



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Geraldine E. Matthews

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

MINGO: This interview with Geraldine Matthews is taking place at 234 10th Street SE, in Washington, to do an interview for the Capitol Hill History Project. My name is Marie Mingo. Good afternoon, Geraldine.

MATTHEWS: Good afternoon.

MINGO: Could we start off with just some of your personal and family background? You were actually born on the Hill.

MATTHEWS: I was born and raised in D. C.

MINGO: Okay.

MATTHEWS: I was an only child. My father, I don't remember him too much. My father died, they said, when I was about three years old. So, I stayed with my mother, my grandmother, grandfather. I had four uncles and...

MINGO: Your mother's brothers?

MATTHEWS: My...

MINGO: The uncles were your mother's brothers?

MATTHEWS: Brothers. Uh-huh. Yes.

MINGO: And you all lived together.

MATTHEWS: We all lived—not all of them, because I can remember my youngest uncle, the one next to him, and I can remember he died at an early age. I'll say like eighteen. I can remember that. My grandfather was there. My grandfather died when I was nine. I can remember that.

MINGO: Now, where did you live—what's your earliest address you remember?

MATTHEWS: I lived at Number 3 Terrace Place NE. That's between Second and Third and East Capitol, right in back of the Reformation Church there. That's on East Capitol Street. Then, after that, my mother and I got a place and we lived on Fourth Street NE. Then, later on, I married and I moved to Southeast. After my husband and I separated, I came back with my mother.

MINGO: On Fourth Street.

MATTHEWS: We lived on Fourth Street for a while and then we moved to Number 17—Number 19 Seventh Street NE. And, then, after that, we moved to Lexington Place. And I've been there ever since, about twenty-nine years or so.

MINGO: That's 61...

MATTHEWS: 638.

MINGO: 638 Lexington. Okay. And you have—is Janice your only child?

MATTHEWS: I have four daughters. Janice, Geraldine, Anita, and Sandra. Sandra is a Eucharistic minister and Geraldine, she's an usher on Saturdays.

MINGO: Oh, okay. So, are you all still living in the same house?

MATTHEWS: No, no.

MINGO: Just near, though.

MATTHEWS: Janice and Geraldine, we live together.

MINGO: And the others—Sandra is near, right?

MATTHEWS: They have their own places. Sandra lives in Northeast. Neither works, so sometimes she can get to the church up at...

MINGO: On East Capitol?

MATTHEWS: No, she goes to—sometimes. But, see, her hours are so funny. Sometimes—St. Francis de Sales.

MINGO: Right. Okay. Now, when you were living there on Terrace Place—now, how old were you when you moved from there?

MATTHEWS: When I moved from there I was about 13, 14.

MINGO: Oh, okay. So, you have quite a memory of what happened there.

MATTHEWS: Yeah. Yeah. Right in that area, that's when we used to skate, I used to skate when they were building the Shakespearean Library. We would skate—oh, that was good skating.

MINGO: On the concrete slab.

MATTHEWS: On that concrete... uh-huh, right, right.

MINGO: So...

MATTHEWS: Yes. And we played in Stanton Park. And they had restrooms, men and women. Never no problem.

MINGO: At Stanton Park.

MATTHEWS: At Stanton Park, never no problem.

MINGO: What else do you recall that was in that area? Now, they're building the Shakespeare Library when you're young. So, what else was actually there that—now there are some houses. Were there other things there before?

MATTHEWS: Yeah. Then, when they made—um—let's see what the—it was houses there, I can remember that, houses, because they were all the way down to I guess you would say Independence, B Street. We called it B Street.

MINGO: Then it was B Street, right.

MATTHEWS: In the B Street. And they were real large houses and they were boarding houses they called them. Boarding houses. You know, when people sometimes—some lived there and had their meals there, and some just came in and had their meals everyday. And, I can remember my grandmother doing ironing for some of the people in the houses down there. And I can remember that.

MINGO: Now, this would have been about in the '20's.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, because I was born in 1923. And I was a little, you know, youngster then and all that.

MINGO: And, what did the people do who were living in the boarding houses?

MATTHEWS: I don't know, different kind of work. I just can't remember, you know, what kind. But, some people lived there, room and board, and then some people just came for meals, to have meals.

MINGO: Do you think they were like government workers or people involved in Congress?

MATTHEWS: Yes, uh-huh, because I can remember where my mother worked on Maryland Avenue, right next to the Marlows' house. My mother said she worked there when she was a little girl washing dishes. And it was, that I can remember, the Lynches. I had gotten to be a good size little girl and my mother worked there and at that—when they had a boarding house and they took in boarders, or whatever you would say. And downstairs, I guess it was the basement, downstairs, anyway, it was a large kitchen

and you would see—to me it looked maybe a restaurant sort of thing. And a lot of them would come and eat, I guess by the week or month or something, you know.

MINGO: Yeah, yeah. Do you think any of them were like—were they actually Congressmen?

MATTHEWS: I don't know. I don't think so but I know, I think, I guess, government workers and hairdressers. Because I can remember a lady Ms. Ridge, she was a hairdresser. Uh-huh.

MINGO: Okay. So, people who worked on the Hill.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, people that worked—um-hmm, um-hmm.

MINGO: Yeah, right. Now, why would they be in boarding houses? Were there not apartments available? Or...

MATTHEWS: I don't know. I guess—I always thought maybe they just would eat out. That's what I called eating out.

MINGO: Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEWS: Some of them, like I said, lived there. Lived room, had their room and board. But some of them would just board.

MINGO: Oh, okay.

MATTHEWS: That's what I remember.

MINGO: Were there restaurants at that time? Or—that was long before fast food.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, that was long before fast food. I can remember as a very young—now, I can't remember just how old I was, when it was Sherrill's Bakery down there on Pennsylvania Avenue. I can remember that. Sherrill's, I can remember that.

MINGO: That was an early establishment, that's right.

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MINGO: Yeah, yeah. Did you know Mr. Sherrill?

MATTHEWS: No, I didn't.

MINGO: Because he was quite a neighborhood figure. Well, in that area, do you remember some of the other businesses that were there? Where they were?

MATTHEWS: I can remember the stores more. I remember the stores, like the Sanitary, which is Safeway now. I can remember the Sanitary on the corner of Third and A on the left hand side, going towards East Capitol Street. I can remember that.

MINGO: Third and A Northeast.

MATTHEWS: Third and A Northeast. Uh-hmm.

MINGO: Now, what would be in the store when it was the Sanitary?

MATTHEWS: When it was the Sanitary I can remember they had lard, lard.

MINGO: Lard [laughing].

MATTHEWS: In containers, in things that you could—they'd dip it up for you.

MINGO: Oh, okay.

MATTHEWS: And things out like that. Flour and sugar, and they scooped it up with a scoop or something, you know.

MINGO: You could buy it by—it wasn't packaged.

MATTHEWS: No, no, uhn-uh.

MINGO: Would they sell meat?

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MINGO: So they had some refrigeration, maybe, or ice box.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, some kind of something, I think. I can't remember just, you know—and I can remember the bread man would leave rolls on Sundays. Bread, milk. And I can remember the milkman coming around, putting the milk outside.

MINGO: Oh, yeah. Those things were delivered. You didn't buy those at the store.

MATTHEWS: Yeah. You didn't—no, you—yeah.

MINGO: How about produce? Did you buy them at the store or was that...

MATTHEWS: Yeah, we bought that at the store and then they had what we called huckster wagons.

