



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Dorothy Taylor and friends

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Before the Overbeck Project was created in 2001, Nancy Metzger interviewed long-time residents of Capitol Hill while she was chair of the Historic Preservation Committee of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society. She graciously offered to allow these interviews to be incorporated into the Overbeck Project collection. Any use of this material should credit the Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project website for making it available.

[Addresses in this transcript are in Southeast Washington, DC, unless otherwise noted.]

Two friends of Dorothy Taylor's, Helene Au and Dorothy Hawkins, also participated in this interview, and their statements are identified by name. Each of them was also interviewed separately by Nancy Metzger, and those transcripts are also available in the Overbeck Project collection.

TAPE 1/SIDE 1

METZGER: When did your family come to the Hill?

TAYLOR: To the Hill? Well, we first lived on E Street and that was in 1889 (my father was seven years old). Then they moved to 11th Street SE.

METZGER: E Street—what block?

TAYLOR: I think it was the 100 block—SE. Then they moved to 116 11th Street SE, and that was in 1903. My father had a house built by a builder. I left there in 1969. The family had lived there 66 years. It's not like our house though because I've been in since it was remodeled. It is so completely changed you wouldn't know it.

METZGER: How do you remember it?

TAYLOR: It had mantles in it and the rooms—the cement has been taken off the walls. Walls have been cut out, like going up the stairway the walls have been opened up. Various things like that make such a definite change. And just the overall looks entirely. They've taken out walls where we used to go down to the basement. They've shortened the walls so it is very different.

METZGER: Was it a double parlor?

TAYLOR: No, ours was not a double parlor. The house down below us—number 120, Sladens' house—was a double parlor. We had a living room and a separate dining room, and in the living room they had a partition where you came into the vestibule and that was separated from the hallway. It had pocket doors. (I never heard it referred to that until recently). We always called them sliding doors (between the hall and the living room). I always talked about having the partition taken out but my mother said, "You can't do anything like that." She never was for changing it. And of course that's exactly what they did—they opened up the whole area to the living room.

METZGER: Then the dining room and then the kitchen in the back ...

TAYLOR: We used to have a separate pantry. My father took that wall out. The pantry was between the dining room and the kitchen. We put the stove in there, but now they've gone back and changed that into a powder room.

METZGER: So eventually the pantry became the powder room?

TAYLOR: Yes. Upstairs there are three bedrooms and a bath and that's exactly how it stands.

METZGER: That back bedroom—was that one of the small—

TAYLOR: It was a rather small room, yes.

METZGER: How was that used?

TAYLOR: It was my bedroom until after my father died, who had the middle bedroom. Then I fixed that up and moved in there.

METZGER: How big was your family?

TAYLOR: I had a brother and a sister. My brother died last year but my sister is living still. Her family all lives in this area so there are plenty of relatives around—about 34 of them I guess. None of them live in Washington though. They're all in the suburban areas.

METZGER: So when you were little and at home, you and your sister shared a bedroom, your parents and then your brother had the little room?

TAYLOR: I think it was a little more complicated than that. One time I slept with my mother. Her bedroom was a very large room—the whole width of the house, 17 feet I guess. There were two beds in there. I know my grandmother and my aunt lived with us one time too. So we were sort of all mixed in there together.

METZGER: Sort of travelling beds. I've always wondered about that room in the back because it was so small.

TAYLOR: What we used to call the areaway came in there where the steps went down to the basement. Then there was a window in the bedroom upstairs overlooking the areaway and also in the dining room overlooking the areaway.

METZGER: The basement—what was down there? Just storage?

TAYLOR: Well, the back part of it underneath the kitchen was not finished off. Otherwise we just used it for storage, and that's what it was used for the last time I was in the house, a couple of years ago. In fact, the basement didn't look anything like the upstairs. It was two different places entirely. Their basement was like our basement in years gone by where the rest was changed.

METZGER: Do you remember what kind of furniture?

TAYLOR: Originally I know that we had some rosewood furniture in there (right now I have the rosewood settee that is very lovely). It has the mother-of-pearl inlay on the back and everything. One time my brother fixed up a rec room in the basement. He proceeded to paint that rosewood furniture white. But I did get the paint off without ruining the patina. My sister has the chair. One time I told her I'd like to have it so I could fix it. She decided she would fix that herself. She is not a fixing person. One day I'll get it. That set had a three-corner seat. I don't know why but I told the fellow that—no, that was another seat, an armchair—the fellow that bought the house from my brother and sister and I, I told him he could have that and I've often thought why did I give that to him? But I did.

AU: They were popular, the corner chairs.

TAYLOR: From there on—well, we did have a heavy set of oak furniture, I guess, in the dining room. Eventually the sideboard part of that went down into the basement and my father used that for a work bench. He had an old lathe down in the basement that he used to play with all the time. Do you know anything about a lathe? You put the wood in and have a little thing that goes around; you pedal it; and make spindles. When we broke up the house, Bill Reich wanted that lathe. Did you know him? He was pretty much into renovations in the southeast.

METZGER: OK. I know who you mean.

TAYLOR: Barbara Reich's husband. He had an eye for business I think. I know there were some things I left there that I could kick myself for leaving. My mother had an oval top trunk from way back she had as a girl and I never took that. I told the fellow that bought the house he could have whatever was in the basement and I never knew what he might have pulled out from the back. Anything my father didn't want, he'd chuck it in the back.

