used to see in this library and admire, but older enough so that as a 10-year-old, a 12-year-old girl is unattainable. She is called Star Black. It's the name I wouldn't have forgotten.

I re-meet this now much older woman in her 50s or 60s who had become a well-known New York poet and tell her that I used to sit behind her in awe, in whatever it is, sixth grade, in this library. I never spoke to her. I certainly never would have. It would have been rude. It would have been inappropriate.

To re-meet her 50 years later was just such a joy, really an amusing and fun experience. I really got a great pleasure out of that. I'm hoping she went and wrote a poem about it but

I don't know that.

Cathy: We'll have to look for it.

Christopher: We'll have to look for it. We'll have to look for it.

[laughter]

Cathy: Star Black. She lived in Georgetown at the time, or at least used this library?

Christopher: At least used this library. I have no idea where she lived. I didn't ask her.

Cathy: You didn't know where she went to school?

Christopher: No. I know she didn't go to Cathedral. I know she didn't go to Holton Arms. I know she didn't go to Visitation or Holy Cross. Other than that I don't know.

Cathy: Interesting.

Christopher: I was allowed to walk after dinner up here to the library and work here until whatever my curfew was. Nine o'clock, 10 o'clock.

Cathy: Didn't matter whether it was light or dark?

Christopher: No. At the time it didn't matter any...I don't know if it was safe. I was never accosted by anyone, never worried much about it. That was the pleasure of Georgetown. People felt, at least, safe. I know I can't think of a vile incident that ever happened in my childhood.

Cathy: It's very interesting, I've recently been interviewing some of the older African Americans who were born in Georgetown, Vernon Ricks and his sister to name two. They have very similar memories. Their attitudes about the comfort and the enrichment that Georgetown in those days brought them as young people is pretty similar to what you have described.

Christopher: That's wonderful. My grandmother's gardener, Charles, I don't think I knew his last name, lived on the west side of Georgetown in one of those little row houses on the bottom of 33rd Street. They're in a bunch by the cupcake place, Georgetown Cupcakes. Charles and his family had that house for years and years and we thought nothing of it. We also thought nothing of learning a great deal about the people who worked for our parents.

In the case of the maid who brought me up, Dorothy Howard, we knew a great deal about her. We knew everything about her. Her husband, all of her children, who her uncle was and who her cousin was because her cousin was the cab driver who came and picked us up if our parents couldn't take us somewhere. She was the person who meted out immediate punishments or immediate "You can't do that," or immediate "I know you have homework, you have to go do that."

Our father would come home late and my parents did not eat with us. We ate in the

kitchen. They served us, and we were sent upstairs, or to the library, or wherever when we finished. My parents came home and had a quiet dinner in the dining room, a formal dinner in the dining room.

It was to me a very insular life, very much contained while being in a relatively large house. We never invited outsiders over for Christmas, or for Thanksgiving, or for Easter, any of those occasions.

Cathy: You had your own crowd.

Christopher: We had. We had a pretty big crowd. Going away to college was a revelation because we were invited everywhere for all sorts of different things. I went to my first Bar Mitzvah. I went to my first Seder. I went to my first "pick an occasion" where families welcomed outsiders. I was shocked that my family never offered that. Never thought about it. Never considered it.

We used to lobby with my parents to have our maid sit with us at dinner. My parents would just shake their heads. "That's just not right." I don't think they were bigoted in the mean sense of the word, but just that they would have considered it wrong. "It shouldn't happen. I can't believe you'd think that. She'll be so uncomfortable. Don't ask her."

Cathy: Isn't that interesting? You know, just the difference in that...a few years that a generation makes.

Christopher: We are not of that generation but...

Cathy: Did you have birthday parties?

Christopher: My birthday was around Labor Day. We lived in a house in Delaware for the entire summer. We went right after school got out. We came back a couple of days before school began. My birthday was always just before we came back and most people had left the beach. I didn't have birthdays, but my siblings did. I'm sure they must have.

Cathy: Invited classmates in or neighborhood friends?

Christopher: I think they were mostly...they were small. I don't remember them inviting anybody except for family. I don't remember the birthday part.

Cathy: I'm a little older than you but my experience was that we had classmates and that was about it. We didn't have the elaborate birthday parties that are given today.

[laughter]

Christopher: I'm pretty sure we didn't have very many classmates, if any. I may be wrong but -- and my sisters could have a different memory than I -- I don't remember them having big birthday parties.

Cathy: Interesting.

Christopher: I don't think my mother...that's not what she did. She dressed up the girls in Seymour dresses when they were little. She would do things like she would take us to the stage door to meet Mary Martin and -- when she was coming here to play "The Sound of Music" -- I had a little dirndl and lederhosen thing that they just...my mother loved that kind of stuff. The big change I think for my parents was music. They loved show tunes -- and maybe a little bit of white jazz but mostly show tunes -- when all of the sudden The Beatles and The Rolling Stones and rock 'n' roll intruded into the house. It created a...call it a cultural rift, a big cultural rift for them. We began to become more independent as a result of that.

I know that I for one never invited people back to my house. It wasn't that I didn't feel that they were welcome. I just felt that it was a unit and that unit was very cohesive and fairly indelible.

Cathy: You thoroughly enjoyed your time on the streets and in the alleys of Georgetown.

Christopher: Oh, I did! And I had such good friends. I was remarking last night at dinner at La Chaumiere with an old, old, old friend of mine I've known for 50 some years. Her brother was my best friend and we met in...there used to be a drugstore at 30th and P Streets...

Cathy: Morgan's?

Christopher: ...called Morgan's Drugstore. And Morgan's Drugstore, as you walked in, used to have a low counter on which you could sit and read comic books.

Cathy: Really?

Christopher: Truly. The lower racks were all comics.

Cathy: Is it still there?

Christopher: Oh God, no. It hasn't been in there in 20 or 30 or 40 years. It's been a long time.

Cathy: It catered to children?

Christopher: The children would sit there and the comic books were racked at this level. And the adult magazines -- "LIFE," "TIME," "National Geographic," whatever -- were racked above it. The children would sit in this alcove, read comic books and buy or not buy them.

I met this particular family -- the Owen family -- there after school one day. We formed this friendship and this rotary of people that became signature to my teenage years anyway. A lot of the things we did, planned and hoped for came out of that friendship. Their house was much more welcoming...much more welcoming to outsiders.

I often had dinner there around a table at a small row house. The Owen's father -- George Owen -- held court. Mrs. Owen -- who was very traditional Uruguagian lady -- made dinner in a small shotgun kitchen. We were not allowed in the kitchen. Dinner was brought out. It was brought out for however many people happened to show up. Now there might be...I remember distinctly...there was a priest there one day, a Jesuit who had been ministering to lepers on an island off the coast of India telling stories about having done this for 10 or 15 years. Or, there was a guy come to discuss with Mr. Owen the international law of the sea. These conversations would go on with us kids being asked to participate if we had something interesting to say. The table was full of people.

Cathy: What a wonderful experience!

Christopher: It was a delight. It was a really beautiful experience. By contrast, when I went away to college I was very interested in demonstrations, protests and so forth. The first time I came back, my parents met me at the door and they said, "Are you here to protest?"

I said "Yeah, I've got my armband and we're going to go down to the Mall." They said "Well, we would prefer if you and your friends didn't stay here, if that's the case." We stayed at one of the churches.

Cathy: You did?

Christopher: Mm-hmm. Slept on the pews, which made it a much more interesting experience and much more...

[crosstalk]

Cathy: This was...?

Christopher: 1968, 1969, 1970, each of those years we came back. For me, when I left high school -- I left high school in 1968 -- I left my blazer and my school tie on the scaffolding of the west transept of the cathedral, got on a bus and went to San Francisco.

It was my breakpoint. I moved -- for the summer -- away from home. I came back the day before school started. My mother had packed me this beautiful trunk with my underwear, socks and sweaters with all those little sewn-in name tags, everything folded and starched. It was shipped up to college. I never opened it. No, I did open it once, but for the most part I never opened it. Never used it.

Cathy: You reminded me of my son, whom I sent off with a beautifully packed trunk to camp in Colorado one summer. When it came home, I began to unpack it and realized he had never opened it in the six weeks he was at camp.