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: That was the wagons that had the vegetables. They'd come around selling vegetables or what—and it was Mr.... Oh, I can't think of the man's name. He had a huckster wagon and the children would wait for him to come past because sometimes he would give them things, you know.

MINGO: Oh. Like what?

MATTHEWS: Like apples or orange, or something like that.

MINGO: And that was a big treat, to get an apple or an orange.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MINGO: And, now, was his wagon drawn by horses or mules or...

MATTHEWS: I just can't remember his wagon being drawn by a horse. But, I can remember some wagons being drawn by horses. I can remember some wagons being—the ice man.

MINGO: The ice man with the horses.

MATTHEWS: He had a horse. Yes, I can remember that.

MINGO: Okay. How often did the ice man come? I guess it would depend upon the time of year.

MATTHEWS: So many times a week. Yeah. Especially the summertime. And he had big blocks of ice. He'd bring a ten cent, twenty-five cent piece. Mm-hmm. Yeah, I can remember that.

MINGO: What it would cost for a big block of ice.

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MINGO: So, then, in your house, did you have an icebox.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, I had an icebox and used the ice pick...

MINGO: To break it up.

MATTHEWS: To break it up, mm-hmm.

MINGO: And put it into whatever the icebox container was.

MATTHEWS: It kept things good, I can remember. I just can't remember too much spoiled, food being spoiled.

MINGO: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: My grandmother was a great cook, ironer. That's why I can't do too much cooking and ironing because I was just the only child my mother had and I just would get away with everything.

MINGO: [Laughs.]

MATTHEWS: I didn't like doing it, I just didn't do it. All I'd have to do was cry and she would say, "Go ahead on." But I loved my grandmother, too.

MINGO: [Laughing.] But, you didn't have to pick up those skills that she had because she did it for you. Okay.

MATTHEWS: No, no, no. I'd get on her nerves, I guess, crying because I wouldn't do it and she'd say "Just go ahead on." [Both laugh.]

MINGO: Well, were there a lot of other children around?

MATTHEWS: Yeah, we had quite a few children around my way. A lot of them. Oh, Halloween time, I can remember—I had my girlfriend that lived right on Second Street. She's my oldest girl's godmother. And, oh, we would do devilish little things. It was an apartment house—I can't think of the name but it was right on Maryland Avenue. It was near to Second Street, and they had an elevator.

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: And we would get on that elevator and ride up and down.

MINGO: Just because an elevator was such a novelty?

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah. We could get up and ride. Ride up and down. And we would stop on different floors and things, and there was ladies' wear and so on, that's what we'd do. But, one night this man came out his apartment and put his hand in the way so we couldn't pull that gate. You know, they had the gates. And told his wife to call the cops. Oh, man, we ran out that place so fast, I never went there again.

MINGO: [Interviewer laughs.] Never went there again.

MATTHEWS: No, I wasn't caught, um-mmm. I was always, but not getting no locked up. I wasn't getting in no trouble, um-mmm. Not me, um-mmm.

MINGO: [Laughs.] Oh, dear. So, you said there was a shoe repair shop somewhere near.

MATTHEWS: On the corner of Second and C, on the right hand, across from St. Joseph's. On the corner it was, I can remember, some kind of little store. I don't know what kind of little store. Oh, I think we bought penny candy and things or something in there, too.

MINGO: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Next to the store was Nick's Shoe Shop. Down the street a little ways, where I showed you, it was that house with the big front, glass front. That was Candy Kitchen.

MINGO: On C Street?

MATTHEWS: On C Street.

MINGO: On C Street, yeah.

MATTHEWS: And they had...

MINGO: That one at the corner of C and...

MATTHEWS: Not on the corner.

MINGO: No.

MATTHEWS: In the block, between—big, big house, and it has a big front window. That was the Candy Kitchen. And they had like horehag...

MINGO: Horehound?

MATTHEWS: Horehound candy and that kind of stuff.

MINGO: Did you like horehound candy?

MATTHEWS: No.

MINGO: No. [Laughs.]

MATTHEWS: No, I never did.

MINGO: Because it's hard to find anymore.

MATTHEWS: I never did like the taste of it.

MINGO: No?

MATTHEWS: But they would have the long peppermint sticks, I guess you'd call them.

MINGO: Mm. The spirals of peppermint, yeah.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah, I can remember that. And licorice.

MINGO: Licorice.

MATTHEWS: Didn't like that black licorice. I wouldn't buy none of that.

MINGO: [Laughs.] They didn't make these things themselves though. They were...

MATTHEWS: I don't know.

MINGO: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: I don't know. But, they always had—we called it the Candy Kitchen.

MINGO: And that's all they sold was candy.

MATTHEWS: Candy, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

MINGO: So there must have been enough commerce for that in the area.

MATTHEWS: Yeah. Then on the next corner, right there Third and C, on the same side, it was a store. I can't remember the name of that store, but they had everything. All kinds of groceries and things I can remember in that store.

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: We had a lot of stores. And drugstores, too. Across the street from the church.

MINGO: Across...

MATTHEWS: Where the parking lot is.

MINGO: Oh, where the Hart Building parking lot is. That was a drug store.

MATTHEWS: Mm-hmm. That was a drugstore.

MINGO: But, that's a big block. There must have been other businesses, too.

MATTHEWS: Oh, yeah, houses all down there, apartments...

MINGO: Oh, houses and...

MATTHEWS: ...going down Second and then going down C. And then going down C it was a lot of Italians lived down there. And I can remember some of them. We played with them.

MINGO: Mm-hmm.

MATTHEWS: Uh-huh, when I come to my girlfriend's house. Then I had two friends that lived in the Roland Apartment. Their father was the janitor there. And we played, we had a good little bit of kids we played with.

MINGO: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: Then, of course, Logan School was at Third and G and they had—it was a big playground. And we would go down there. My uncle, a lot of times would, when I was real small, take me down. That's where I started school at, the kindergarten, first grade. And then I transferred from there and I went to Lincoln, there on the corner of Second and—was that Second, I guess? Yeah. On the corner of Second and C Southeast. It was a school there, big school, Lincoln School.

MINGO: Oh, okay. Is that now where the Capitol Hill Suites are?

MATTHEWS: Yeah, something right on that—yeah, Second and C.

MINGO: Kind of diagonally across from St. Peter's.

MATTHEWS: Yes, yes, yes.

MINGO: Mm-hmm, yeah.

MATTHEWS: And then after that they had the—bad boys would go to the Incurable School, they called it.

MINGO: The Incurable School. Oh.

MATTHEWS: After they built a new school for us at Third and G, Southeast.

MINGO: Third and G, Southeast.

MATTHEWS: Uh-huh. Third and G.

MINGO: What was the name of that?

MATTHEWS: Giddings.

MINGO: Oh, that was Giddings. Okay, okay. Which is no longer a school.

MATTHEWS: No longer a school there, uhn-uh.

MINGO: Now, you had a mixed neighborhood and mixed companions, but the schools were segregated.

MATTHEWS: Yeah. And, we had, we played, we would play around with the children but it wasn't too much so. I knew a lot of, you know, kids like that. But, now, like at St. Joseph's Church, I went to St. Cyprian's, that was the predominantly black church, Catholic church.

MINGO: Yes, up on...

MATTHEWS: I would go to St. Joseph's if it was raining hard or cold or something. Or if my girlfriend, if we were going somewhere that Sunday and, you know, we'd go there early Mass, like that. Now, they said that the blacks sat in the back. Well, I guess we did, but I don't remember—I never did remember anybody telling me I had to sit in the back. I don't remember that.

MINGO: But, do you think that...

MATTHEWS: But it had...