METZGER: What kind of heat was it? Coal?

TAYLOR: It was coal heat and then eventually we had gas heat put in. It got to the point that it was for me to shovel the coal or make the exchange.

METZGER: About when did you have it changed?

TAYLOR: I don't know. A wild guess would be in the 50s.

METZGER: Did the coal come in the back or the front?

TAYLOR: Yes, in the back. We didn't have any basement entrance like some people.

METZGER: One other thing about the house since landscaping is one of my real interests. How was the front yard?

TAYLOR: Well, I got tired of going out front and trying to keep the grass and some flowers so I had flagstone put in and left a little area that you could put flowers in. Finally over the years it's been changed back to grass. In the back we had a two-car garage and a small yard, big enough to put your clothes reel in. Then I decided I wanted to have enough—I didn't have a car at the time, at least I got my father's old car out of there and a trailer (he had built a trailer and that was in the garage so I sold that). Then I had the garage torn down but left the concrete floor and used that for sitting out, tubs of flowers and greenery. I didn't like to park in the back. If I came in late at night, I wasn't interested in going in the alley.

AU: This might be the place to tell about the little park.

TAYLOR: The back lot? It was in the back and had a tree in the middle. This is between 11th and 12th, East Capitol and the alley. We used to play back there all the time—football, baseball. We'd sit out front on Sladens' iron railing, (there'd be five or six of us) and somebody would decide we should go play baseball. I always thought they said, "Two Knocker Widdium." They were saying, "Two knock or with him." In other words, one person was up at bat and one other person was up with him at the same time, like a team. I always thought it was "Two Knocker Widdium" until I was much older, in my twenties probably.

METZGER: So you would have two batters ...

TAYLOR: There would be two up together.

METZGER: That was a side.

TAYLOR: Then when those two got out another two would be up ... then we played mumbledy-peg ...

METZGER: Which is what?

TAYLOR: You had a pen knife. Sometimes you put it on the back of your hand, you hit it and it would flip over. It was supposed to stick in the ground. I can't think of all the different things we did ... Oh, sometimes you put it on your head and pushed it down. All those crazy things. Different things like that, I

can't remember exactly. Another weird thing we always did was at Christmas time everybody put their trees out on the back lot.

METZGER: After Christmas?

TAYLOR: After Christmas when people took their trees down. We would build forts and everything out of them—back them up against this big tree in the middle. Then we would go around the neighborhood to different places where other kids lived and steal their trees. Then they would come and steal them back from us. Really, that was a big thing. We'd go clear around to 13th Street I think—some alley around there—and Kentucky Avenue, even. We'd go into there and collect up trees and haul them home. Then we'd play Run Sheep Run.

METZGER: Explain Run Sheep Run.

TAYLOR: Run Sheep Run—the way we'd play was one side would go out and hide. One of them would go back and draw a map as to where they were. Then the other side would go out and try to find them. If you did find them, whoever got back to home first was the winner. Then we played Red Rover, Red Rover. We'd stand in the 11th Street alley, which is wide there. You'd say, "Red Rover, Red Rover, I dare you to come over." The person with ball would try to hit people as they tried to come over. We always played Stair Steps, with a stone in your hand. You'd try guess what hand the stone was in and you'd move up the steps if you guessed the right hand, until you got on up to the top. Then we'd play hopscotch out front on the pavement—with chalk.

METZGER: Was the pavement cement, or brick or none of the above?

TAYLOR: I remember them as cement, but undoubtedly they were brick before. Did you tell me they had been turned back into brick?

AU: Along East Capitol ...

HAWKINS: Is this interview about the life of the times?

METZGER: It's about the Capitol Hill neighborhood as you remember it when you were growing up. Any time up to when the "restoration" movement started, which is approximately 1960. We're trying to figure out how the neighborhood felt, who was here, what people did, how it looked.

TAYLOR: Of course, in the winter, 11th Street and B Street were great places to pull each other on our sleds down through the ruts. They never cleared the streets and the cars would make these track ruts. One summer I remember they paved 11th Street (it had been brick up until that time—I was probably about

eight years old which would have been 1926). After the men would leave in the evening we'd all go out and play on all their equipment they left there. That was great fun during the summer.

METZGER: Did you go ice skating in the winter?

TAYLOR: Never did. They didn't have ice skating rinks that I know of. Children today have all these things that they don't exactly appreciate that they do have—like that building for swimming down at the market. That's so nice—we had nothing like that. We used to go over every once in a while to Rosedale to the swimming pool. Rosedale was over in northeast off Florida Avenue (near 15th). Then again we used to walk down to Anacostia to the swimming pool. Those were the only two places we could go to go swimming.

METZGER: In the winter did you ever go to the Capitol grounds to go sledding?

TAYLOR: Oh, yes. No we didn't go sledding but we did roll our Easter Eggs down. That was a big thing too. Once in a while we might have gone to the zoo.

AU: Pastor Wee [of Lutheran Church of the Reformation] found out that you can't play on the Capitol grounds now.

METZGER: My stepson was one of the last to be able to sled on the Capitol grounds—about 20 to 25 years ago but my son who is ten years younger wasn't allowed to—although we snuck on to the grounds one night. So it changed in just that time period.

TAYLOR: My father was a great one to participate in anything that was happening. I saw some pictures recently about the hunger marchers—what was it called ...

METZGER: The World War I Bonus Marchers?