Christopher: I know. It could be worse. We sent our son to camp in Colorado one year with a trunk. It came back with him and he'd put everything from camp in wet.

Cathy: [laughs]

Christopher: And it had all mildewed. It was...

Cathy: Covered with that red dirt from Colorado.

Christopher: Exactly...that little fuzz. It was amazing.

Cathy: I can identify with that attitude. [laughs] What else? You're doing so well.

Christopher: I grew up on a street where we obviously knew everybody on the street. Down the street was a carriage house, an open carriage house. In my lifetime it was always open. There were never cars there. In it were just bins of old stuff. Above it was a loft with old stuff. In it, one day as a teenager, I found a long civil war jacket. A blue officer's jacket with beautiful brass buttons, double breasted. I wore that as my hippie uniform walking through Georgetown. It was an amazing piece of memorabilia. It was in incredible condition. Nobody was living in the house. I don't know why the garage was always open, but it was always open...

Cathy: Was it a carriage house to a grander house?

Christopher: It was a carriage house to a grander house. Whoever lived in the house -- at that point in my life -- was never there.

Cathy: Isn't that interesting?

Christopher: It was fascinating. We did so much that was silly and childlike. We did so much that was characteristic of Georgetown. You know, a lot of my peers played volleyball in Montrose, in the same place that we hid under the hedges as little children. In the same places that we pushed our siblings on those iron swings where the metal is so old that the metal itself was etched with age. I don't know when those swings went in, but they were old by the time I was using them as a child.

Cathy: They were old in the early '60s.

Christopher: Absolutely! Very, very old in the early '60s. I think that what I loved was the freedom. At some point we realized my mother had a charge account at Neam's...

Cathy: I loved Neams.

Christopher: Neams was the...old Mrs. Neams lived upstairs.

Cathy: Oh, she did? That I did not know.

Christopher: She did. The Neams brothers would...one was behind the meat counter and one was stocking. It was wonderful. That was when we started to get more gourmet groceries. Before we were a modest family. The children had fish sticks on Fridays. My parents had sole. We had five meals. We had "meat cakes" -- my mother couldn't say hamburgers. We had "meat cakes" of ground chuck. Dorothy made us some fried chicken that was extraordinary. We had the best scalloped ham and potatoes. Then we had two or three other things but that was pretty much it.

Cathy: What you ate?

Christopher: That was what we ate.

Cathy: Day after day.

Christopher: It wasn't very...my mother was a terrible...she loved cooking but she was a terrible cook. We were happy when our maid was cooking for us, which was most of the time.

Cathy: I think in that generation, very frequently, the meals were designed by the day. On Monday it was...Tuesday it was...and another on Wednesday.

Christopher: Correct. We would either have roast lamb or roast beef with Yorkshire pudding on Sunday. We would all eat together and we had the same...we had spinach with vinegar, which was a very Southern thing to have.

While my father's parents were alive we went next door to their house a lot. They were country people. There's a picture of them somewhere, I wish I could find, of them coming into Washington in a horse and carriage and buying their house on 29th Street.

Cathy: Really? These were your grandparents...

Christopher: These are my grandparents who had a big farm out in Prince George's County. And then a friend of mine who lived across the street -- what was his name -- Robin Bull showed me a picture taken in the '30s of 29th Street as a cobbled street with dirt sidewalks and mud puddles in the sidewalks where my grandmother's ducks, that she brought in, chicks that she brought in from the country, would be playing.

Cathy: Wow!

Christopher: Now the very different thing. It was so...

Cathy: Were you close to your grandparents?

Christopher: It was hard to get close to them. We were very fond of them. My grandmother read to us. I think I loved books so much because she read to us a lot. They had a strange relationship, my grandparents. They were best friends, and they never dated anybody else. They were sixth or seventh cousins. My grandfather was huge. He weighed 300 pounds, and slept in one room. She weighed like 30 pounds and lived in the other room. The rumor that we told over and over again because it amused adolescent children was that they slept together once, and they'd had my father, and that was fine.

Cathy: That was it?

Christopher: They were done. They were done. My grandmother slept, and I've kept it because it's so meaningful to me, my grandmother slept with this Indian club, carved from an old tree root that she kept behind her bed, in case somebody climbed up her window and tried to molest her.

[laughter]

Cathy: You still have the Indian club?

Christopher: I have the Indian club. I love the Indian club.

Cathy: I think that's a wonderful story.

Christopher: The garbage used to be kept outside. There used to be containers for garbage, and the raccoons used to raid it. My grandmother's bedroom window was above where the garbage pit was. In the spring the raccoons really came out. She used to keep a pot of boiling water to pour on the raccoons when they tried to raid the garbage.

Cathy: That's a very honest way to...

[crosstalk]

Christopher: She was a country woman. She made her soap, she made her lace, she made her...do you know what scrapple is?

Cathy: Yes, I know what scrapple is.

Christopher: She made her scrapple.

Cathy: I never liked it, but my father loved it.

Christopher: We grew up with it, and it was often a breakfast food. My grandmother...not once, but the first time I discovered it, had a sliced hog's head half with the cornbread and liver mixings, in this...

Cathy: In the hog's head?

Christopher: In a rather grotesque head, in the ice box. It was extraordinary. She thought nothing of...They were very successful, they were doing very well, but they didn't need much. He and she played Gin every Sunday. He lost faithfully, every Sunday, and that was her pin money, that was what she ran the household on.

Cathy: They'd bet. They played Gin, and that was her pin money?

Christopher: That was how she paid for the household. He was a banker. My grandfather died, falling over in his chair at his club, smoking a cigar and playing cards. He was so big they had a hard time getting him out of the Metropolitan Club. I guess he died happy. He was a funny guy. They were very quiet, very...I don't want to say shy, they just were very quiet people.

In my childhood he had a big Cadillac. In those days Cadillacs were really wide cars and he was relatively short. He used to sit behind the wheel of this Cadillac way down like this. He didn't think the streets should be anything other than one way, and he would just drive down the center of 29th street, or 28th street, or 30th street, and people honked at him but he just paid them no mind.

Cathy: He got away with it?

Christopher: Apparently. No one ever stopped him or called him out or did anything about it. They were nice people and we loved going to their farm, and we were the anomaly, we were the city cousins. There were dozens of other cousins in the country, but few of them...you mentioned Grace Addison. Grace and Joe Addison lived on the other side of Georgetown, and they were my second cousins.

I just saw one of their children the other night, Marge Shepherd. They were the only other cousins who moved into the city.

Cathy: Is Boucie Addison your sister?

Christopher: Boucie is my eldest sister. I had Boucie, Ceci, Nimi, my brother Raulti, my sister Ann, and my sister Catherine.

Cathy: A lot of girls in that family.

Christopher: Lots of girls. It was really horrible. My sisters were very clever. They knew how to bait me, and they would wait for an explosive response, and they would call the parents, "Look what he's done!"

[laughter]

Christopher: I'm sure we were quite the handful. I'm pretty sure that my father didn't know all of our names at any given time. He would just point and go, "you!" and we would know, mostly me, we would know that we were in trouble. We were taught not to really accost him when he came home from work. We were really told to leave your father alone, go and study, and do what you need to do.

To think of how different things are, we had phones that connected to the wall, and we had two phones for the house. As the children got older the use of the phone became a real privilege. If you wanted to stay on and have a long conversation with your boyfriend, girlfriend, best friend, whatever...

Cathy: A lot of girls talking in the house.

Christopher: A lot of girls talking, and very easy to pick up a phone and listen to somebody else's conversation. Very hard to get to the point where you could go down, and you would have to leave the phone to go to the other phone to get them to get off the phone.

We had a finished basement that children were allowed to make into their playroom. By the time I was about 16, we decided we would give one party in Georgetown. We would give one party at my house, an afternoon party, and we invited a whole bunch of kids, and we turned up the music loud and we had cokes and chips and whatever it is you did.

One of the really bad kids in the neighborhood came with his girlfriend, and we were a little bit nervous about that. He and his girlfriend retired into the downstairs bathroom for

quite a long time. My mother came down with one of those little aprons with the gingham around them. My mother came down with a tray of cookies to introduce herself to all the kids at, probably three o'clock in the afternoon. This young man, Jamie, came out of the bathroom doing up his trousers, his girlfriend putting back on her blue jeans, and they had been using heroine. They had all the works, the rubber tubing, and needle, and they were putting it all away. They were completely unaffected by the fact that my mother was there. They sort of walked by her outstretched hand.