MINGO: Do you think that African American people...

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MINGO: That's mmm...

MATTHEWS: Yeah, right in church.

MINGO: Yes, yes. So, St. Cyprian's was farther away but you were more comfortable because it was an African American parish.

MATTHEWS: Mm-hmm, African American parish.

MINGO: It was on, what? It was on, oh, East Capitol. No, not East Capitol, but anyhow, it's...

MATTHEWS: St. Cyprian's? Thirteenth and C, in Southeast. Right on the corner there.

MINGO: And the building, I think, is totally gone now.

MATTHEWS: Yes, yeah, uh-huh.

MINGO: Yes, so—interesting.

MATTHEWS: And a little after they merged like that I started—a little before they merged I started coming to St. Joseph's. Yeah, but it was really, it was...

MINGO: Very different.

MATTHEWS: And I can remember over there at St. Cyprian's where it is—it was Holy Comforter then.

MINGO: Yes.

MATTHEWS: And I can remember my girlfriend and I, she and I would go around a lot of places. We'd go over there to—of course, we was going to St. Cyprian's—and we would just go around. We had friends over that way and all. And I can remember I'd be looking through the—they'd have a, I guess, bazaars or something like that—and we'd be standing on the outside looking in. We couldn't go in, you know. We didn't have—because it was segregated.

MINGO: At St. Joseph's.

MATTHEWS: No, that's at Holy Comforter.

MINGO: Oh, at Holy Comforter.

MATTHEWS: And I can remember that drugstore across from St. Joseph's. We'd always go and buy our sodas there. And this particular day, my girlfriend and I, we went to have our soda, cherry smash. And there was this little white boy, he was new. We had never seen him before. And, when we'd get our cherry smash, he fixed it and we sat down at the table. We couldn't sit at the table and have sodas! And that was good, we liked that. So, [laughing] we did it the next day. Then, the next day we were there and he wasn't there anymore. Now, whether they fired him or told him something, I don't know. But, we didn't sit down after that.

MINGO: Did somebody then tell you you couldn't sit down anymore...

MATTHEWS: No.

MINGO: ...or you just thought...

MATTHEWS: No. They didn't serve it to us anymore like that. We would always go to the counter like and get it.

MINGO: Oh, okay, so...

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MINGO: How'd that make you feel?

MATTHEWS: Bad.

MINGO: Yeah. I mean...

MATTHEWS: Oh, it made us feel good when we could sit at that table. It made me feel good when we could sit down. Oh, we couldn't sit at the—you know, they had a lot of five-and-dimes. We couldn't sit down there and have our hot dogs or sodas. We stood up to the counter there.

MINGO: You could use the counter, but not, but couldn't sit down.

MATTHEWS: No, mm-hmm, mm-hmm, no.

MINGO: So, the...

MATTHEWS: No.

MINGO: Well, what a shame. And, now, did St. Joseph's have the school at that time?

MATTHEWS: Yes, yes.

MINGO: And was it segregated, too?

MATTHEWS: No, when my children started going they just went there for a year or so or something. They—Uhn-uh—it wasn't segregated. It had just, just was integrated. And I know the sisters...

MINGO: Just was integrated. When your children started?

MATTHEWS: Yeah, just a couple of them—Janice didn't go. I think—after I left my husband, we came over. That's how it was. And they went for about a year. But, then, I had no—I wasn't able to keep them in, you know, Catholic school. And, that was when my children—yeah, they went for a while, one year around there. But, before that, no, they didn't. It was segregated.

MINGO: It was segregated also?

MATTHEWS: Yeah, when I was coming up, it was segregated.

MINGO: In other words, that's why you don't say you didn't go there because there was no possibility at all.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, mm-hmm.

MINGO: So, all of these things segregated, or they started integrating in the '60s probably.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MINGO: So, by that time you were an adult.

MATTHEWS: Because, like I said, I walked past Peabody School. Well, really, if you think about it that way, although I went down Third Street, I walked past—it was Peabody School, down further where they have apartments, Carbery something. It's an apartment, a big apartment. It's an apartment building there, right on Fifth Street. That was a school.

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: But, it was white. Peabody was white.

MINGO: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: So, I had to go to Third and G to [school].

MINGO: So, that the integrated things that you did then, were mainly outdoor play.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah, yeah. We went to the show, of course, the theaters, they were segregated.

MINGO: Yes, so you went over on H Street. Right?

MATTHEWS: Yeah, we went to—we would walk to the Howard Theater or to, up on U Street to the Lincoln Theater. No, after I got some size and, you know, like that.

MINGO: Right, yeah.

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MINGO: Because you couldn't go to the Penn Theater.

MATTHEWS: No, no, uhm-uhm.

MINGO: And...

MATTHEWS: No, none of those places. I can remember, mmm...

MINGO: Was there any feeling then that, you know, that that situation was going to change? There was no kind of civil rights feeling...

MATTHEWS: No, no, nothing like that. No, hmm-mmm, no.

MINGO: That was just the way it is, the way it was.

MATTHEWS: And there was some mean people in church, too. I can remember, you know, it looked like some people didn't go to confession and things until Easter and Christmas and things. And the line would be real long. I'd go there sometimes because it was closer, see, just for confession. And I can

remember we'd be in line and how they'd be pushing you. This old lady and that one. Yeah. Push you, looking at you like that, you know. Yeah, I can remember, right in church.

MINGO: Yeah. It seems a terrible burden to have had throughout your whole young life.

MATTHEWS: That's right.

MINGO: But, yet, you had a lot of fun there, too.

MATTHEWS: Yes, we did. We had a lot of fun.

MINGO: Yes. Now, you were telling me about where the Hart Building is now, you said that was all houses.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

MINGO: And did you live in one of those houses?

MATTHEWS: No, my girlfriend lived in one of those houses.

MINGO: Oh, that's it.

MATTHEWS: I lived further down.

MINGO: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, but my girlfriend lived there. And I would go to see her. And when she, after she and I got some size, when we'd go over to St. Cyprian's to plays or to dances, and when we came back, I'd walk to the—it was a drugstore on the corner of Maryland, Second and Maryland Avenue, with her. Then, we'd have the same distance to go. If we were coming from the other direction, she'd walk to the drugstore.

MINGO: To meet you.

MATTHEWS: Nobody bothered you then, but that's the way we would do it.

MINGO: Uh-huh. That was just because it was convenient for you.

MATTHEWS: Yes, mm-hmm.

MINGO: So, it was not a problem, say, to play around the neighborhood wherever...

MATTHEWS: No, not for us.

MINGO: ...or to play in the evening or at night even.

MATTHEWS: No, no, it wasn't no problem.

MINGO: Yes, so, everybody...

MATTHEWS: We'd play hopscotch and all those things.

MINGO: Did you hopscotch where the Hart Building is now?

MATTHEWS: I, we would play, but we had to stop that because we couldn't write on, you know, couldn't write on our sidewalk. We could do that skating on that sidewalk.

MINGO: Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, I can remember all of that. When they built that and then the court.

MINGO: Oh, the Supreme Court building.

MATTHEWS: The Supreme Court building, mm-hmm.

MINGO: Was that a skating place, too, or...

MATTHEWS: No, we didn't skate on that. No, I don't think we skated on that. I don't think so.

MINGO: But, then, what was before there were houses.

MATTHEWS: Houses. Little houses. Row houses.

MINGO: And kind of like the houses are now. Little houses. Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, uh-huh, uh-huh. All those were houses.

MINGO: So, they just took them all out.

MATTHEWS: Uh-huh. We'd go on the Capitol grounds and play. We would go down there and play.