TAYLOR: Yes. So we went down to the camp on the Anacostia flats. He'd go take us down there because he wanted to see it, but we were all interested.

HAWKINS: I was right there on [S Street?] in Anacostia the night that they burned it. I witnessed it. All these veterans came up the street right in front of the house. Before that happened, they would come by and we would give them food and they would want a postage stamp so they could mail a letter home. They built some real nice little places down there.

TAYLOR: Of course, when you speak of giving them food, men used to come to our door quite frequently asking for a sandwich or some fruit ... anytime during the Depression really. I guess they were

sleeping up in Lincoln Park probably and they would come out through the neighborhood to get some food, some of which my mother always gave them.

METZGER: Was it the same people day after day?

TAYLOR: No, I don't think so. They were really transient people. We only lived three doors from the corner there. We've seen that store on the corner go from one thing to another. What is it now? It used to be a laundry. One time it was a grocery store; way back when it was a grocery, then it turned into a delicatessen-style thing. I guess about three different persons operated it in the course of as many years. Then it turned into the laundry and I don't know what it is now—catty-corner from the newsstand.

Then, of course, we used to go to the Carolina [a movie theater] all the time.

METZGER: Where was the Carolina?

TAYLOR: At the corner [southwest corner of 11th Street and North Carolina Avenue SE]. There was a store—Safeway—and then the theater, next to that was a meat market, next to that there was the A&P. It was a frame building and some persons lived upstairs by the name of Anderson who were very poor and the neighborhood practically took care of them. They had a walkway that went to the back and their living quarters upstairs.

The frame building was torn down and the brick building is still existing and it is a home. It's the first building after the frame house—there's still one frame house in there [111-11th Street SE], Mary Quailing's. That store changed hands numerous times. It used to be a Palace Laundry, and then a ten-cent store. As I said, on the corner there was a Safeway and the store next to the theater was Green's Meat Market. Later on the Safeway moved out and Mr. Green moved up to the store on the corner.

HAWKINS: I don't think it was called the Safeway in that day. It was the Sanitary Store.

TAYLOR: When I look at it now, it's quite changed I would say.

METZGER: The Carolina—how big of a theater was it?

TAYLOR: It was a pretty good size. It had, I'd say maybe, 15 seats across the middle, then side isles, then maybe six or seven seats on each side. It was a pretty good size theater for the day. I'm not sure but was "What Price Glory?" one of the first talking shows. I know they had a small orchestra in there for that. Then there was a woman who was the cashier, Mrs. Chip. She was there for years. Later on there was another family where the lady became the cashier. I know her daughter used to go to Eastern High School. I can't think of her name now ...

AU: Casper's.

TAYLOR: Oh, that's right. Casper's. There used to be a hardware store in the back of the theater. A separate building but it was right in there. Now it's a home, as Helen said. That was Casper's, but later on Mr. Allman took it over—he lived around on 12th Street. On the corner of Tenth and North Carolina there was the little store—mostly they sold penny candy—Mrs. Hinckley's. We always raced around there to buy the penny candy—licorice sticks and jujubes, balls of gum and dewey squares (they were chocolate-covered something). Later on, after that closed down, we used to go up to 11th and B Streets NE [now Constitution Avenue NE] to get our candy. Well, Mrs. Hinckley sold thread and ... notions. That's what it was—a notions store.

METZGER: How big did you consider your neighborhood?

TAYLOR: My neighborhood? Both sides of 11th Street, although we did know the kids over on 12th Street but not very well. Well, for instance, I knew of a Helen Au but we never played together. You were a little older. Although we knew the boys who lived across the street from you. What was their name? Whitcombs? No. Kileys—Ed, Jack, and Mary. We used to play in the back behind the funeral home [131-11th Street]. The one that has the driveway that goes back in—next to the alley, towards North Carolina. It had a great big loft up in the back. We used to play up in the loft. Of course, I was telling Helen there was a long stairway going up to the loft. In the room over here they were doing their embalming I guess and we always had to do a little peeking in to see what was going on in there. Those persons that we knew were Rita and Tom Fedden and their family. I think their grandmother that really was the Gramery Funeral Home at the very end. Later that changed hands. I was telling Helen the other day, one day we were playing in the back alley there. I don't know who we were fighting, probably the Osborn boys who lived along in there. I don't know what we were throwing—probably things back and forth. My brother was in a cardboard box. One of the persons on the other team came up with a broomstick and hit the cardboard box—and hit him and knocked him out. They took him into Mrs. Fedden's—into the funeral home. She took care of him and got him awake and all.

HAWKINS: The neighborhoods were small, is what we're trying to say. She lived on 11th Street; I lived on Fifth and E, right across from the park. I just played with kids right around you, because your parents wouldn't let you go very far.

TAYLOR: I know my mother would stand on the back porch and call, "Come on in, it's dinnertime."

HAWKINS: Yes, you were within hollering distance.

TAYLOR: When you got older you didn't play all those games. That was the end of it.

HAWKINS: Then too, once you got into high school you were not addressed as Tom and Mary. You were Miss Jones and Mr. Smith. You were being trained to be a mature adult, you were getting ready for a job because very few people went beyond high school in education in that day. I went to Eastern and I wore high heels and silk stockings.

METZGER: That would have been in the 1930s.

TAYLOR: Yes, the 1930s.

METZGER: Did you go to Eastern too? What were your schools?

TAYLOR: Yes, I went to Eastern. I went to Wallach, Hine, and Eastern. I went right down the line.