I'm sure she had no idea what it was because there's no reason that she should have known what that was. They sort of walked past her outstretched hand and now exited the house, but it kind of characterized our time. We never gave another party. We were too worried that something would happen.

Cathy: Like that would happen again?

Christopher: Yeah. My sister went out with this fellow's younger brother, and because my mother knew who this family was and who his children were, we had to make up a preppy sounding name. Instead of Taylor this fellow's name was Taitsy or Willy, or I don't know what his name was. He would call and we'd have to do this.

Cathy: You would cover for her?

Christopher: Absolutely. I took my sister and her boyfriend to Woodstock.

Cathy: You did?

Christopher: I did. I told my mother I'll take care of her and she won't get into any trouble. Of course, she went with her boyfriend and stayed in a tent for three days, I never saw her, I didn't see her until we left.

Cathy: You had no idea what trouble she got into!

Christopher: No, I didn't, and I did not want to know what trouble she got into.

Cathy: It rained, and rained, and rained.

Christopher: Fortunately, we had tents and food, and tickets, another anomaly that wasn't needed. I gave one more party in my house in Georgetown while my parents were off in their house in Delaware when we were in our 20s. We invited several hundred people.

We took all the furniture in the house from the first floor and took it outside and covered it with tarps. This was the middle of summer. We closed the whole house off, and I built these big free-standing speakers, four or five feet tall, and we had this wild really crazy fun party all night in my parent's house in Georgetown.

We knew that, no-one on one side, that is my grandmother, would give us trouble, because my grandmother never got out of bed and never listened to anything. On the other side there was no-one living there. That's the only time we really entertained.

Cathy: How'd that party go?

Christopher: It was wonderful!

Cathy: Huge success?

Christopher: I had to refinish the floors before my parents came home. The floors were so coated with beer and whatever, sweat and I put candles in sconces in the dining room, and the candles had all melted down the walls.

Cathy: Oh my gosh!

Christopher: As far as I know, they never knew.

Cathy: You cleaned it up, and refinished the floors, and moved the furniture back in.

Christopher: We did. It took about three days to do.

Cathy: That's a lot of effort for a party.

Christopher: We were so enamored at this idea of giving parties in Georgetown. The next party we gave was in the boathouse. We rented the Potomac Boathouse, back in the days when you could do that, and we had 600 people.

Cathy: I've been to a few parties there.

Christopher: It's a wonderful place to do it. I spent a lot of time under K Street, and probably doing things that I wouldn't want my children to do.

Cathy: We won't recall those things. [laughs]

Christopher: We were ill-advised in what we did. We were fortunate in that we weren't really either addictive kids and we weren't really very bad kids. We smoked pot, and that was a big deal, but we probably didn't smoke very good pot, because probably never got very altered consciousness.

Cathy: Was it hard to get the pot?

Christopher: We'd just walk to DuPont Circle. A typical weekend in this kind of weather we would walk to P Street bridge and go down to P Street beach, where there were dozens of, mostly older than we were, people sunning and beginning to grow their hair, and playing wild music and tanning their faces and so on. It wasn't until much later that we learned more about how extreme things could be.

Cathy: You were the first wave.

Christopher: We were definitely the first and most naive wave, and that's probably good for us. You asked about what our experience were, and the church part of it. The Christ Church does have Addison pews in it because my parents donated them. Or, my grandparents donated them I don't remember which.

When we were little, we were all taken and set in the first two rows, in those two pews on the left-hand side. When we were older my sister sang in the choir. I was an acolyte, and carried the cross up to the sanctuary, and stayed up there in my little surplice and gown. I liked it.

I had chapel five days a week and we had a very nice minister called Doctor Anschutz, very different than Mister Kenworthy. He was sort of a Santa Claus figure, old and wise. We did all those things willingly and enthusiastically. I don't go to church now, I have very little interest in that, but we then were properly dressed and very participatory.

It was fun, typical of any teenager, I also noted that by the time I was old enough to be an acolyte, that you could look out over the congregation, and see if there were any of the 13-year-old girls who happened to be in church.

Cathy: It became a scouting event.

Christopher: My wife tells me that her nanny would walk them over from her parents' house at Sheridan Circle and sit in the back row, and remembers our family being there, remembers me and my sisters being up in the sanctuary. That was a nice thing.

The other family was a Catholic family, and by the time I was a later teenager, I went with William to the French mass, the eleven o'clock mass. One of the reasons we went, other than we could practice our French, was that in those days, the priest at the end of the service would say, "And now the kiss of peace."

We would position ourselves behind the very prettiest girls and be available for the kiss of peace. They got it, we got it, the priest got it! We were eventually asked to not do that anymore.

Cathy: [laughs] You were?

Christopher: We were. Contrary to what we thought originally, priests really have pretty sharp eyes about on what's going on in the congregation. We roamed all over Georgetown. We knew every alley and most of the families in one way or another, and many of them came from interesting elsewhere.

There was a family that we used to babysit for their little children, and they had come from San Francisco, which in those days sounded very exotic. They used to go ahead and point to their mantel and say, "There's some up there if you want any." There would be a little cigarette box with joints rolled.

We were way too shy, and probably way too responsible to take anything out and do that. They probably only really felt safe in doing that themselves. I didn't do too many terrible things, but we used to walk up and down the streets in hippie uniform and beg for money, I'm not sure why. "Can I have a quarter?" It was a good way to meet people, and businesses in Georgetown were beginning to be head shops, and they were beginning to be... Georgetown Leather, was first opening on M Street. There were clubs that we could try and get into and hear live music. The music clubs on M Street were open and had a lot

of music in the afternoons. We couldn't...

[crosstalk]

Cathy: Oh, I didn't realize they had a lot of music in the afternoons.

Christopher: They did. Some of the local bands would play live music. We used the...

Cathy: Did you hear the Momas and the Popas in those days?

Christopher: I did.

Cathy: And the cellar door?

Christopher: We would have bought tickets and gone to a regular concert, and you could get in there. Some of the smaller clubs, the Crazy Horse, there were three or four of them. If you knew the person at the door you could sneak in and see if they wouldn't sell you liquor. They were grimly dark, and you wouldn't have wanted to see them in daylight. Some of the bands that were local had people that we knew playing in them, and others we just knew of the band. That was very enjoyable. We were all very interested in music as a sort of signature way to define our generation of people.

The K Street furnaces was so different, all of those abandoned warehouses, the rendering factory by the time I was a middle teenager was no longer active but you could smell the rendering being...

Cathy: When I moved to Washington in '68 and I lived on N Street, I could smell the rendering factory if the wind was right.

Christopher: It closed soon after that. The incinerator wasn't smelly. It just made a lot of noise. The railroad tracks ended there too, so occasionally we could hop on a train that was going along K Street. That was amusing, and I'm sure fairly dangerous. We were very involved in doing things that were sort of dangerous but not terribly.

Cathy: Did you ride that train out toward Glenn Echo ever?

Christopher: No, we usually caught it when it was coming in, because we knew it would be slowing down. It wasn't hard to hop on and it wasn't hard to hop off.

I'm reminded of, I went to a school on Cathedral Hill, and we had some great snowstorms. When I was, I don't know maybe 13 or 12, we had a great snowstorm. They closed all of Wisconsin Avenue, and we could get on the trays from the refectory. We could take the trays from Mass Avenue, down Wisconsin Avenue, all the way to K Street.

[laughter]

Christopher: They didn't plow the streets in those days. That wasn't a thing. You had...

[crosstalk]

Cathy: You literally could sled all the way down?

Christopher: Yeah. At some point you...

[crosstalk]

Cathy: All way down to K Street?

Christopher: We didn't have...

[crosstalk]

Cathy: That's a long walk back!

Christopher: It was, but you didn't think about it.

Cathy: No, it was just the freedom and the exuberance for the moment, and you just did it.

Christopher: I walked to school from the time I was in second grade by myself. Now I can't imagine my children doing that.

Cathy: Where did you go to school?

Christopher: I went to Sheridan School in Sheridan Circle, so it was a five-block walk from my house. We would go past Dumbarton House, where I went to my first wedding. My mother's sister was a younger sister and got married there.