MINGO: Oh, well, that would be a great park, a great park.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, we'd go down there and play. We'd have a good time.

MINGO: Well, now, what would you play? Now, that's a big area.

MATTHEWS: We'd play it all. We'd just play tag and do, you know, like that.

MINGO: Yeah, yeah. You didn't play ball.

MATTHEWS: We—Hmm-mm. No, you know.

MINGO: Girls probably didn't play, really play ball. Jump rope.

MATTHEWS: Jump rope, things like that. Mm-hmm.

MINGO: Now, so, was most of your activity and life just right there near where you lived?

MATTHEWS: Yeah, 'til after I got a good little size and you could go.

MINGO: About what age?

MATTHEWS: You know, 'til about maybe 14 or 15. We could go. Go over to St. Cyprian's to dances and different little plays, like that. My girlfriend and I, we'd go to the zoo.

MINGO: How?

MATTHEWS: Yeah, we'd catch the streetcar.

MINGO: You'd go on the streetcar.

MATTHEWS: They had the open cars and—yes—and we always went. We always—she and I, we would visit the Bureau of Engraving. We always did things like that.

MINGO: You did the educational things that were available.

MATTHEWS: Yes, we did.

MINGO: Went down on the Mall to the museums.

MATTHEWS: Uh-huh. mm-hmm.

MINGO: That's great.

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MINGO: And then—did you go to high school somewhere on the Hill, too?

MATTHEWS: Yes, I went to high school. I went to Cardozo High School.

MINGO: Oh, okay. Well, that was a distance to go.

MATTHEWS: Yeah. Then that was Rhode Island Avenue.

MINGO: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Ninth and Rhode Island Avenue.

MINGO: Yeah, yeah. So, you took the streetcar to get there?

MATTHEWS: Yes, we'd catch the—and sometime we'd walk if it was nice. We would walk.

MINGO: You are a walker.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, we would walk. And not hand our little fare to the driver, a lot of times we'd walk. And, then, it was what they call the Lincoln Colonnade. And they would have bands there. And they started, they would have dances for the school children and it would last 'til 9:00. That would be on Mondays, sometime on Mondays. And we'd go up there and then the group of us would walk. Different ones lived here, they'd drop off or there and all like that. Yeah.

MINGO: Now, where was the Lincoln Colonnade. Was that at Cardozo?

MATTHEWS: U Street, up on U Street.

MINGO: Was that sort of...

MATTHEWS: Big Bands. They would have a lot of times Big Bands. And we had Suburban Gardens, out Forty-Ninth and—Forty-Ninth Street, Northeast. Deane Avenue. And it was called Suburban Gardens. It sat up on the hill. And they had all kinds of rides and they had a big pavillion. And they used to have all the big bands. Ella Fitzgerald. I never will forget. I can remember...

MINGO: Ella Fitzgerald? Ooooo.

MATTHEWS: And Chick Webb. All the Big Bands. Lionel Hampton and they'd have all the Big Bands. I think we paid like seventy-five cent or something or a dollar and a quarter or something.

MINGO: Oh, my gosh.

MATTHEWS: We'd be begging for that. And we'd catch the streetcar. The streetcar would run out on H, out there. And we'd get to Fifteenth and H, they had to put the trolley wire up, I think, going out. Coming back, when we got there, they'd take the trolley wire down. Sure did.

MINGO: Now, why was that? 'Cause they could coast back, was that it?

MATTHEWS: It must have to run on, was running on something, I guess, when they got out that way, because that sort of—out that way it was like country to me.

MINGO: Really. Was it? Was it country?

MATTHEWS: Yeah. Kinda' like country, some places. Yeah.

MINGO: I mean, were there houses at all or was it just like a...

MATTHEWS: Yes, it was some houses further down. But, up there wasn't no building. They have beautiful houses up there now, but there wasn't nothing up there. I can remember going up this hill. There were Suburban Gardens. It was nice. We had a nice time.

MINGO: Now, that was probably a segregated place.

MATTHEWS: Yes, just—Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. I don't remember any others.

MINGO: So, now, did you go to—well, were there any other places in the area that you went to quite a bit, for entertainment?

MATTHEWS: Just the theaters, like. That's all I can kind of remember.

MINGO: And, when you'd go dancing or something like that, it would—did you go with an individual date or were these kind of groups?

MATTHEWS: No, a lot of times, until I got older, it would be a date, you know. But, most of the time I had some girlfriends, like school friends. We would all go, like that, together.

MINGO: And, then, some guys would come together and you would just meet...

MATTHEWS: Yeah, and then we'd meet the boys and they'd, uh-huh. They'd be up there or something, would walk us home a lot of times and all. Mm-hmm.

MINGO: The Lincoln Colonnade, was that a building or an area that was just kind of...

MATTHEWS: That was on U Street. That was a building.

MINGO: It's an actual building.

MATTHEWS: That was a building.

MINGO: And, that was a place, also, for dances.

MATTHEWS: Dance.

MINGO: And Big Bands and things. Yeah.

MATTHEWS: See the Lincoln Theater is up there, you know.

MINGO: Yes, yeah, yeah.

MATTHEWS: The Lincoln Colonnade, uh-huh.

MINGO: Yes, those things are having a revival now.

MATTHEWS: Yes, yes.

MINGO: Which is wonderful to see.

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MINGO: I'm trying to think, also, about the area you are talking about... Now, the Arboretum was there, but...

MATTHEWS: Over, over...

MINGO: On Bladensburg.

MATTHEWS: Bladensburg, mm-hmm.

MINGO: Was that a place you ever went to?

MATTHEWS: Yeah, we'd visit, go and look, you know. Check out the things and all. We'd go over there. We'd visit over there once in a while.

MINGO: So, when you went to places that were racially mixed, did you just stay separately or was there a lot of actual animosity?

MATTHEWS: Yeah, it was animosity. We just stayed separate like, you know.

MINGO: Because—so...

MATTHEWS: Yeah, because they wouldn't want you to—I mean, you know, some people were so mean.

MINGO: Oh. It wasn't a situation where there were just groups of people and some, just because they happened to know each other, regardless of color, they were together, you were—it was actively separated.

MATTHEWS: That's right.

MINGO: Actively separated. So, that's—and that continued up until the '60s.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

MINGO: So, your children also...

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MINGO: But, as you say, by the time they went to school, schools were...

MATTHEWS: Start after a while, uh-huh.

MINGO: Yes, it was—they were integrated.

MATTHEWS: I think when Janice started junior high. She went to Stuart. That's when it started to change, the prejudice.

MINGO: Now, where is Stuart?

MATTHEWS: Stuart's right there Fourth and—Fourth and Fifth on—right by me. E between—E...

MINGO: Okay, I—Okay, over there, not too far from the Northeast Library.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah, Right near, between Fourth and Fifth—well, we—that would be E and, what's the street over? F.

MINGO: And F, okay. In that area. So, that's certainly close to where you are on Lexington.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah, right around the corner. Right around the corner, uh-huh.

MINGO: Right, very close to there. Yeah, yeah. Now, the library, that's another thought, was that... Was there some segregation in that? Or could you check books out of the library?

MATTHEWS: I didn't, I don't—I can't remember that library. I can't remember. Let's see. I do remember having a card there at some time, but I could check books out. But, it was another library we'd go to, the one I think down on Seventh Street. I guess it was Seventh Street more.

MINGO: The Martin Luther King...

MATTHEWS: Why, why—no, we didn't have that then.