METZGER: Was Hine a junior high?

TAYLOR: Yes, a junior high.

METZGER: But it was the old building.

TAYLOR: Yes, but there was a new portion of it too. The old building was in the ... that's not right.

HAWKINS: What years did you go to Wallach?

TAYLOR: Well, let's see. When was I six years old—1924, I guess.

HAWKINS: Well, I moved away in 1925 and there were three buildings—Wallach, old Hine, and Towers.

TAYLOR: That's right, Towers was in there too. Towers was a junior high too.

AU: No, elementary.

HAWKINS: But I moved to northeast and I graduated in 1929 from Wheatley school and they were building Stuart on E Street [now Stuart-Hobson Middle School at 410 E Street NE], not too far from Union Station. As I remember it, that was the first junior high school in Washington. That was the new idea of education. As I say, I graduated from the eighth grade and went to Eastern for four years.

TAYLOR: Well, I remember having some classes in a new building down near, or next to, the old building of Hine Junior High. What was Towers?

AU: It was the new wing.

TAYLOR: Towers was a new wing.

HAWKINS: Towers was by itself.

TAYLOR: Tell me what grades it covered.

AU: Elementary.

TAYLOR: Oh, was that an elementary?

AU: I went there.

TAYLOR: I guess by that time I had gotten away from elementary.

HAWKINS: I left when I was in the fifth grade. When I was about in the fourth grade, I was in Wallach, and at lunch time they would send me over to Towers to do the dishes for the teachers.

TAYLOR: How nice.

METZGER: Well, wait a minute, why were they sending you over to do dishes for the teachers? Did you come back and continue class?

HAWKINS: Well sure. In other words, I was smart enough to be able to take that time to wash dishes.

METZGER: They really had a thing going, didn't they?

HAWKINS: But Maryland was always ahead of the District. I went out to the Maryland schools, just across the District line, for a year and a half—the fifth grade and half of the sixth. Then my parents back into town when I went to Wheatley. They wanted to skip me because I was way ahead. Of course, my parents wouldn't let that happen, which was ok with me. Of course later on, I met my husband.

METZGER: So, it was definitely ok.

What drugstores? Were there drugstores with soda fountains?

TAYLOR: Peoples was at 11th and East Capitol. That's just an apartment in there. There were always apartments above that. After the riots and all, Peoples never reopened. Right beside Peoples there was a store at Massachusetts and 11th NE. It was a meat market, I believe. I don't remember if they sold groceries or not. But I know once in a while we'd go over there to buy certain types of meat.

HAWKINS: That was unusual for you to go to a special meat market with Eastern Market right there.

TAYLOR: Well it was only a block from us.

AU: We went to Diggleman's Meat Market on C Street.

METZGER: So you—Dorothy Hawkins—used Eastern Market but you—Dorothy Taylor—really didn't?

TAYLOR: Well, I guess once in a while we might have gone down there but not as a regular thing. But I know my brother-in-law's father ran the chicken stand at Eastern Market for years and his mother-in-law, Mrs. McDonald, had run it before that. When he married Ada McDonald he worked in there, along with his mother-in-law.

METZGER: What was his name?

TAYLOR: His name was Zambreny.

AU: Very well known.

METZGER: So that was part of the Italian ...

TAYLOR: No, Austrian. Zambreny.

HAWKINS: Well, my part of the story would be completely different from hers because she had boys and I was an only child. I lived farther south so it would be completely different neighborhood. I would go in the other direction.

TAYLOR: Well, 11th Street was always ... when you think about it, the width of that street in those days was very unusual. I know that in Prohibition the rum runners from southern Maryland would come up there and race their touring cars. One time they ran into the park. I guess they couldn't quite make that turn there and they ended up in the park area.

METZGER: Where did the streetcar go?

TAYLOR: The streetcar went around the park. It came up East Capitol and split and went around the park and on out.

METZGER: But there was a streetcar that went up Eighth?

TAYLOR: Yes, the Eighth Street line. Then there was the Pennsylvania line. I think some of those streetcars are over in Yugoslavia now.

METZGER: Did you have a sense at the time that Capitol Hill was a historic neighborhood? That you were living in a place ...

TAYLOR: No. When we sold our house it was not considered part of the historic neighborhood at all. It stopped I don't know where. It didn't come out as far as 11th Street.

HAWKINS: Well, I can maybe better answer that. The fact that people in Washington never had a vote meant the business of the Capitol was beyond us. We never thought about it as being important, so to speak. My father never worked for the [federal] government, he worked for the District government for a while. Up until World War II, there was like a quota system as to who could work in the government. The quota was so many people from certain states could come into Washington.

TAYLOR: I couldn't even get a job when I graduated from high school. I was 16, but even when I was 18, I went to work for Metropolitan Life Insurance. I couldn't get into the government until the war.

HAWKINS: I went to work for an insurance company and then when World War II came up they finally let the people in the District of Columbia take the civil service exam. I said to myself, I'm going to take that just to prove to myself that I can do it. They called me but they called me to the Navy Yard to type up bolts and nuts. I said, I'm a secretary.

TAYLOR: You said we didn't pay much attention because we didn't have the vote. But my aunt worked for the Architect of the Capitol. Of course the Capitol was always something to us. We'd go down there to see her and she'd take us to different places—like down to the crypt. I'm not sure which president it was but my brother had a pair of pants from material my aunt had brought home from this crypt. So my mother made him a pair of pants.