I don't remember this but I was teased about it mercilessly. I was taken to this wedding, and a group of these very, to me as a four-year-old, big women got up to sing, and it scared the hell out of me. I ran screaming out of Dumbarton House, the two blocks home, always to be teased about it when my aunt and mother thought it was the cutest thing ever.

Cathy: These big women singing at the tops of their lungs?

Christopher: Exactly, and they were probably singing some college song. I don't have any memory of it at all. But every time I would go by there and see Dumbarton House, it would remind me of this story that had become family lore.

In the beginning I took a streetcar to get to school at St Albans. I would either take the bus or walk to Wisconsin Avenue and take the streetcar, and that was kind of fun. You had those little bus tickets. You bought a little package of them. It only ran for two of the years that I went there, so two of the nine years there was a trolley car.

Cathy: I didn't realize there was a trolley car up Wisconsin. That's the first time I've heard of that.

Christopher: I think it went all the way to Western.

Cathy: Probably.

Christopher: I don't remember taking it much further than Cathedral Hill. When I was in...St. Albans started 4th grade, c-form. In the fall I got off, I couldn't find my bus ticket, I decided I would just walk home. There was a construction site on the east side of the street where the British school is now. I couldn't get past, so I determined that I had to cross the street. I looked both ways. I didn't see anything coming. I ran across. A taxi came over the hill, coming down Wisconsin Avenue, going very quickly.

I was eight-years-old or something. I was scared and I froze. The taxi cab hit me and knocked me in the air in a huge arc, landing on the sidewalk where I woke to find myself unable to get up and kind of broken and put into an ambulance and taken to the hospital.

Cathy: Which hospital did they take you to?

Christopher: I went to Georgetown for that. My mother wasn't home. I didn't know the telephone numbers of my father's office. My father worked in a bank then in Wheaton. I sat in this hospital for hours, seemed like hours. It was probably an hour, no more than that.

I had broken my hips and my legs wouldn't work.

Cathy: Oh my gosh!

Christopher: I missed school for months at a time just healing from this.

Cathy: Both hips were broken?

Christopher: The car hit me and spun me. I guess I must have hit...

Cathy: Then you landed?

Christopher: I don't remember landing there when...

[crosstalk]

Cathy: You landed on the sidewalk?

Christopher: It threw me a long way. It threw me about 30 feet. I guess I was OK. I was lucky I wasn't killed.

Cathy: I would say so!

Christopher: What it did, and probably what I'm grateful for was that it took me out of a mindset. I was going to go to this school to which my uncle and father and whatever had gone to. Now I was out of it for three or four months. When I came back, I wasn't on that track any longer. It characterizes a search to find a whole different crowd and niche of people. That was lovely. It turned out for me to be a blessing.

A lot of my friendships were formed not from school, but from Georgetown. Because

those persons had very different experiences, it gave me a rich tapestry of experience in the most enjoyable possible way.

Cathy: What an optimistic way to look at what could have been...

Christopher: Easier to say now. My...

[crosstalk]

Cathy: It could have been a very devastating experience had you approached it differently...

[crosstalk]

Christopher: I loathed going to St. Albans from then on. I wasn't offered the choice.

Cathy: You just did it?

Christopher: There was a downside to that as well.

Cathy: It brought you into your neighborhood with all of these different, interesting characters.

Christopher: It did. The freedom we were allowed at that time kept us in that neighborhood. It wasn't a time when your parent got you in a car, arranged play dates and extracurricular after-school activities. It just wasn't done.

Cathy: No. It also freed you from varsity sports, I would assume?

[crosstalk]

Christopher: I was not able to play. By the time I could, I was very uninterested in that. I used to be punished at St. Albans and forced to go to the football games and sit in the cheerleading section. We were given demerits for bad behavior.

Once we borrowed the keys from the purple ladies at the cathedral and made a game of hide and seek, going through the closed, and locked spaces, including the catacombs of the cathedral, until we were finally cornered in a tower and made to give over the keys, at which point we were given, I don't know, a month of Saturdays to repent of our sins.

[laughter]

Cathy: Again, in the cathedral, or did you just have jobs that you had in between?

Christopher: It was done from the school. I arrived at school and my master would supervise whatever it was I was supposed to do that was my penance.

When Al Gore was running for president, I went to an event, having given a tiny bit of money. I went up and said, "Hi, you were a senior prefect when I was a freshman. I still have some of the demerits that you gave me. I couldn't work them all off before I

graduated."

[laughter]

Christopher: I thought this was a very amusing comment, and I thought this was a lot of fun. He sort of looked at me very straight faced and very dour and said, "Well I'm very disappointed." It was not funny to him at all. He would have been senior prefect when I was a freshman.

Cathy: How did you discover the art world?

Christopher: I mostly discovered it by going to The Phillips Collection. Now, one of the Sunday or Saturday occupations was to walk over there, walk through the museum, and look at those rooms, the Rothko Room, the interesting and quirky artists who were up in the old building.

The Phillips were friends of my parents. My father and he were at St. Albans together. There is a story that was told. When they were all first having their children and my parents had first moved into this house in Georgetown, there was a big snow. And Laughlin's parents took out a carriage and a horse and dragged people around in the snowy streets in Georgetown in a horse and carriage.

Cathy: That would have been wonderful.

Christopher: I was too young to see that.

I had two very good friends. One was a young girl called Lyn Noland who lived on the corner of 30th and P, across the street from Morgan's, and the other was, a woman now, a young girl called Becca Smith.

Becca Smith's father was David Smith and Lyn Noland's father was Ken Noland. Ken Noland in learning about that introduced me to the Washington Color School, and David Smith introduced me this idea of three-dimensional art as an abstract, and interesting, and very muscular thing.

[<http://www.theartstory.org/artist-smith-david.htm>] [<http://www.theartstory.org/artist-noland-kenneth.htm>]

When I went to college I was fascinated to study that. I was forever hooked by three poles; the Phillips, the Nolands, and the Smiths. The Nolands not so much, but with the Smiths we've remained friends.

I have a vivid memory of...neither male parent came to visit a great deal. David Smith used to come and see the Nolands, and he died. I don't remember ever talking to him, but he had these great hands, cut, and burned, and gnarled, and very thick and stubby, the hands of someone who worked in steel and had burned himself a lot.

Had I any sense, I would have taken pictures of those hands in the way that Stieglitz took pictures of Georgia O'Keeffe's hands. It made a very deep impression on him. My parents

did not collect art. They only had family things in that house, so that wouldn't have been in my house, but it was available in the Noland's house.

It was a big target that Cornelia had kept as part of her settlement in getting divorced from Ken Noland. It was an incredibly powerful picture, sort of a room sized picture of these concentric circles, very painterly, very crude, and powerful.

I think we liked things that we were pretty sure our parents wouldn't like in the way of teen interest. I remember my parents coming back from New York and saying, "We went to the Museum of Modern Art. It's a tourist attraction. There was a bed on the wall, and it was covered with paint, and it was a piece of art." They went on and on about this, and it wasn't until I went to college that I realized that this was a Bob Rauschenberg piece, a very famous piece called "Bed." Later on, I was fortunate enough to work on an exhibit where there was a retrospective of Rauschenberg's work, and I helped him install it. I installed this piece here in Washington.

[crosstalk]

Cathy: It was the same bed?

Christopher: Yeah, the same bed. Nice full circle experience. I think we always gravitated towards people who made music or made art, who wrote, or danced, or whatever.

One of the families was a family who were connected to Mexico. The father had been an Ambassador to Mexico. The daughter, Margaret, was interested in flamenco, left us to go live in Spain with her husband and found a flamenco troupe.

There was a guy, what was his name? There was a painter who lived down the street from my parents called Walton, Will Walton. We didn't know anything about him. He never seemed to leave his house or show his work. Apparently, he was a well-known painter. I had a friend whose parents had famously purchased a Cy Twombly, unheard of in Georgetown. Nobody here would have known anything about Cy Twombly. It's one of these wonderful things of curved circles drawn onto a canvas, completely abstract, the Brancusi "Bird in Space" that sat at the head of the stairs in the Graham's house.

Cathy: Really?

Christopher: It's now in the National Gallery. All on which we would throw our coats. We were very irreverent. By the time I was 16 we were full-fledged rebellion.