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: It was by Pennsylvania Avenue, I think we went there. I think that was the one we went to most of the time. I think that was the one. But, then, I can kind of remember we could check books out. I can remember checking books out. I think that's where it was.

MINGO: Yes, yes, that you could do. So, do you feel that that situation has really changed a lot. I mean...

MATTHEWS: Yes, it's changed a lot.

MINGO: Yeah. But the composition of the neighborhoods now—how is the racial balance now compared to when you were a kid?

MATTHEWS: Oh, my goodness. The street that I live in now, the only time you saw a black person in that street—and I know because I used to go, was going down the, going down to the, going different places down there—would be a delivery man or something. That was all white.

MINGO: Really.

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MINGO: So, over time it became much more African American.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah. Sure, uh-huh. Late in life, after we moved from Seventh Street.

[Bell rings.]

MINGO: Sorry. That means that the tape is about to end.

MATTHEWS: Okay.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

MATTHEWS: It just wasn't no—I can't remember the blocks being mixed, you know. I don't know, no.

MINGO: But, the area where you lived as a kid, your grandparents' home...

MATTHEWS: No, we were all blacks. Now, about Eighth Street and all there was a lot of whites, like that. Around on Second Street, all white from, let's see, that would be East Capitol Street all the way down. All the way down, past the church. But, I do remember, on the other side of the street, that was a lady, like—I had some friends, the Masons, their grandmother lived on the left hand side where the parking lot is. They had been there for years. But, on the other side it was all white, like that.

MINGO: Now, and the boarding houses were...

MATTHEWS: White.

MINGO: Were mostly white. So, what do you think determined where black people lived and where white people lived.

MATTHEWS: I guess where they could afford. I don't know, I guess.

MINGO: So, the places...

MATTHEWS: Yeah, now, my girlfriend lived on Second Street, right where the Hart Building is. I can't think at 2, 2-something. 234? 2-something Second Street. Go right up the—but they lived there and then there was some more people. The Tolgers I can remember. They all lived down there. But, I do know that her grandfather, he had retired. I think he had a good job. I think the grandmother had, too, or something like that though. Maybe they had a little more money or something. I don't know.

MINGO: So, it tended to be separated...

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MINGO: ...by blocks.

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MINGO: But the blocks were, like—presumably, the African American people were living in places that were slightly less expensive?

MATTHEWS: I guess. Because on A Street further down between Third and Fourth, that whole block was black. But they had nice houses. I can't...

MINGO: So, it wasn't economic...

MATTHEWS: I can't remember the ones near the church up there, whether they were white or not. But, I do know some boys we played with, their father had a storage truck, a transfer. Transfer and storage, he had that. They lived on the corner there. Yeah. And they lived on—and then on the other side I can remember some black families living there, too. Then, in later life, I remember 'cross there it was a lady. She was a white lady that lived there. But, I think that's the only family that I can kind of remember was there. And she was sort of, the children thought she was kind of weird or something. But, they would go and sell Christmas cards to her and everything. Oh, yeah, that was after my children were born. I can remember, you know, getting some size. And it was Kaluski. Their child went to St. Joseph's. Mrs. Kaluski.

MINGO: Kaluski.

MATTHEWS: Uh-huh. And she would say "What kind of church do you all go to? Y'all are always begging. That must be a Baptist church." I didn't know Catholic churches was always begging."
[Laughs.] They'd be selling Christmas cards and things like that. She would always buy something from

the children. But she said, “It must be a Baptist church. I ain’t never known a Catholic church to...”

[Laughs.]

MINGO: The Catholic church didn’t sell things like that.

MATTHEWS: They begged, you know. She called it begging. They always had something to sell. Christmas cards, candy—they always sold something for the school, for the church and the school. That was when they were going to school over at St. Cyprian’s then.

MINGO: Right. So, the way the housing patterns developed were...

MATTHEWS: Yeah, you just don’t. Yeah, some blocks, you didn’t, you know...

MINGO: There was just an unwritten rule.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah.

MINGO: This block is white, that one...

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah.

MINGO: Or this side of the street is white and that side is...

MATTHEWS: That’s right, that’s right.

MINGO: Oh. But, as far as if you went to the right block, an African American person, and you wanted to buy a house, you didn’t have problems loans or...

MATTHEWS: No, no, I don’t remember having problems like that.

MINGO: There wasn’t a...

MATTHEWS: We was always, my friends, we was always sort of good children. [Both laugh.] No, we didn’t. Uhn-uh. I don’t remember that problem.

MINGO: Yes, yes. So, you—Well, you know how it feels...

MATTHEWS: But, you know how some children could be calling you names and things like that. Excuse me. Then, we’d call them names back, too, sometimes, you know.

MINGO: Well—perhaps as it should be. Well, the—another place that was important in the neighborhood was Providence Hospital. Was that important...

MATTHEWS: Providence? Oh, yeah.

MINGO: Was that important to you at all?

MATTHEWS: Yeah, because I can remember my mother was in Providence Hospital.

MINGO: She was ill.

MATTHEWS: Yeah. I can remember several times my mother was in Providence Hospital. My mother sort of had—well, her legs were stiff, they didn't bend. She had been in an accident when I was real little, they say. And I can remember the sisters and—I'd be there and they'd have prayer. You know, the sisters would have on those habits with the—like that.

MINGO: Yes, sort of like a big bird.

MATTHEWS: But, that was segregated too now. You know, that was segregated.

MINGO: Really?

MATTHEWS: Oh, yes.

MINGO: You mean on the floors or somehow.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah. You'd—Oh, yeah, yeah.

MINGO: And even—well, for instance, doctors—would...

MATTHEWS: Most of them would be white.

MINGO: But, okay...

MATTHEWS: But, I can remember—I don't remember no black doctors there.

MINGO: And they would take care of any patients.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, they would take care of the patients.

MINGO: And the sisters were probably mostly white because that group came from some white area. I can't remember where.

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MINGO: But, were they cordial and...

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MINGO: ...when you were there.

MATTHEWS: Some of them could be—oh, yeah.

MINGO: And you could go there? As far as your treatment...

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MINGO: How about as a kid? Did you ever, like, get a cut and have to go there or any of those things?

MATTHEWS: Uhn-uh. I remember up to—up here on, what do you call it, Greater, uh, what am I trying to say? I'm getting real forgetful. It was Casualty then and then it was Capitol Hill, Capitol Hill.

MINGO: D. C. General?

MATTHEWS: Capitol Hill, right up here Eighth—where the nursing home is now.

MINGO: Oh, yeah, Medlink, what's now Medlink.

MATTHEWS: Where that—that was Casualty.

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: And they—you would have to go—I never will forget. You'd go past the Men's Ward to get to the Women's Ward. And it was—oh, I always said, "Don't even—If I got hit by a car, don't take me there." I always said that. But, then, after a while it got real nice. But, well—I went to D. C. General. I had all my children at D. C. General.

MINGO: Did you?

MATTHEWS: For a while that was sort of segregated, too, and then after a while you'd see—being mixed.

MINGO: It was changing.

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MINGO: It was changing.

MATTHEWS: You'd see it changing, mm-hmm.

MINGO: But, now, in regard to some of the historical events that went on while, you know, throughout your time here, you were recalling something about bonus marches.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah. They were from World War I, I think, and they came here because I think they were due some money.

MINGO: They were veterans of World War I.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, they were veterans. And they were crippled up and—oh, boy, they looked so bad. I was afraid of them really. They'd be laying out there on the grass and, oh, all over the place.

MINGO: On the grass like on the Mall?