HAWKINS: In 1923, when President Harding died, my grandfather was a policeman. Harding was lying in state and the people were lining up, nothing like for Kennedy. I remember my grandmother taking me up to the Capitol. My grandfather was stationed right at the foot of the Capitol steps so he put us in line there. We walked up and went through but I remember that.

TAYLOR: Another time I remember going down to the Capitol was when Lindbergh came back. I was looking at that television program on this century that they had on channel seven recently and I thought, "Any minute now I'll see myself down there." But it never showed up. And for different inaugurations, we went in the Capitol. My aunt would take us up around the Rotunda, the walkway up in there, and then sometimes out where they have those platforms on the right and left sides. I know that the first time that I knew that Roosevelt was crippled was when he came because we were up in that walkway around the Rotunda looking down and they brought him through in a wheelchair. They were very quiet about that whole business when he was running for president.

METZGER: What was your aunt's name?

TAYLOR: May Taylor. She lived to be 97. She worked there from the time she was 18 or 19 until they had to push her out—really. They didn't have any requirements that you had to retire at 70, so she worked there until after she was 70.

METZGER: On Capitol Hill—and you've mentioned it too—there are small frame houses, next to large houses next to grocery stores. Was there any sense that there were better places to live?

TAYLOR: No, I never thought about it. But most of them there with the white marble steps and then the ones up toward the park, which is where we lived. But across the street there was just Mary Quailing's house was the only frame house and the next house was a little gray house, which is not that color anymore. From there on down, there were all brick houses. The houses on our side of the street were all brick houses—Philadelphia Row, down.

HAWKINS: We were on the edge of the black community. I lived down at Fifth and E. Anything below that was for black people, and they even lived in the alleys. It took Mrs. Roosevelt to come and start cleaning the thing out. Of course the Navy Yard was operating. They would blow the whistle at seven o'clock and everybody in Southeast would have to be awake at that time.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE A

TAPE 1/SIDE B

[Some conversation is missing at the beginning of Side B.]

TAYLOR: —but Tenth Street on one side was all black families. I don't know about the opposite side—the uneven side—they were all brick houses, and I don't know if blacks owned those. I don't think so.

METZGER: Did the kids play together at all? You know, if there happened to be a black family on the block.

TAYLOR: The only people that I knew around there were the ones who did the upholstery work. Other than that I don't know who lived back in there so we didn't.

HAWKINS: I think the blacks stayed to themselves. Where I lived there were four English bricks and then a lot and a black church on the corner. The minister lived in the house next to my grandmother and we were the next house. So the corner was the church then the next house [511 E Street SE] was Reverend Boone, a black minister, then my grandmother's house, my house, another, and the following house faced Sixth Street.

METZGER: I have to get back to you because I used to live at Sixth and E, beside the alley.

Did you all go to Lincoln Park and play?

TAYLOR: We used to take picnic lunches up to Lincoln Park, and we'd go up there and just run around. There used to be a policeman that came up there. Of course they were always trying to keep the kids from getting in the hedges, flowers, climbing the trees. His name was Pat Tierney, something like that. If we saw him coming we used to yell "Patent Attorney, Patent Attorney."

HAWKINS: That goes all the way back to my father, who practically grew up there. This goes back to the early 1900s. The police in that day wore green uniforms and the kids would be up in the trees. The police would come and they would holler, "Greenies coming! Greenies coming!"

TAYLOR: Of course Lincoln's statue faced the Capitol and the Bethune statue wasn't there at all. So the park has changed a great deal. They used to have concerts in there. They still do, don't they?

METZGER: Not so frequently but occasionally from time to time.

HAWKINS: Of course, you have the Marine Barracks down there for the concerts.

TAYLOR: Yes the Marine band used to come up to Lincoln Park. I remember one year the Shriners had a parade in Washington. They grouped together down there at Massachusetts Avenue to begin their march. The thing I remember at that time was they had lights on their feet.

HAWKINS: And they strung lights across Pennsylvania Avenue, big lights.

AU: In the 1920s?

TAYLOR: In the 1920s, yes.

METZGER: How did you celebrate Christmas? Any differently than we do now? Was it just family?

TAYLOR: We always had a train display because my father liked trains. We were never allowed to come down the steps on Christmas morning until he got the train running. We had a train going there for years, even after I was going to work. A lot of the younger kids from the neighborhood, when I came home from work, they'd be all in the dining room running the train. My mother would let them come in. But as far as Christmas went, Christmas is Christmas.

HAWKINS: Well, my grandmother had a dining room, but you ate in the kitchen, which was big enough to do that. But during Christmas, the dining room table was kept dressed. The whole time with a white cloth. She always had a little Christmas tree in a cut-glass bowl. Incidentally, I bought one from the

antique place for nostalgic purposes. She put this little tree in the bowl and there were always nuts and so forth on the table.

METZGER: Was there a typical menu for Christmas?

TAYLOR: Always turkey.

METZGER: Not goose or ...

TAYLOR: No we always had turkey with just plain sage dressing, none of the fancy oyster dressing.

METZGER: Well, Easter you had the Easter egg roll when you were little.

TAYLOR: And we hid our Easter baskets around the house.

METZGER: Were there any special parades or things for the Fourth of July?

HAWKINS: The usual parade was over Labor Day but that was later on. I was a teenager by that time. The fire departments from all over the area would come and would get prizes and so forth. The District Fire Department organized a woman's auxiliary which existed for a number of years.