Cathy: Appropriately so.

Christopher: I had a very appropriately strict upbringing. It was appropriate to be rebellious at that point. It was nice that we worked. It was nice that we got to know houses in Georgetown by entering them as worker people. We didn't consider ourselves to be privileged. We didn't consider ourselves to be wealthy. We didn't consider ourselves to be effete.

It was humbling to be around people who spoke languages that we didn't know well. In those days, I didn't speak any Spanish at all. It was exotic to hear people doing that. It was exotic to go to a dinner party and have Spanish, and French, and English spoken at the same time, if not, Italian and Portuguese. Mostly Romance languages, it wasn't that exotic.

I had a conversation last night about doing a 60th- anniversary dance. We gave a dance at a friend's house. We had seen a movie that had a Virginia reel on it. We gave a Virginia reel party. All the boys dressed up in their father's tuxedos. All the girls dressed up in their mother's evening gowns. We rolled back the rugs.

For the Virginia reel, you have to have a caller. They have to call like in a square dance. You have to call that. We had no idea what we were doing, but we had this wonderful time. Very much for me, typical of Georgetown was this coterie of people who were maybe as much as 10- or 12- years apart in age. Us biggers, took care of the littlers on a pretty regular basis. One of the kids that we hung out with had this wonderful space in his father's house where they had built a bomb shelter that was a labyrinth in the bottom. That was the place where you could go, do something nefarious.

The simplicity of it, the small village of it, the leafiness of it was so characteristic of why it was comfortable. It was never noisy at night. M Street is not what it is now. Wisconsin Avenue was completely closed.

Cathy: No traffic at all at night.

Christopher: No traffic and in and out of shops or restaurants. They just weren't there. When I was a really little kid, the only real restaurant on M Street was Clyde's. There was nothing else. There were a dozen clubs and a lot of things opened up after that. Chadwick's opened up after that.

The Guards opened up after that. Charing Cross opened up and Napana. I guess Nathan's was there. I don't remember Nathan's too much later.

Cathy: No. Nathan's was there when I moved here in '68.

Christopher: I'm sure it was there in the '60s. I don't know if it was there in the '50s.

Cathy: I don't know.

Christopher: It was interestingly exotic to go into Charing Cross, for instance, a restaurant owned by Persians, operated by Guatemalans, serving Italian food.

Cathy: [laughs] A truly international experience.

Christopher: It wasn't meant to be that and of an English variant. Charing Cross did mean, obviously, the Tube stop in London. Many of us worked there. We learned how to be waiters. I was very painfully shy.

Cathy: The international experience that you did experience primarily were people who

were actively involved at the World Bank, or embassies?

Christopher: Mostly embassies.

Cathy: They weren't immigrants?

Christopher: No, never. Never. Not in Georgetown. In my case, they were mostly the children of professionals, ambassadors for the most part, and a lot of administration people, and a lot of senators, congressmen. There weren't very many congresswomen. There weren't very many senators who were women.

Cathy: No, I think Margaret Chase Smith was one of the only ones in the day.

Christopher: As far as I know, that was it. It was interesting to grow up then and meet many of these people in a more one-to-one basis as opposed to coming in and delivering their groceries.

Cathy: Yes. I can understand that.

Christopher: It's fascinating to read histories that talk about the people that were the parents of the people that we were friends with.

Cathy: Yeah, because they were just the mothers and fathers of your friends. Now, later, you begin to understand.

Christopher: I think we were very naive. I think we were just oblivious.

Cathy: It was just the way it was.

Christopher: I know. When Mary Mayer was killed, for instance, I remember going over to the house. She had been killed and it was a mystery, but we didn't know that there was anything particular about it. We knew her paintings. We knew some of the families. A couple of those children were good friends of ours. Later on, that became connected. All of that became connected.

Cathy: Interesting.

Christopher: Why did you move here in '68, just to turn the tables?

Cathy: [laughs] I had a roommate from college who had a house on N Street -- 3333 N Street -- and she needed a roommate. I had just graduated with a Master's degree and was applying for a teaching job. I got a job in Montgomery County teaching English. I moved to Washington because I had a place to live.

Christopher: Montgomery County then, there was nowhere to live out there, right?

Cathy: No.

Christopher: You had to live somewhere else and take a bus or drive.

Cathy: I essentially moved here because it was easy. It was a furnished apartment. I wanted to be in Washington. I was intending to return to Chicago which was my home. I met my husband here and I've been here ever since.

Christopher: That's so wonderful. My mother was what was not so nicely known as a "cave dweller." Been there forever and were out there forever and very...considered to be very snobbish about it. It didn't occur to me that my parents were ever snobbish. I think they were purposely so.

We met so many people. My mother's best friend was Scottie Lanaham. My favorite picture of my mother is she and Scottie, when Scottie's first book came out. Now, I'm talking about *Growing Up with Scott and Zelda*. Scottie married Grove Smith, who was a classmate of my father's and gone to war with him.

They've known each other. Grove married a dancer in France with whom he had a couple of children. Then she basically ran away and left him with two children. The two children were called Martin and Pupete.

Martin was my agent. Pupete was one my sisters' ages. Boucie reminded me the other day that we'd had them over one day. My father had this very cool pellet gun that was air driven. You'd broke the gun. You pumped up the air charge. You'd put a pellet in, put the gun back together and you fired. Martin thought it would be a great idea to sit in my bedroom on the second floor and shoot pellets at the girls in the back yard.

[laughter]

Cathy: It didn't last long.

Christopher: It didn't last long. We were vigorously punished for quite ...it was quite amusing.

Cathy: That's interesting. So many famous people were a part of Georgetown in a very simple and easy way.

Christopher: I now think that when we knew Mrs. Lanaham, we didn't know anything about Scott and Zelda. Not a single thing. It was only much later.

Cathy: Were they not buried in Rockville? Of course, the Lindberg children lived in Georgetown.

Christopher: They did. Not during my time.

Cathy: They're older than you.

Christopher: Well, somebody's got to be older.

Cathy: Ann Lindburg's children went to Potomac. She used to come and sit in the library and work on her children's books.

Christopher: I thought Potomac was idyllic. I thought my sisters getting on the buses in

the morning and getting bused down there, when I was only in a lower school, was idyllic. It was still a farm.

Cathy: It was.

Christopher: What was it? There was that big recreation area in the center of the building, that doubles as a gym.

Cathy: The covered play area.

Christopher: It went to ninth grade then, right?

Cathy: It went to ninth grade.

Christopher: We boys were so jealous of my sisters being able to go to a less formal school.

Cathy: A lot of freedom and a lot of outdoors.

Christopher: It was a really beautiful setting. There were a lot of really gifted teachers, a lot of memorable teachers there. It was as warm and welcoming an environment as any school I've ever known, certainly. The only thing I know, close to it, was my kids went to Maret, went to the cottage at Maret. The cottage at Murray has a similar sort of that atmosphere.

Cathy: The attitude to let children be who they are.

Christopher: Yeah, the bigger kids help to take care of the little kids. That was terribly nice. By the time I was in high school, I begged my parents to let me go to Western High School. I knew some of the teachers there. One of the teachers was Leon Berkowitz, the painter, who was very popular with the kids because he'd smoke pot with them, take them to his house and show them his paintings. I was not allowed to do that. The day of the riots, after Doctor King was killed, day of the riots we were in Western High School and been told to go home.

I could see part of downtown starting to burn and someone lit two trashcans, lit them in the stairwells of the school and caused the school to be evacuated. I don't think any damage was done, but it was a very dramatic moment. The school was terrified that some real violence was going to break out and kids would be murdered. Western High School was part of a wild place in those days too.

Cathy: I imagine that it was.

Christopher: No, it was a very different group of people. It was on the periphery and margins of Georgetown. We certainly didn't call that part...it was known as West Village.

Cathy: No, it was not an Art School at that time.

Christopher: Not in any sense.

Cathy: It was integrated.

Christopher: It was integrated for sure. It was very much integrated. I had some gifted teachers. Some interesting things and I knew a lot of the people who went there. It was interesting culturally but it was also a little Wild-West-like.