MATTHEWS: No, up there where the Shakespearean Library and all is now. They was all around through there and the Capitol grounds and all. They didn't have no place to stay.

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: All around by where I told you the boarding houses were.

MINGO: The boarding houses were gone by that time.

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MINGO: Yes.

MATTHEWS: No, there wasn't nothing there, you know. And they would sell little, different little things. And I can remember, I can't remember some of the things, but I remember they used to have a little thing you would blow.

MINGO: A harmonica?

MATTHEWS: No.

MINGO: No, not a harmonica.

MATTHEWS: Make a little music, like, you know. A little toot, a little something or other like that.

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: Uh-huh. They'd come around selling them. Some of them didn't have but one leg and things. It was sad. I'll never forget that. Little children, they had babies with them.

MINGO: Oh. How long were they here?

MATTHEWS: I just can't remember. I just don't, can't remember. I had a lot of stuff—we had a lot of stuff. Like I said, my grandmother had a lot of stuff. But, I don't know. When she moved, she moved with her son and—she—all those things, you know. She had all those things and I don't know what his wife, you know, did...

MINGO: All the pictures or...

MATTHEWS: Yeah, a lot of things like that, uh-huh.

MINGO: And you aren't able to get those now.

MATTHEWS: But, I'm going to look through some of the things and see if it's, some things, and see if I can find some things, you know.

MINGO: That would be very interesting...

MATTHEWS: Uh-huh, see if I can find some things.

MINGO: ...very interesting. Yeah.

MATTHEWS: Yes. But I can remember that.

MINGO: Yeah. But, eventually, I guess, whatever happened and they left...

MATTHEWS: Yeah, they left. What they did, they ran them off all down through there. That Saturday, I never will forget. I didn't know what was going on. And the—I don't know whether, can't remember whether it's the policemen or soldiers was on horses.

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: Just chased them off the grounds and all. And then...

MINGO: The Capitol grounds.

MATTHEWS: ...I could smell this stuff, but I didn't know what it was. It was all in my eyes. And they said it was they was throwing the tear gas, you know.

MINGO: Oh. To get them to leave that area. Yeah.

MATTHEWS: To leave. Mm-hmm. And they moved. And then after that I can't remember what happened to them. I don't know what happened to them, whether they got whatever they were supposed to get or what.

MINGO: But, do you think they were kind of living on the Capitol grounds all the time?

MATTHEWS: Yeah, living, yeah, anywhere they could. I do know that.

MINGO: But, they were there a long time?

MATTHEWS: I don't think, far as I can remember, too long. I don't know.

MINGO: Like, maybe a month? Or...

MATTHEWS: Or more. Or something like that. Yeah.

MINGO: Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEWS: I can't remember being there when it was cold. Now, I can't remember that. It seems as though it was, to me, it was warm weather. Uh-huh.

MINGO: But, they had something that you could—did you buy one of the things that you could blow and make music?

MATTHEWS: Yes, I had some girlfriends on B Street—it was B Street then. And we all would go and get some change so we could get those little things. I never will forget.

MINGO: Yeah, yeah. Now, what sort of songs were popular? Do you remember the...?

MATTHEWS: Oh, way back, yeah. I don't know, when I was a child. I can't remember the songs when I was a child.

MINGO: What could you play on that little thing that you could blow?

MATTHEWS: Nothing.

MINGO: Nothing. Oh, just music [laughing].

MATTHEWS: And, I can remember, we had a player piano.

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: We had a player piano. It had rolls you'd put in there and pump it, like that. And I can't think of the music. I can't remember what the songs would be. But, oh, yeah, boy, we liked that. [Both laugh.]

MINGO: And you could sing along...

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah.

MINGO: Oh, that was...

MATTHEWS: Oh, that was...Yeah.

MINGO: Do you have that still?

MATTHEWS: No. Momma didn't, hmm-mm, hmm-mm. She moved, and my uncle had—I think that piano went with him or something. They...

MINGO: It's not available now anyway.

MATTHEWS: He's dead, too, now. He'd dead, too. He could play anything. He could play—never had a—never took music in his life. He could play the trumpet, guitar, piano, every, every. Mm-hmm. He was really gifted.

MINGO: Did you, like, have parties and he would play?

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah. Well, after I got to be—a girl, I got to be grown-like. Of course, he was just a couple of years older than I was. He would play—they had a band, a little band. The Altones, they called it. And they would have, play for different things. And I'd go a lot of times. He'd take me with him to, you know

MINGO: Like where?

MATTHEWS: ...hear them play. Like to a lot of the clubs.

MINGO: Now, what were the clubs?

MATTHEWS: Oh, let's see. Up on U Street. I can't think of that club. Republic Gardens. That's what we called it, uh-huh. And they played over to St. Cyprian's when the—people had the little dances and things like that, you know. They'd rent the hall out and they'd have music.

MINGO: Did they ever play in people's houses?

MATTHEWS: Yeah, they used to play—Oh, not the band, though. But, I had a cousin, and her husband was blinded in World War II. And Charlie, he used to play music. And he would have—he would have a band in his house. He wouldn't have to have a party, just invite everybody. And, now, that was—it was a white lady lived next door. She didn't care, didn't bother her at all. And my cousin Helen, they had the basement soundproofed. And he would have just sometime, like two bands. When one band got up to rest, the other band would sit down and they would play music all day long. And they'd serve all kinds of foods and drinks and all free. Just his friends. He was blind and Charlie liked that. Mm-hmm

MINGO: And who—could just anybody come in...

MATTHEWS: Just his friends, his friends.

MINGO: ...or people were invited?

MATTHEWS: His friends.

MINGO: ...people were invited?

MATTHEWS: His friends, like, his friends, like.

MINGO: Was there ever a time when there were kind of parties and people just went into people's houses even though...

MATTHEWS: Yes, they did.

MINGO: ...even though they didn't know them maybe?

MATTHEWS: Yes, I can remember that, too. And some of them would try to start trouble. You'd have to get them out. Yeah, I can remember that.

MINGO: Oh, you mean, to start trouble. You didn't go to...

MATTHEWS: Yeah, sometime. Sometime they'd just go on. Yeah, sometime they'd go in there and you wouldn't know them and you'd come to find out—somebody asked who they were and they didn't know. But, some of them would just be there, but—Mm-hmm. Just open that door. You know, we didn't have to do no locking up the doors and things too much then, back then.

MINGO: Yes. So, on a...

MATTHEWS: Yeah, but. Mmm-mm.

MINGO: People could just go around the neighborhood and enjoy the sociability.

MATTHEWS: Yes. Like we'd just have screens, the screen door. We may lock that at night, in the summer. But, you didn't have to lock up and do like...

MINGO: There weren't a lot of bars or nightclubs or that kind of hangout...

MATTHEWS: No.

MINGO: ...in place at that time. It was in people's homes.

MATTHEWS: No. After I got grown, they started having them down on H Street, down H Street, Northeast, and things like that. But, uh-uh—uptown it would be the bars and the places, you know. But, we didn't have not too much, nothing around here that I can remember now. Not as a child.

MINGO: Now, where did you shop for things, I mean, for things besides the groceries that were in the area.

MATTHEWS: Oh, H Street, Northeast, I can remember.

MINGO: And downtown?

MATTHEWS: Yes, downtown. That was segregated and Garfinkel's was awfully segregated. I couldn't go in Garfinkel's.

MINGO: Couldn't go in Garfinkel's. Where could you go?

MATTHEWS: Mm-mmm. Could go in Woodies—no, I don't want to talk too much about Woodies. We'd go to Kann's.