TAYLOR: My mother used to take us down to the Canton Restaurant on Pennsylvania Avenue near 15th and E [probably NW]. It's no longer in existence. It had a little balcony. We'd have our lunch and watch the parade go by from our balcony. Other times we'd would just be outside watching.

AU: What about the circus parade?

TAYLOR: I don't remember too much about that. My father used to take us over to Eckington Place to watch them unload the boxcars with the animals in them.

HAWKINS: Didn't they set up one time—I guess I was grown about that time—out where the stadium was?

TAYLOR: That was before the Armory too.

HAWKINS: Eastern High School was the end of civilization. There was one house way down there and that was a big mystery house.

TAYLOR: Oh yeah, where the lady got killed.

METZGER: Was it a big house?

HAWKINS: Wasn't very big—two stories.

TAYLOR: Beulah Limerick.

AU: She was found dead. A policeman had looked through with his flashlight and thought she was asleep. Of course, for the kids at Eastern that was a big mystery.

TAYLOR: We used to drive by there.

HAWKINS: Apparently it was like a roadhouse where they did bootlegging and so forth because it was Prohibition. But for that one house to be out there in the middle of this prairie. It was always questionable.

AU: It was the talk of Southeast for years—the Beulah Limerick murder.

METZGER: That would have been in the early 1930s.

What did you do when it got hot in the summer time?

TAYLOR: We'd go out in the park, and they had hoses hitched up. I remember sometimes we'd run down the line of hoses. What else did we do? As a child, we'd sit in the washtub out in the back yard. Many times my mother used to have the big tin washtubs, we'd get those, fill them with water and sit in the back yard.

HAWKINS: At Garfield Playground at Third Street, they had a little wading pool, which was as long as this room, almost 30 feet, and about up to here on you [18 inches]. My mother would let me go down there and go wading. As a matter of fact, there is a rock that still stands. Well the kids played in it—I guess it was supposed to be a camel or something. That rock has been there ever since I can remember and I'm in my 80s.

METZGER: They used that in conjunction with the wading pool?

HAWKINS: It was part of the playground.

AU: Kids swam in the fountain in front of Union Station.

METZGER: And do you remember the beach at the Tidal Basin?

TAYLOR: Oh yes, we used to go there when we were about seven or eight years old. Then when we got older there used to be a swimming pool over at Hoover Airport.

METZGER: Where?

TAYLOR: That's a new one on you! Hoover Airport was right off the 14th Street Bridge, where the Pentagon now sits. They had a pool there that was nice.

AU: Cars had to stop.

HAWKINS: I don't remember that, but I took my first airplane ride from there in a double-winged plane. For two dollars, you could ride over the city, ride over the Monument, ride around the White House.

METZGER: That was in the 1930s?

TAYLOR: Yes, the early 1930s, because I took my first ride to New York in 1936. That airport, well the pool and I guess the airport too, was still there when I went to work in 1937. It was after that, quite a few years after that, that we used to go over to the pool.

HAWKINS: Then there was Glen Echo. Glen Echo had a lovely pool. And of course the streetcar went right to Glen Echo. I'm glad they're restoring it.

TAYLOR: Are they restoring the pool?

HAWKINS: Glen Echo—the paper this morning said that Maryland was appropriating money for it.

TAYLOR: We used to ride the open car that came along. They had the long seats and the long running board. Sometimes people stood out on the running board.

AU: There was an amusement park across the bridge in Arlington that Kate Smith, the singer lived in Foggy Bottom, would sneak away from home and go over there and sing. Everybody enjoyed her singing so much. The fellows—my girlfriend's father was one of the young fellows—would keep watch out for when her mother came to get her they would warn her.

METZGER: You mean to bring her back home because she wasn't supposed to be there?

AU: She wasn't supposed to go over there. She wasn't supposed to leave home.

METZGER: Are there any other neighbors that you remember? Maybe older people that you thought were interesting?

TAYLOR: Helen mentioned the Sladen family. They lived there—I think it was Mrs. Sladen's father who first lived in that house [120 11th Street SE]. Somewhere along the line I understood that that house used to be used for a church. That was the big house on the alley on 11th Street, across from the stone-faced houses.

AU: Milton Sladen was born in 1900 and graduated from Eastern in 1917. Franklin Roosevelt gave the speech at graduation. He became a secretary to Mary Roberts Rinehart's husband at the Washington Post. Then he became her secretary—she was a very popular mystery writer. He moved to New York and was her private secretary for many years. He lived up there in a hotel.

TAYLOR: After she died he was taken in by Rinehart Publishing Company. Her sons had a publishing company. I know sometimes he used to go out with them to their place on Long Island in the summer. He was quite a fellow. He came down here, I guess, occasionally. He was an older person so I don't remember. Later on he retired and lived here. I don't know if his mother was still living at the time. And you've heard of Bruce Sladen, have you not? He was a great one in the neighborhood. He went to St. Mark's Church and he used to pay a lot of attention to the back lot. He used to cut the grass back there for years and years that otherwise wouldn't have been cut. He was pretty well known in the area.

AU: Dorothy, tell about your father and the neighbors buying that lot. [The lot being discussed is at the northern end of the alleys between 11th and 12th streets, just behind the houses facing Lincoln Park. There is now a sign "Sladen's Park."]