The four corners of the school were called just that, Four Corners. You could buy heroin on one corner, pot on one corner, LSD on one corner and speed on one corner. We all knew that. We would never have gone there and done that. It would have been far too dangerous. I met some people who were far outside of my experience, were much nuttier and much more out there in their behavior. The first girl who showed me heroin went to school there. I'm not sure how she went to school there. She lived in McLean, so her parents must have owned some place in Washington around.

It was nice. I went to California when I graduated from high school with a kid who I went to school with at Western High School and with whom I was friends. We stayed for the summer at his sister's house in San Francisco and enjoyed that quite a lot. In a way that 17-year-old kids can enjoy San Francisco in the summer of love, for sure. It was lovely

Cathy: There's a big exhibition at one of the museums there about the Summer of Love. I saw it last summer.

Christopher: I think we should see that. There's also that wonderful exhibit that's up at the Renwick, The Burning Man.

Cathy: I have not seen that.

Christopher: That's interesting to bring here in the first place. That's very clever of the director to bring something that's so "not Washington," here.

Cathy: I agree with you on that.

Christopher: One of the things that is memorable for me about Georgetown is how much we wanted to be at the cutting edge of something and then how little we really got there. We formed bands. We played wild music. We gave dances. We smoked pot. We dressed in weird and interesting clothes.

We were certainly rebellious, but we weren't in full revolt. I wasn't allowed to have long hair during the school year. The headmaster at Saint Albans would come around and go, "Mr. Addison, I think you should go to the barber before you come back to the refectory for lunch." He'd give me five dollars.

Cathy: And off you'd go to have your hair trimmed.

Christopher: Exactly. It was very much in loco parentis. We were expected to meet a particular norm and if we didn't, we were spoken to.

Cathy: You really were on the edge of that movement that went so much further than you and your peers were willing to go.

Christopher: Or needed to go. We were very satisfied with the amount of rebellion. Until I went away to college I really didn't consider that we needed to be any more extreme than we were. We used to love going in those abandoned factories down in K Street and running around. We also used to delight in all the refuse in the river. It was remarkably dirty in K Street.

Cathy: Were the lumber yards still down there at that time?

Christopher: They were still there. The plant that made marine engines had been evacuated. That was fun to go in. The other generating plant, the one near the canal, was fun to go in. They had a huge incinerator.

Cathy: I know, the power plant that they're now trying to turn it into a luxury apartment.

Christopher: They're always trying to turn everything into luxury apartments. There was very little...I don't remember much in the way of luxury here. I never thought of it as luxurious. Nobody appeared to us to be particularly wealthy. It was a big deal if someone had a pool. When the Cafritz built their pool on 29th Street by Kay Graham's house, that summer they hadn't moved into the house and we felt very free to use the pool all summer.

Cathy: You did.

Christopher: Of course.

Cathy: Just go over the wall.

Christopher: The gate wasn't locked. We had a great time.

Cathy: Did the Belin's have a pool?

Christopher: No, or if they did, I don't remember. I don't remember them having a pool. A tennis court. We went to lots of dances at the Belin's? It's weird going there now.

Cathy: It's very different now.

Christopher: I know that -- now they're divorced -- they had very high hopes of making it a music center. I don't know how much they do and if it's rented out or there's anything else.

Cathy: Didn't a Japanese couple buy it?

Christopher: They wanted to do musical programs and their foundation was supporting that. They also bought John Dreyfuss's place, Halcyon as well. I don't have a clue what they're doing there. I never see things happening there. Those are expensive properties.

Cathy: Very. I did enjoy going to Halcyon House for weddings or parties.

Christopher: John did such a great job taking the entire insides out of that house and rebuilding it. His father bought that with partners in the hopes that there was going to be a

subway in Georgetown.

That was the reason for it. When they determined that they couldn't cross the water, the stream that's underneath the branch of Rock Creek, the creek that goes down Wisconsin Avenue, I think John's father bought out the rest of the partners.

John inherited that property and determined that he would live there and make sculpture there. While they were rebuilding the interior, he and his then wife, Marina lived in a building next door, an apartment next door.

Cathy: OK, that I did not know. I did go to a wedding in that basement.

Christopher: Wow, that's wonderful.

Cathy: That fabulous concrete, huge space.

Christopher: It's wonderful. With the big doors looked out over the river that would be better.

Cathy: Yes.

Christopher: They often gave things up on the terrace above it. It was a brilliant idea to take all that roof out and to carve back out that space underneath it.

Cathy: Would that space have been his studio?

Christopher: It was his studio, until they sold it.

Cathy: All right. Tired yet?

Christopher: Oh. Yeah. Exhausted. We had a lot of this conversation last night at La Chaumiere.

Cathy: [laughs] You did.

Christopher: Two of the people there I grew up with here in Georgetown. One. Casey Lee who you might be interested in talking to was very articulate about the architecture history of the village in Washington.

Cathy: That would be wonderful.

[crosstalk]

Christopher: Then Georgina Owen who is married to an architect here, Outerbridge Horsey. We were just comparing notes. They were years younger than I. We babysat Georgina and her sister.

Cathy: I think we have Georgina on our list.

Christopher: That's what I heard.

Cathy: I think Tom is going too. Tom Birch.

Christopher: I know Tom asked her. I don't know if Tom's going to interview.

Cathy: Yes. Her husband as well is on our list for this fall.

Christopher: Oh. I hope so. They live in the West Village, but still. The West Village was enemy territory.

Cathy: That's interesting to hear.

Christopher: It wasn't enemy territory, but we wouldn't have gone...

Cathy: The African American children had to cross to go to Wormley School at that time. As adults they described their school experience with a gratitude and reverence that reminded me of Potomac.

Christopher: Potomac School was very egalitarian. NCRC was very democratic. My mother told me she was the first class of NCRC.

Cathy: She was. When?

Christopher: That was a considerably long time ago. It must have been in DuPont Circle then. Over in Kalorama

Cathy: Yeah. It's still going strong.

[crosstalk]

Christopher: ...Oh. It's going terrific. I just talked to a parent who was bemoaning the fact that they were going to have to go into the board in order to keep things, right?

Cathy: Yeah. Sometimes boards respond and sometimes they don't. [laughs]

Christopher: For us there were distinctions made in terms of where people went to school but they were only sort of experiential things. The children who went to Georgetown Day were the most interesting ones. Their parents were the most permissive. Their experience at school was the most open and free. Even then it was all that one campus. That was very fascinating. Then there was a big difference between the kids who went to Catholic School, for instance, went to Holy Trinity. Or went to Saint Anselm's. Or went to Georgetown Prep. Saint John's was a big...

[crosstalk]

Cathy: In your neighborhood group in Georgetown did kids go to all these different schools?

Christopher: Yep. Public school. Saint Alban's.

Cathy: This was sort of the melting pot and everybody was...

Christopher: Stone Ridge. Georgetown Day. Potomac. Saint Alban's, Cathedral...

Cathy: Holton?

Christopher: Holton. Think my sister went to Madeira. It was a big... What was it like to have to go to Cathedral?

Cathy: [laughs]

Christopher: Smart. I don't know. I dated for about 10 minutes a young woman who went to Madeira. Who we think was in my sister's class called, Tally Flowers. There used to be Sunbeam Bread.

Cathy: I remember Sunbeam Bread.

Christopher: Tally Flowers was the little girl picture on Sunbeam Bread package. Not to sound sexist. She was the stupidest girl I ever met in my entire life. She went to Madeira for seven years. Her father finally gave a gym is what we understood.

Cathy: She graduated! [laughs]

Christopher: Apparently. I re-met her not too many years ago in Georgia, in Thomasville where her family came from. They were all very involved in horses and shooting and so forth. It was all very interesting. She's still very pretty and very slow. Not terribly imaginative. It was interesting.

I think the richness of Georgetown was the vast array of different persons. While it would have been interesting to have known about the grown-up parties that we heard about so much later... the parties that included grownups, and politicians, and newspaper people. They were famous overindulgent events. I don't think we would have understood it. It was much more fun to be the kids that we were because we were definitely allowed that freedom.

Cathy: To my knowledge, you are the first to have completely described what it was like to be a child on these streets.

Christopher: I didn't want to get into the rest of it. I figured other people would have been much better than I. My childhood in Georgetown is so defining for me. Much more so than my time...

Cathy: It really was influential in your direction and flow of your life?