MINGO: Okay.

MATTHEWS: Hecht's.

MINGO: Those were not segregated.

MATTHEWS: Hecht's was at Seventh and, Seventh Street there. Seventh and F. And then there was Kann's, Landsberg. Up further was Goldberg's. And it was a Hahn's on the corner there after I got larger. But,...

MINGO: Hahn's?

MATTHEWS: Hahn's Shoe Store.

MINGO: H-A-H-N, you think?

MATTHEWS: H-A-H-N. Yes, um-hmm. Hahn's. And, that's about it.

MINGO: Did you go out to, say, like, Glen Echo? Did you ever go there?

MATTHEWS: No, they didn't, that's wasn't—when I was little, that was segregated...

MINGO: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: ...Glen Echo was. We had Suburban Gardens.

MINGO: Which was the same kind of thing.

MATTHEWS: Just the same, like, thing, yes.

MINGO: Did you also have a pool at Suburban Gardens?

MATTHEWS: I don't remember. I don't think so. We'd go to the beach. Sparrow's in Maryland. Sparrow's Beach and Carr's Beach was connected sort of like.

MINGO: Sparrow's. And which was the other, Carr's?

MATTHEWS: Carr's. C-A-R-R-'-S, I think that was the name.

MINGO: Oh, okay.

MATTHEWS: And, then, Sparrow's. S-P-A-R-R-O-W-S, or something like that.

MINGO: Yeah, the bird.

MATTHEWS: We'd go. But, you'd have to go catch the—have the bus, have a bus. And one Sunday in the summertime, I can't remember just what month it was, whether it was August or what, but all the black Catholic churches mostly had that one particular Sunday for the beach.

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: And, oh, everybody would—mm-hmm, uh-huh. And a lot of times they'd leave from St. Cyprian. Our bus would leave from St. Cyprian's and we'd all go down there to the beach and like that.

MINGO: Oh. And as a religious group outing.

MATTHEWS: We'd take our own lunch and things, you know.

MINGO: Now, oh, in regard to—are there things that you remember, say, about World War II that come particularly to mind? As it affected the Hill.

MATTHEWS: No, I just can remember the blackouts. We used to have blackouts. Everybody had to be in the house.

MINGO: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: I remember that.

MINGO: Were those often?

MATTHEWS: Huh?

MINGO: Were they often?

MATTHEWS: Yeah, quite often. And everything you'd see, everything would be black and try not to get caught out, because none of the people would, as a rule, let you in the house. Just let you sit there until after it was over.

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: Uh-huh, uh-huh. But I wouldn't like to be out there, because everything was dark. People's shades would be drawn. And then we had the ration.

MINGO: Yes, yeah. And then when World War II was over, do you recall any changes at that time?

MATTHEWS: No, I can't think of none. [pause] Well, yes, I noticed some changes when, during the course of the War it was a little more jobs, I think. You know, like that.

MINGO: A lot of people came here and were working for the government. Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEWS: Mm-hmm, yeah.

MINGO: Now, did you work the...

MATTHEWS: I worked at the Bureau of Engraving for a while.

MINGO: Oh, did you?

MATTHEWS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. But, then after the war, a bunch of us, we were laid off and I went to work for the bank. I went to National—I went to work where my cousin worked for years. She got me a job, elevator operator in Metropolitan Bank. That was on Fifteenth Street between New York Ave—G, F & G. Right across from the Treasury Department. Then after that they got self-service elevators. And that bank there had the clearinghouse for all the city banks, you know. A runner from every bank in the city came there a couple of times a day to exchange the checks and things and what have you.

MINGO: Right, right.

MATTHEWS: And I always got along with people and all. And I had—the fellows didn't—white and black, they always liked me, say I was a nice person. And there was this one fellow, we called him "John L". We called him John L.

MINGO: Why John L. ?

MATTHEWS: John L. Lewis, like that...

MINGO: After John L. Lewis, okay. [laughs]

MATTHEWS: ...but just say John L. We used to say. They would all call him John L. And it was another fellow there, Pat. Pat, he was a, oh, he was, oh, [laughing] he was real funny. But, John L., he said to me when he knew that we were going to lose our jobs, he said to me, he said, “You know,” he said, “You’re a nice person. You go around to the National Bank of Washington and tell them that I sent you.”

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: I said okay, because I had four children. My husband and I were separated. He wasn’t...

MINGO: He wasn’t helping you.

MATTHEWS: No, no. And I’d rather never have been bothered with him than to—I’d been losing that little piece of job. And I went around to, right there at Fourteenth and G, National Bank of Washington, and the man told me, he said, “Well, we don’t have any openings and we don’t have—we don’t have any openings yet but I can’t take an application from you because you work for another bank. When you leave that bank, then you come around.” And that’s what I did.

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: I went around and I filled out an application. And, of course, I told them who sent me and all. And don’t you know it wasn’t two weeks before they called me for a job at National Bank of Washington. But, I worked up at Fifteenth and I. I was the elevator operator. And then when they started merging—they started—they got a new branch [coughs], excuse me, up on Connecticut—oh, the elevators—no, what they did, a lot of the departments in there were going, moving into the new branch. And there was nothing left down there but the first floor and the second floor and the tellers. So, I went—they sent me up on Van Ness Street. And, then, after that, the lady said to me, she said, “Geraldine”. Of course, they had asked me before about different jobs in the bank. They figured I could do it and all. But, it was one lady they wanted me to go work with but I said no. I wasn’t going to chance it. And if I could just stay where I was because she was terrible. But, don’t you know, she was nice to me but she would—the girls say she would be nice to them like that and all, but she treated those girls like slaves or something. So, I just told them, when they called me down and interviewed me for it, I told them, uh-uh, I didn’t want it and all. And I told them how she was. So, after that, after a while, they called me and told me they wanted me—would I try for a safe deposit clerk? And, I said “Yeah.” That’s where I retired from. I went right back to Liberty Branch, Fifteenth and I and that’s where I retired from.

MINGO: Oh, my gosh, you went right back.

MATTHEWS: And it was some nice—there were nice people there with me, too. I mean, I’m speaking of white, that helped me. Yes, they did. Real nice to me, very nice to me.

MINGO: Well, that's good to hear.

MATTHEWS: Mm-hmm, very nice to me.

MINGO: And, then, by that time you were already living on Lexington.

MATTHEWS: Yes. I was living on Ninth—on Seventh Street, Number 19. That was a big house and, boy, but all the heat bill was so high. And all. Then, we had a big water bill. We didn't know that whatever was leaking. My mother and I, and she wasn't working then, you know. And, boy, it was so hard for us, you know. And we decided—we had been there just not too long—and so we decided to sell. We could get a place down Lexington Place. We could get something all [unintelligible], you know. So, that's what we did. And my mother—like my mother used to work for the Lynches on Maryland Avenue, next door to the Marlows. And my mother had worked there for years. And Mrs. Lynch died and she had a son. And I don't know too much about it, I think, I don't know. He was something on the trains. I can see him now.

MINGO: Mr. Lynch was?

MATTHEWS: The son.

MINGO: Oh. What did Mr. Lynch do?

MATTHEWS: That was Mr. Lynch before. He was something on the train. Conductor or something, I guess. He would have his lunch box. I can remember that just as good. Back when they had—they had had a boarding house there but it wasn't a boarding house anymore. And his friend, Miss Ruth Ridge—she was the one was the hair dresser I was talking about.