TAYLOR: One time the District wanted to sell it to someone who wanted to put an apartment on it. None of the neighbors wanted that to be done so the people who abutted on to the back lot got together and bought the lot and deeded it back to the District with the understanding that it would be maintained as a park. I know my grandfather—I still have some receipts where my grandmother paid a certain amount monthly. Later on, the District wanted to sell the lot to the telephone company and they were going to put a house on it for that coaxial cable that came from the North down through this area—some little checkpoint I suppose for that. Then we went to court about it. I know I wrote out the information that I just told you how the persons had bought it and given it back to the District. I said something in that about how history now repeats itself, the District wants to sell it. After that was read, that was the end of it. I never heard anything more about it. But they did buy part of the lot—there is a little house on 12th Street and on the back of the house that is right next to the alley is this building that looks like a garage. I don't know if it is still maintained—I don't know what it is used for. Then they bought the back of that lot and put their little house up there for their cable. I should have sold them part of ours.

METZGER: Which church did you go to?

TAYLOR: Reformation. Helen and I are old standbys. Yes, my father when he was seven years old in 1889 moved from Herndon, Virginia, to Washington. The church used to be down on B Street Southeast and that was the nearest church to where they lived. So naturally when we were kids that's where we went and I'm still here.

METZGER: When did your mother's family move to the Hill?

TAYLOR: My mother came here after she got married. She lived in Schenectady, New York. He worked for the General Electric Company up there and roomed in her mother's house. Then they married and they moved to Buffalo and later on came here where his family had lived for all those years. First they lived on First Street, down by Union Station, and later on 11th Street.

METZGER: Did your family have a car?

TAYLOR: Yes, to begin with my Aunt May Taylor had a Model T Ford. My father used to drive that too. We did finally buy a car. Later on she had a Chevrolet—an open car with running boards and everything. We had relatives that lived out in Hyattsville and they often came to visit. They had a touring car. If there wasn't room enough for all of them to sit inside they rode in on the running board. It was typical of that time—to ride in from Hyattsville on the running board. Later on my father did buy a car. After his death in 1954 I bought a car. I wanted to tear the garage down so I turned it in on the first car that I bought.

METZGER: Did your family have hired help? Did someone come to help with the laundry?

TAYLOR: At one time we had a maid—not a maid. She came in to do the housework. She lived out somewhere near the ballpark [Griffith Stadium]. One time my aunt had some money missing but there was nothing to think but that she had gone into the room to clean and the money was gone. My mother and father went out to the area out there, looking for her. In later years, you wouldn't dream of getting in the car and riding out beyond the ball park looking for somebody. It just wouldn't be safe. But at that time they just got in the car and went out there to see if they could find her. But that was the only help we ever had to my knowledge. My mother did it all.

METZGER: How common was it? Most people didn't have any help?

TAYLOR: I can't remember anybody up and down our street that had any help come in like that. There may have been persons who had somebody come in one day for housekeeping or laundry. I used to go down once in a while—my girlfriend Lizzie Thomas lived down on Philadelphia Row—and help her scrub the white marble steps every day.

METZGER: Did people sweep the sidewalks every day?

TAYLOR: Oh yes, you swept the gutters too. You kept the gutters clean. You kept the snow—the water running—so there wouldn't be puddles to walk through. You always got out and cleaned your own gutter and the sidewalk. I don't think they do that today. Of course sweeping the dirt and cleaning the gutter,

that wasn't too interesting but when it snowed and you cleaned the gutter out, you liked to do that. That was fun—to get out there and fool around in the snow and water and everything.

AU: At Eighth and East Capitol, the “lake” goes out into the intersection and if you want to cross you have to go out in the street in the middle of the block.

TAYLOR: Of course we used to have heavier snowfalls. We used to make skateboards. Well, we'd get a box (ginger ale boxes were ideal) and put it on a board. We'd take a skate apart and put them on the two ends.

METZGER: So you would sit on the box or stood on the board?

TAYLOR: Well we'd put a ginger ale box on the front ...

METZGER: Now a ginger ale box is about what size?

TAYLOR: Well it used to stand about that tall [two and a half feet], a good sturdy box, and then you generally put a board across there for handles and then you'd have the skateboard and you'd put yourself down the street.

METZGER: So it was like a scooter?

TAYLOR: Yes, like a scooter, only they're all made now. And an orange box was something we used to use too. An orange crate—sometimes we made houses or rooms out of them.

METZGER: And what was the candle box?

AU: Maybe Milton told me about that. It was a cardboard box and it seems to me he said they would cut a window in it, put some colored tissue paper over that, and put a candle in it, put a string on it and pull it down the sidewalk.

METZGER: I have read where—and I think 1890 to 1910—where they would have “firefly” parades. They cut designs in paper bags and would have a candle inside, hold the candle, and then walk down the sidewalk.

TAYLOR: We used to catch fireflies in a glass. The other thing we used to do. The Sladens had a lot of hollyhocks in their back yard, all along the line. We used to go in there and catch bees, no less.

METZGER: What other kinds of flowers were popular?

TAYLOR: We always had a nice pretty rose bush in our back yard. It was a big bush. We had a porch and the rose bush was just about as high as the porch would have been. My mother had iris—or flag we used to call them. We had a forsythia bush. I don't know what we had up against the brick wall. Next to us was a two-family house that went the whole length of the place. The brick wall was right alongside of our yard and went halfway on the garage. Then they had a metal porch on that. That used to be just a two-family [with] three-bedroom apartments. Then they broke it down to having two apartments on each floor. I think some of my family was sorry we didn't buy that lot when our house was built so that we could have put windows along that side which would have been good.