Christopher: Yeah. Saint Albans was a negative experience and Georgetown was a very positive experience. I'll tell you the life story and then I better go.

Cathy: OK.

Christopher: When I was about 10 or 11 years old we determined over Halloween that it would be amusing to ring the doorbells of houses in Georgetown and run away. I don't

know why. It escapes me who came up with the idea. Three or four of us would do this. Ring the bell and run away laughing. The idea was we became more and more emboldened and you'd hide behind a plant or something so you could see the faces of the people and get annoyed.

I remember we got caught. We didn't hide well enough and one of the people who owned the house came out and said, "I know you. I know you. I am going to tell your parents." That was the other thing about Georgetown was that you couldn't do anything without somebody telling your parent that you had done something wrong.

I was about 15 years old. Maybe 14. One of the older kids convinced me that I should go into the People's drug store and buy condoms for him. I don't know why this was. It was probably a rite of passage. You had to get them at the drug counter.

Cathy: They weren't on the shelf.

Christopher: No, definitely not on the shelf. Go to the drug counter and you go bright red face. "I want a package of [funny sound]." [laughs] The druggist folds his arms and he goes, "I know who you are and I'm going to be calling your mother later."

Cathy: [laughs]

Christopher: He did.

Cathy: He did.

Christopher: Yes, of course. What doesn't occur to you at 14 is your mother is quite sanguine that you're obviously either doing it just to impress your friends. You're not doing it because you found this young lady who's going to copulate with you.

Cathy: [laughs]

Christopher: It's just a stupid kid thing. My mother got such a kick out of it.

Cathy: Did she?

Christopher: Oh. Sure.

Cathy: What a nice response.

Christopher: It wasn't like your son's been picked up for shoplifting.

Cathy: Right.

Christopher: "You dummy." You dummy. That characterized our lives here, was that people knew and both protected.

Cathy: People cared.

Christopher: Called you on it. Your bad behavior you were called on it. You thought

nothing of shoveling your neighbor's walk. You just did it. By the same token your neighbor thought nothing of giving you five bucks for doing it. Even though it was not asked for and it wasn't necessary. It was a nice...

[crosstalk]

Cathy: A nice place to live, a very special place.

Christopher: Yeah. I don't know that it's that different now. The character of person is different. It's a much wealthier and much more privileged group of people living here.

Cathy: Properties are very more valuable than they used to be.

Christopher: My sister told me that the house that my parents built for \$200,000 -- they were the general contractors for -- has nine bedrooms, sold for \$6 million the most recent time last year. I just thought why? It's just a great big brick box with a little yard in the back and that happens to have parking spaces beside it.

Cathy: Those parking spaces are very valuable!

Christopher: Very valuable. Absolutely. I mean it's not a beautiful house like one of these on...

[crosstalk]

Christopher: ...always a fun house to do. I used to go over there and she used to amuse me with her off-color conversations. She was great fun to be around.

Her daughter Victoria, who years ago lived with her husband down the street Mr. Mealy, was in my class in kindergarten and Sheraton school. I remember her well because I got into a fight with her in kindergarten. She scratched my face so badly that I couldn't come to school for a few days. Then we were great friends after that.

Cathy: Broke the ice. [laughs] Broke the skin.

Christopher: Broke the skin. Broke something. I don't know. There are hundreds of houses here where there are specific memories of people and experiences.

[crosstalk]

Cathy: You're still here.

Christopher: I'm still here.

Cathy: Your business is here and you're not going anywhere.

Christopher: I bought that house so that I could go to see my mom. It just seemed right to buy a building that did two things. It was close to my mother, and it was an inside-out gallery. Allowed people to walk by when we're not open and see what was on display.

I like that. The openness of art. Offering it as a gift to people. You don't have to come in and buy something. You don't have to be intimidated by what it is. I enjoy being an art dealer. I've done it for a really long time.

I've done it as a family business. I've done it with a person whom I married and have stayed married to all these years. Thank god my children are not doing it.

Cathy: Really?

Christopher: I'm delighted that they're....

Cathy: They have other interests.

Christopher: They have other interests and they're good at what they do.

Cathy: They have their own identities.

Christopher: They want me to give all my art. Which is I suppose in some sense flattering.

Cathy: I would think that it is flattering. Yes. Is there any coordination or support between the galleries that exists sort of at this end...?

[crosstalk]

Christopher: We made this sort of cooperative gesture to do the galleries in Book Hill. That is now seven galleries and still it will become six when Maurine Littleton leaves. Everything from Artist's Proof down to P Street up to me is involved in an association that does the Spring and Fall Art Walk.

We used to do the French Market but there's not much more galleries doing French Market. Then we coordinate lectures, and openings, and advertising. We're each so individually different.

Cathy: How?

Christopher: I would say it's not competitive.

Cathy: It's a non-competitive cooperative?

Christopher: There used to be an art dealers' association in Washington. That had 20 plus galleries and disbanded. It was very aggressive in advertising. Had a brochure, standards and director, helped people, gave events where people could meet appraisers and so forth. Now the art scene is much more widespread and is much less cohesive. There are far fewer galleries.

Cathy: The only other item I want ask you to comment on is the new project called Stable.

Christopher: I contributed to it. I'm not convinced they can do what they want to do. It's

a little far away from me. I'm admiring of they're wanting to do that. It seemed more appropriate to Bushwick than it did to Washington. Bushwick being Brooklyn where there are a lot of the newer houses and store front space.

Cathy: Is it primarily intended to give opportunities to young developing artists or is it primarily designed to increase the art scene in Washington?

Christopher: I think it's both. I think it's opportunities and the furtherance of artist's careers by exposure. I'm not convinced that they'll be able to stay there beyond a certain point nor if they'll raise the money to be able to purchase the building.

I've been supporting an interesting organization that's more about writing which is the East City Art Foundation in Anacostia. It has a two rivers project which talk about the art between Anacostia and Potomac. Their purpose it to train writers to do critical writing.

Phil Hutinet who runs that I'm convinced has been doing an extraordinary job putting out written information about art and art projects in Washington.

Cathy: How do they identify the writers?

Christopher: Most of the writers find them. It's the same principle as we find. We find more than enough artists find us. The artists that we're most interested in we go looking for because the opportunities are few and it's so horribly painful to make your art and then have to sell it. Sell it to a gallery. Sell it to other people. It's hard to be turned down.

Most people make art in good faith. Write if they write in good faith. As in writing a huge percentage of people aren't that good. I don't enjoy saying to someone, "Look. I'm really sorry. This is the fifth time you've brought it in. I don't like your work. I don't think it's that good and I wish you would stop asking."

It's a terrible thing to say to someone who might in good faith feel they worked hard on this and this is their best effort. I feel an obligation to speak with an artist whom we don't represent and give as good advice as we can.

I make studio visits to all the artists on a regular basis. I also make studio visits to young artists, older artists, established artists, artists who haven't been seen in a while. I'm on the way out to see Bill Woodward and look at his Figurative art, which I have very little interest in, but I admire Bill.

I'm meeting with another artist who you might know here who does beautifully rendered work. Carol Roman who I won't represent but who I admire enough to give good advice about what she does.

We give internships to kids in college and high school to come work in galleries and see what that's like. We give advice to friends and family who have artists in friends and family circles. Insofar try not to be too cynical.

Try not to be too impatient with people. Find something good to say about it. There are some people who need to be told, "This is really dreadful." We get a lot of unsolicited

stuff in the mail. Try and send it back with a polite note.

You know what it is? A hundred years ago there were so few artists and so few collectors that it was a rarefied genre. Now there are literally millions of people who make art. There is some tiny percentage of opportunities for those millions of people to show and sell their art. Within that milieu that is able to exhibit their art regularly. There's only a tiny percentage whom will actually make a living at that.

A part of what we do is to build an audience for art, by lecturing about it and by giving regular exhibits, and by greeting people when they come in. We answer questions. We show them a wide range of artists. We are not being afraid about the kinds of artists that we show. We are building younger generations of artists.

We might otherwise spend a lot of time building younger generations of philanthropists. Getting people involved in fundraising and not for profits and so on because if you don't do that you'll lose. It's the same as raising generations of young politicians. If you don't find people who are willing to be involved in public service it's going to be...

Cathy: It's to our detriment.