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: She always—my mother helped, still helped and did little things around there. But, she didn't need—she wasn't, you know—and they helped my mother. He left a—he got sick. He left a note he always wanted her to try to look out for my mother. But, when we got this house, she helped us to get this house. And we were in there—but, we were up on Seventh Street and she told my mother to call. And at first we couldn't get it or something. So, Miss Ruth said she—no, she didn't want nothing to—no, that's when we were going to move on Number 19 Seventh Street. And she said, no, she wanted it in her name. In my mother's name.

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: And when we got ready to move down here, they wanted—I forget how much they wanted down.

MINGO: On Lexington, you mean.

MATTHEWS: On Lexington. And Miss Ruth called them. But, she called because she was white, they were going to cut it down on her. Uh-huh. But, then she told them about it, too. So, we got that house down there what we got off the house up there. And then I worried that...

MINGO: The house up there is the one on Seventh Street? 19 Seventh.

MATTHEWS: Uh-huh. Number 19.

MINGO: What—do you remember...

MATTHEWS: Number 19. That was a big house.

MINGO: You remember what you sold it for?

MATTHEWS: No. It wasn't that much because, see, we hadn't been in it but so many years, you know.

MINGO: Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEWS: And, it was big. The rooms—that bedroom upstairs, you could put a bed, two bedroom suites in it, and a couch and everything.

MINGO: Too big, so...

MATTHEWS: Oh, and the kitchen. Oh, my goodness. But, you know, I can remember we never...[Buzzer buzzes.]

MINGO: Stop. I'm sorry.

MATTHEWS: Never had a light blow out or nothing, while we were there.

MINGO: Really?

MATTHEWS: Uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh. Up there on Seventh Street.

MINGO: Do you remember what you paid for the Lexington house? I'm just curious...

MATTHEWS: Something like \$14,500 or \$15-something. Something like that. We had two notes.

MINGO: \$14,000 or \$15,000, yeah.

MATTHEWS: We had two notes.

MINGO: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: Sure did.

MINGO: But the price came down because a white person had inquired...

MATTHEWS: But, then, Miss Ruth just told us—see, that was one time we had inquired about a house down there. But, then, later on when my mother inquired again, it didn't do that. But, yeah. Um-hmm. Yeah, yeah.

MINGO: You mean you ended up paying more than Miss Ruth would have paid.

MATTHEWS: No, no. We paid about the same, like maybe six months or so later. Yeah. Uh-huh.

MINGO: Okay.

MATTHEWS: And when I moved to the street there was a lot of white people lived in there then. But, they eventually moved or lot of them died, you know, and all.

MINGO: But, I'm still not clear about the pricing. You ended up with the same price that Miss Ruth would have had.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Something like that. But, it was later on.

MINGO: But, it was a few months later that you bought it.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, mm-hmm.

MINGO: But, if she hadn't gotten a different price, you might have paid a higher price.

MATTHEWS: Yeah. If we'd have moved in then—oh, well, more or less my mother was wanting to move from up there and wanted to move down there. And we just waited a while.

MINGO: And then it was more reasonable. Yes.

MATTHEWS: Mm-hmm. And, now, look what they're selling for now.

MINGO: And this is about when—you bought that house, what, in the '40s?

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MINGO: Would it be in the '40s or '50s?

MATTHEWS: Yeah, uh-huh. I've been there about fifty years or so. I'd have to check it.

MINGO: Okay, so you bought it about around the '50s, yeah. So fifty years later. Yeah. Quite incredible.

[Pause]...remember the huckster man.

MATTHEWS: I can remember him, the huckster man. And I can remember—and even after I got grown—he went out. Then he had a truck, I know he had a truck then. He would come around and I can remember the children—I had a girlfriend Bernice. Bernice was like a big, older sister to me. And she had children. And she had a little girl named after me, was born on my birthday, Geraldine.

MINGO: Oh.

MATTHEWS: And she died. I never will forget. In a fire, they had a fire or something. And, she would say, she'd be waiting, "What are you waiting for, Gerialie?" "I'm waiting for Mr. Lipscomb." "What are you waiting for?" "To get some fruit or..." "Do you have any money?" "No. [Laughs.] He'll give it to me." "No, he'll give it to me." Yes sir. I can remember that.

MINGO: So, he had several generations of children...

MATTHEWS: And then we had the—a truck would come around with fish. And they'd clean the fish right there for you.

MINGO: Oh, great. Really fresh.

MATTHEWS: Yeah. Clean 'em and right there for you.

MINGO: Great. Well, so, those things all changed as the population got bigger I guess.

MATTHEWS: Yeah. You couldn't, they couldn't, you couldn't, they couldn't do that now. Unsanitary, you know. You know all like that, how they felt then.

MINGO: But, those things were very fresh. They were brought right from the river probably.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah.

MINGO: They were fresh.

MATTHEWS: And he'd scale 'em right there for you.

MINGO: On the ice, the ice with—remember the ice man.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, with the ice. Yes, with the ice, um-hmm.

MINGO: Well, you've recalled a lot of things. What other areas should we talk about?

MATTHEWS: I don't know. Then, when I go home, I'll think about a whole lot. [Both laugh.]

MINGO: Well...

MATTHEWS: I'm so forgetful. I'm getting so forgetful.

MINGO: Well, at this point, because it's always possible to have another interview another day...

MATTHEWS: All right, if I think about some more, I'm going to write it down.

MINGO: Okay, well...

MATTHEWS: I'll get with my girlfriend, too. Maybe some things she can remember that I don't remember.

MINGO: It'd be fun. Well, I want to thank you on behalf...

MATTHEWS: You're quite welcome.

MINGO: ...of this project, that this is wonderful for you to do this and...

MATTHEWS: Quite welcome.

MINGO: You know, I'm sure the people in the project, they will be in touch with other things, too.

MATTHEWS: But, Capitol Hill wasn't all the way over to Anacostia and all like that then. Capitol Hill was only like down to—what would that be?

MINGO: Thirteenth? Fifteenth?

MATTHEWS: No, not over that far like that.

MINGO: Not that far either.

MATTHEWS: Um-umm. Like certain sides of Maryland Avenue and certain. down to about Massachusetts Avenue or something like that. It wasn't all, you know, like it is now. We didn't call—that wasn't Capitol Hill.

MINGO: I mean, like it ended, I think, one time it was Sixth or Seventh was actually the end.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MINGO: Yeah, so that, what you're talking about is real Capitol Hill, very central.

MATTHEWS: Like Stanton Park on each side and then going down, I can remember. Going down to, like—there used to be a store, well, I'll say where Schneider's Liquor store is now. That's on Third Street, Massachusetts Avenue, right along in there. That was Capitol Hill. And we'd always say going down the Hill. Like going down to play, go down the Hill.

MINGO: Down the Hill. Was...

MATTHEWS: Yeah, you know. That was considered, you know, too far Capitol Hill. No.

MINGO: So, the boundaries have expanded over the years, too.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, oh, yeah. Over Anacostia? No, that wasn't no Capitol Hill, like, you know.

MINGO: Yeah. It was just the central area.

MATTHEWS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

MINGO: Well, and you like, you have liked living here, I hope. [Laughs.]

MATTHEWS: Yes, yes, yes. I really have.

MINGO: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: I've had some right good times. We've had some good times.

MINGO: Yeah, yeah. Well, thank you, again.

MATTHEWS: You're quite welcome.

MINGO: And we'll...

MATTHEWS: And maybe I'll go and sleep on it and we can find some more...

MINGO: [Laughing.] Great. All right. This is the end of Side 2, then, of Tape 1 of interviews with Geraldine Matthews. Thank you.

MATTHEWS: You're welcome.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

END OF INTERVIEW