AU: At [unclear] and Independence, on the east side of the street, where all the black families were as I recall. There was one family—he was an upholsterer—and he did upholstery for important people in the government—quality work.

TAYLOR: His name was Landsman, I believe, wasn't it?

AU: He had one son named Cedric, and he played with the white boy across the street from us. That was in the 40s I guess. That was a little unusual, but Cedric was really nice, very well dressed. That was the only two black-and-white friends that I know of. Landers. That was his name.

TAYLOR: Yes, Landers. Landsman was the tailor at Ninth and East Capitol. I used to go to his son who was a dentist.

AU: Pat [Schauer] was talking with me about the drugstore at Ninth and East Capitol, about the Helmsman brothers, so we have that.

TAYLOR: I know one thing I've wondered if it is still there. In the house that is above the newspaper stand at [the northwest corner of] North Carolina and 11th, in the front yard of that building there used to be a room. (It was dug out underneath the walk.) I've often wondered if it is still there. It was dirt of course, but there was a space that you could go into.

AU: When I was in high school in the early 30s, Sam had a peanut wagon at the eastern end of Lincoln Park, at 13th Street. Kids would go walking from school and stop there. And then the people who owned the house there were he is now, they put an awning in back there and he was under the awning—that was all, he was not inside. He sold peanuts. In the summer, he sold snowballs. At first they scraped it but then they got a machine and a man to run it. One nice thing about Sam was that he was so good to his father—he had this very little, old little father. He was always sitting there packaging peanuts. Sam always had his father with him; he was good to him. Then they got a machine that shaved the ice. It would whirr. It was electric and supposed to be very sanitary. They would get the ice in the cup and then this man that worked

there would take his hand and smash it down into the cup before he put the syrup on it. Then he was able to rent inside, so he progressed. I think he went to Florida finally. Sam had the handsomest sons. One of them was there not too long ago.

In the 1000 block of North Carolina, in the middle of the block, there is one painted orange with white trim. Mr. What's-his-name that restored a lot of houses around here, there are a couple alike. One of them was a Chinese laundry and there was a Chinese laundry on the NE corner of Ninth and Independence. It's an open lot now. It was a one story—one or two rooms. It had a counter at one end and I would take my father's shirts there.

TAYLOR: I took my father's shirts down to East Capitol. Another thing that was in there was Capinetti's, the shoemaker's place.

AU: The Chinese place, he was put out at some point. A lady who lived nearby and could see it said this poor Chinaman kept coming back, banging on the door. He was so unhappy. Capanetti was a shoemaker in the 1000 block of Independence Avenue that has now been painted white. This is the house that is now being restored. Mr. Jones lived there for a while.

TAYLOR: The Eastern Coal Company was across the street from that.

AU: My brother will be able to tell you the name of that. They kept the horses in the stable behind it and I can remember when it caught on fire (the horses didn't all get out). That was very frightening to a little girl.

TAYLOR: The fire house down at North Carolina and Seventh [later the site of the William H. Rumsey Aquatic Center, aka Natatorium] had the horses—Tom, Dick and Harry.

AU: That was scary when they came galloping by. The boiler would have the fire in it. At night time that was real scary for a little kid.

METZGER: Were there lots of fires?

AU: Yes apparently. But there are now too.

METZGER: Originally there had been a pretty good Italian community and a Greek community down near the Capitol because the stonemasons had worked on the grounds. Was there still ... ?

TAYLOR: Oh, at the foot of the Capitol. Near the Botanical Gardens there used to be along there were Italian families. I knew an Italian girl that lived in there.

AU: Where Pennsylvania Avenue hits the Capitol Grounds was Chinatown and they had Tong wars. What's there now?

METZGER: A parking lot, across from the Art Gallery.

AU: The old Metropolitan Hotel was there where Congressman used to stay. I once read where the Tiber Creek ran across the base of the Capitol grounds there, it was open. In the winter there would be ice. John Jacob Astor came down from New York to see his congressman and they were staying at the hotel. He brought his grandson with him. While he was busy talking with his congressman, the boy was playing, with other children maybe, around Tiber Creek. There was a plank across there and he fell in and was drowned.

TAYLOR: Talking about the Chinese people down there. We used to go down there to those little stores all the time. My aunt would take us down. There were also Gypsies a few blocks further down towards downtown. The doctor that I went to—Dr. Baker—was doctor to those Gypsies and was part owner of the Metropolitan hotel.

We were talking the other day how doctors made house calls in the olden days. He would come to our house, maybe 11 o'clock at night. Come up two flights of steps to see us if we had bad colds.

AU: At our house too—and stay and talk.

METZGER: Did anybody ever have to go to the hospital?

TAYLOR: Well. I didn't. I had an aunt who they thought had indigestion and finally decided she had to go to the hospital. She had appendicitis but it was never diagnosed as that in those days. It was too late to do anything about it.

I also had an aunt—I can never remember if it was Bessie or Daisy—who sang in a Jewish synagogue. She was a paid singer. That was rather unusual. Over at Eighth and I, I think it was, Northwest.

AU: J. Edgar Hoover's family went to Reformation. He sang in the choir and I understand that the family left when our altar was changed. It was placed up against the wall.

END OF TAPE
END OF INTERVIEW