

University District Oral History Interview Index

Interviewer: Frank Sokolowski

Interviewer: Robert Caldwell

Date of Interview: October 20th

- 0:00:00 - Robert Caldwell discusses his history in the Weinland Park area as president of the Community Civic Association
- 0:01:57 - funding for projects in Weinland Park
- 0:03:02 - discussion of the revitalization of Weinland Park (steps being taken to fight crime)
- 0:03:45 - why Robert Caldwell chose to live where he lives
- 0:04:40 - Ohio State's involvement trying to fight crime in Weinland Park (south campus gateway project)
- 0:06:35 - discussion of the dramatic changes occurring in Weinland Park
- 0:09:02 - Robert Caldwell discusses his job and family history
- 0:09:35 - raising a family in the University District (OSU as major asset)
- 0:11:00 - problems caused by OSU student (drug trade) (not large compared to positives)
- 0:12:05 - repercussion of housing being owned by slum lords
- 0:12:40 - drugs in the community
- 0:13:40 - story of Robert Caldwell interrupting a drug deal while walking around the neighborhood praying
- 0:14:24 - the homicide in the 1990's because of drug deal gone bad was the catalyst for development
- 0:16:05 - discussion of the changes in the community, especially the new police station being opened

- 0:16:25 - why and how drugs are a problem in the community and how the problems can be solved
- 0:17:40 - the neighborhood demographics are discussed (poor, single-parent families)
- 0:19:05 - how OSU students are positive for the community
- 0:21:15 - Robert Caldwell discusses his children and their college opportunities
- 0:22:25 - Robert Caldwell discusses how he enjoys the excitement that OSU football brings
- 0:23:20 - riots from football game discussed, not as big of problem as others say
- 0:25:30 - community traditions (Community Festival to celebrate success of community)
- 0:26:24 - community is rich in history but disconnected from it
- 0:29:34 - renovations to the park in the community and how its an asset
- 0:30:30 - story of Dorothy Kromartie, outstanding citizen, and other success stories and involvement from the community
- 0:34:34 - discussion of religious activity in community and the involvement of the churches in the community
- 0:37:59 - discussion of the need for real employment in the community
- 0:39:39 - why drug trafficking in the community is there
- 0:41:06 - Robert Caldwell discusses his bad experiences with the police (being arrested 6 times for what he believes is racial profiling)
- 0:50:50 - quality of housing in the community and the bad effects the slum lords have had on the quality

University District Oral History Partial Transcript

Interviewer: Francis Sokolowski

Interviewee: Robert Caldwell

Date of Interview: 10/20/08

0:41:08-0:47:40

Francis Sokolowski (FS):

Have you or anyone you know ever had any bad experiences with the sorts of people that are being criminals? Like wear those...

Robert Caldwell (RC):

I've had more bad experiences with the police, personally, than I've had with criminals. I've been arrested or stopped, whatever, by the police six different times over a couple, three, year period, um... while I was living, you know... living in the neighborhood. Um, and for no, I mean... in what could be considered one of those profiling kind of deals, you know. As far as interaction with criminals, I mean... One of the things I've often said to people who aren't are aware of the reality is that most of the time the people that are involved in the shootings and the problems or whatever, are the criminals. You know, very few innocent bystanders get, you know... caught up in that. A vast majority of the people in the neighborhood are, you know... decent people who are just trying to live and do what they need to do to take care of their families. Um, so if you don't get into, I mean if you, you know... if you don't get into the mess you're not gonna be affected by it for the most part.

FS:

So are those kind of arrestations common? Like, beyond you?

RC:

Yeah, I mean... a lot of the guys will tell you that they get, what they call, harassed by the police or whatever, and again I think its an unfortunate combination of dynamics that, you know... lead to why these things occur. I mean, the police are trying to proactively, aggressively, you know... police. And, um... and while some of their stuff might be unjustifiable, I think for the most part, in their minds they think they have a, you know... a just cause to do some things or to pursue some people or whatever. So its a fine line that you have to walk, but by the same token, a lot of the young guys, you know... are defiant and um, they don't uh, they're... they're... they're also contributors to it by uh... you know the way they posture themselves or whatever. Now somebody like me on the other hand, um... when I get stopped um... you know its... it makes it particularly um... curious. You know what I mean? 'Cuz I'm not dressed like, you know, uh...

FS:

Yeah.

RC:

Like other people or you know, some of the guys or whatever. So again, you know... I can only surmise that they saw the color of my skin and in fact, I was in the neighborhood and based on assumptions.

FS:

Could you describe like... one of those experiences?

RC:

Um, I uh... I think the most recent one that the one that I think I actually ended up going to court and fought against this ticket that I was given and won. Um... was when I uh, I had... I was

coming home from uh... we had actually taken a couple of guys out from the neighborhood to get some chicken wings at the... the BW3's (Buffalo Wild Wings) up here on campus and we were coming back um... coming back home and the reason why I remember this so significantly is that one of the guys lived a few blocks, you know... east into the community so I stopped at a stop sign and I was trying to debate about whether I should go forward or make a left hand turn. So I actually sat at the stop sign you know.. probably longer than you would normally stop trying to sort out that decision. And then I finally made the decision to turn left and go you know, into the uhh... turn left. And then we got stopped by the police and the guy said we ran the stop sign. You know, it's three black guys in a car and... and I was like, you know... I didn't run a stop sign. I know I didn't run the stop sign And uh... yeah you know... he gave me a ticket and blah, blah, blah. So I fought it in court and I won and I represented myself and just told the story and actually ended up uh... winning and getting the charges dropped and the ticket... But there were four... five other occasions when I had been stopped. Two of which resulted in tickets and I actually ended up taking the ticket. I didn't fight it in court quite that way. But they were you know, clearly like... from my perspective they didn't stop because I had actually did anything that warranted a ticket. I think I got a ticket to justify why they chose to stop me. They kind of manufactured the charge and uh... stupid stuff like that.

FS:

So were they rude to you other than that?

RC:

Well, um... one time I got handcuffed and put in the back of a police car in my own driveway.

FS:

How... How did that arise?

RC:

Because I didn't know why the person stopped me. You know, I mean... they came up behind me, I turned, pulled into my driveway, they came up and I got out of my car and said, "What? What're you....? You know... this is my house. What are you doin'?" And, uh... so I guess you... It was a woman police officer but I guess she perceived that as a threat and uh... handcuffed me and put me back uh... in the back of the police car and gave me a ticket. So... kinda crazy.