Christopher: ...harmful. I have a strong memory of my children. The first time they were all three old enough to vote they voted for Obama. It was a big deal. They were so excited. They were so proud of themselves. Now none of them want to vote. All of them feel completely disconnected. All of them are...disempowered. They're smart, engaged people with...They're hyper-opinionated. They're very well educated.

Cathy: They're turned off...

[crosstalk]

Christopher: Completely turned off.

Cathy: I went to a lecture by Madeleine Albright at Georgetown recently. She was given an award. Some of the young people in the audience stood and asked the question, "We feel turned off. What should our response be?" She said, "Your response should be to get in there and fight."

Christopher: What's encouraging is that... Have you met Leslie Coburn?

Cathy: No.

Christopher: She'd be an interesting person to interview having had that house in Georgetown for years. Leslie's staff of people, helping her run the fifth district of Virginia, are all really young people. They've propelled her to become the most likely candidate for the Democratic Nomination in the caucuses which are all about people. She's got this great crowd of 20 somethings who are wildly enthusiastic and they're breeding other young people who are wild and enthusiastic...

Cathy: They've recreated the Obama experience.

Christopher: You have to have a kernel of something. You can't just...For me, it's all about what I don't like now. I don't see a lot that I do like. I'm willing to work hard to change that. I don't see a lot to propose. What were you going to ask?

Cathy: I was going to ask you if you see things that disturb you about Georgetown's future or whether you're optimistic that this community can retain the character that it has developed.

Christopher: I think it still has the character. I think that the bones of Georgetown haven't changed at all. Every now and then we lose a significant tree. I lost the tree in front of my building last year. It was an old, old tree, but it was our tree.

Every now and then, you find some things that are aggressive and irritating like the parking enforcement people. They go around in cars with cameras. They don't even have to get out of their cars to give the tickets. It's only fair that you should have to walk around and be miserable on your feet giving me a ticket. Between the fond bones that exist and continue to exist and the minor irritants, the stronger part are the bones.

I was shocked when I moved back here into Washington. They had put barbed wire up at Dumbarton Oaks so you could no longer climb over the wall in the evening and swim at the pool. That was a huge thing.

Cathy: I've heard lots of stories about people climbing over that wall and swimming in the pool.

Christopher: Oh, we did so often. The fellows were never there. In particular at night, there were no fellows there. I think when I came back from college they had watchdogs. The first time you climbed the wall in the 1970s, say, there were dogs. We climbed quickly back over the wall. On a hot summer night, it was the only swimming pool in town. Volta pool wasn't open in the evenings. The Volta pool was pretty, pretty grimy in the '60s and '70s. We wouldn't have swum there. It was much more use the hose in the backyard kind of thing...or an inflatable pool or something.

I think that what I don't see is much -- it's probably because I don't live here now -- are the connections that existed between people. In my block alone, we were connected in multiple ways to the people who live there. My godfather's family lived behind us. He was our general physician. Our pediatrician had offices on 30th Street in that apartment complex. We went to the center around the corner to get our shots.

Cathy: You went out on your own?

Christopher: Of course, Dr. Daisley would meet us. A nurse wouldn't do it. He would give us the shots himself. Isn't his daughter also a doctor?

Cathy: I don't know, but I knew Dr. Daisley.

Christopher: I think she may be as well. He was wonderful.

Cathy: Daisley and Ong

Christopher: Then Beal Ong, right?

Cathy: Yes. Beal Ong.

Christopher: They were awfully nice people.

Cathy: Those connections you don't see as acutely as they used to exist for you?

Christopher: No, they were clearly cliques of people as there are anywhere, I suspect. The connections were very strong and very rich in those connections. I don't see that so much anymore, partly because of the high turnover.

On my street alone, Reservoir one, in that one block, those houses have turned over multiple times in the last 10 years, almost every single one of them. I think almost, without exception.

Cathy: In the old days, people didn't sell so often? They lived there 20, 30...

Christopher: many, many years. I think that changes the character of a place, high turnover, certainly. We made a joke about the social Safeway, but the social Safeway changed the character of here. It was no longer a real meeting place. It was more a gossiping place. Whereas doing business at Neams or Scheele's, was very much a village-oriented grocery store.

Cathy: It was a community experience.

Christopher: George Scheele would know what kind of meat you like. Fred Scheele would know that you liked Anjou pears.

Cathy: I would call the butcher at Neams and read him a recipe over the phone.

Christopher: Exactly. He had it waiting for you.

Cathy: And he had it waiting. And it was dressed beautifully with fresh herbs.

Christopher: It was a wonderful place to go. I've lost thought in what I was saying. There used to be a place called "Georgetown Wine and Cheese." That's where Appalachian Spring was. There was one guy who ran the cheese shop and one guy who ran the wine shop in front. They had what was seen then to be exotic cheeses. It was the place where you went if you've never heard of a sheep cheese, never seen a sheep cheese.

Cathy: Or an Epoisses.

Christopher: Exactly! In those days it was all French wine. You might have seen a Spanish wine, might have seen a couple Italian wines. You wouldn't have seen an Argentinian wine.

Cathy: South African.

Christopher: Not Australian, none of that would have been there. We worked here, too.

I spent a year having two jobs and working in the daytime painting people's houses in order to go on a trip with the kids I grew up with in Georgetown.

A trip we planned for five years. Although we didn't make it the way we planned it, now that was our little childhood dream.

Cathy: To take a trip together?

Christopher: We dreamt of buying two Land Rovers and taking the Land Rovers from Washington to Tierra del Fuego. Winching our way across the impenetrable jungle of the Darien Gap between Panama and Columbia.

Cathy: There's no highway.

Christopher: There is no highway. There's nothing. There are two contemporary references to people driving through it, winching their way across the streams and whatever. We researched it. We raised money for it. We worked extra jobs for it.

We eventually did it differently for a variety of reasons.

Cathy: You did do a trip?

Christopher: Oh yeah. We had to fly to Panama and then take a boat to Columbia. From Columbia, we went to Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina and Uruguay.

Cathy: Wow!

Christopher: We traveled overland the whole way.

Cathy: In Range Rovers?

Christopher: No. There was an agreement in force then called the Andean Pact. In order to take the Rovers in, we had to leave deposits in each of the countries for tens of thousands of dollars. Way, way more than we could possibly spend, so we flew to Panama.

We went by public transportation.

Cathy: You did?

Christopher: All the way. Across the Andes...

Cathy: Buses the whole way?

Christopher: Buses, camion, what's called "collectivo". We hitchhiked. We walked. We walked across the border between Peru and Bolivia.

Cathy: Golly! Lake Titicaca?

Christopher: Mm-hmm. We arrived on the shores of Titicaca. We had bribed a border

guard to get across because we didn't have the right papers to go across. There was a social problem in Peru at the time. We had backpacks. We were obviously gringos.

We were having an experience. We were doing the opposite of "The Motorcycle Diaries." We were traveling the roads that Che Guevara would have made going up from Chile and Argentina up to the North coast and heading south.

Cathy: You went the opposite direction.

Christopher: We went the opposite way. We were met by a family in Martadero. We had an extraordinary time. First of all, we'd been on the road for months. We were a little grubby. We were heroes.

Cathy: You were heroes when you were traveling.

Christopher: We were young 20 somethings. We had done this remarkable trip. All the young men in Uruguay, at the time were what they call Tupamaros. They had left the country for political reasons.

Cathy: Say that word again.

Christopher: Tupamaros, which is a mythological personality. We had a wonderful time and then we flew back.

[crosstalk]

Cathy: It all started in Georgetown.

Christopher: It all started as a result of living in Georgetown, by far my favorite place. My only regret is that we didn't find a nice house to live in here. Which wasn't for lack of trying.

Cathy: Maybe you will.

Christopher: No, no. I just redid a house. I don't have the energy to do that. May I keep this? This is great!

Cathy: Yes.

Christopher: This is wonderful. That is so thoughtful. I hope I touched on a few of those things.

Cathy: You did, you did. I wanted you to be in the driver's seat. You certainly have been. Thank you so much for your memories and your time.

Christopher: It was a pleasure. It's my pleasure. I don't love doing this. I hate speaking about myself, but this is so thoughtful. It made it such an enjoyable way of passing an afternoon. Thank you.

Cathy: Thank you.

Transcription by CastingWords