



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Esther M. Yost

Interview Date: June 10, 2002
Interviewer: Marie Mingo
Transcriber: Jennifer Newton

[TAPE 1/SIDE 1]

MINGO: Today is June 10, 2002, I am Marie Mingo, interviewer, and this interview is at my home at 234 10th Street, S.E. in Washington, D.C. I'm going to be talking with Esther Yost, who lived here for many years and who I believe—were you actually born here?

YOST: I was born in D.C. I'm a native.

MINGO: You were actually born here. Was your family living on the Hill when you were born?

YOST: Yes. I was born at the old Sibley Hospital, which at that time was out on North Capitol Street.

MINGO: And then you were saying that you lived around the corner here at 11th the whole time?

YOST: Well, I'm told that I lived with my grandparents at 1114 C Street, S.E. up until I was a year old, when my parents moved to 529 11th Street, where I lived till I was 22 years old, when I got married.

MINGO: And you just told me that your husband was in the Marines when you met?

YOST: That's right, my husband was stationed at the Marine Corps Barracks at 8th and I, and I met him down at a dance at the old USO, which was at—oh, my goodness, I guess at L'Enfant Plaza or –

MINGO: Really? Down in that area?

YOST: I'm not really sure where it was. I know it's gone! [Laughter.]

MINGO: That was around the time of World War II—or later than that?

YOST: No, no—we were married in 1960 and I met him in '58. Actually, I think the USO was almost directly across the street from the White House. I said L'Enfant Plaza, but I'm wrong there, it was closer to 15th—15th and H N.W.

MINGO: Maybe Lafayette Park?

YOST: Lafayette Park—there you go.

MINGO: Now, were your children also born in the District?

YOST: No, we moved to Suitland, Maryland, in June of 1962, and we've been at our present address, which is at Fairhill Drive, for 40-plus years. But my daughter was born at the new Sibley Hospital. [Laughter.] We're keeping it in the family. It's right off Macarthur Boulevard now.

MINGO: Right, way over there. And you told me your husband has just retired?

YOST: My husband's just retired from the Secret Service. He was a security specialist in charge of the armor section that builds all of the inaugural stands and the podiums, and all this kind of stuff. Always involved with protection of presidents. He's been with every president since Eisenhower.

MINGO: Oh, my goodness. A wonderful career. And did you work yourself outside the home?

YOST: I worked at the General Services Administration. I was a management analyst. And I retired—oh, my goodness, I've been retired 13, 14 years. I took an early out! [Laughter.]

MINGO: So, living on Capitol Hill then was just a natural location for you, initially. But you moved shortly after you were married.

YOST: We moved when we were married. We lived over in Congress Heights for awhile, on Lebaun Street, and we moved from there to an apartment on Naylor Road, where we were—I guess we were married two years before we bought our house in Maryland.

MINGO: Well, I wonder if you would kind of set the scene of the neighborhood to begin with, particularly the shopping that was available on the Hill?

YOST: On the Hill?

MINGO: That you used, or your family used.

YOST: Shopping that was available on the Hill. Let me see, there was—well, it's still there—there was the CVS at 7th and Pennsylvania Avenue. At the time, it was Peoples Drug Store. Directly across the street from that—I think it's Bread and Chocolate or something like that now—that was a Kresge's Five-and-Ten-Cent Store. Farther down, there was the Sampan Chinese restaurant where we got carryout every now and then. There was a little old hat shop there where my mom loved to buy hats.

MINGO: Women wore hats much more then.

YOST: Yes. Where the CVS store is now at 12th—I guess it's 12th and E—that was a A&P Store—Ann Page. So that was like a supermarket at the time, of course nothing like the supermarkets of today. Directly across the street from that, at 12th and Pennsylvania Avenue, where there's now an Exxon station—that was a Sanitary Market, which later became Safeway. So that's where we did our shopping. A friend of mine who lived at 12th and Independence Avenue had a car, and his mom was confined to a wheelchair, so he would take my mom and I to the Giant in Coral Hills to shop for his mother. My mom would select meat and everything, figuring that Al knew absolutely nothing about buying meat [laughter] and so we did some of our shopping out there. But most of it was done within walking distance, and of course, you didn't go to the store like every week or every two weeks, you kind of went every other day

because refrigerators at the time just didn't have all the capacity to freeze meat or frozen food. The A&P—I can remember going there, and it wasn't a self-service meat counter. You took a number and there was actually a butcher behind the counter, and you selected the meat that you wanted. That was true at the Safeway and the A&P. So the first thing you would do, particularly if the store was crowded, was to go in and get your number for meat, and then they would call it, and you could almost finish your shopping by the time you were called to select meat!

MINGO: You say the supermarkets weren't like they are now—what besides the meat would you buy there?

YOST: Canned goods, produce—

MINGO: They did have produce then.

YOST: They did have produce. But there were none of the over-the-counter medicines, cosmetics, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes—none of that. All that stuff or items of that nature—that's what you went to the drugstore for.

MINGO: OK, so there was a drugstore nearby.

YOST: Yes, there was one at 7th and Pennsylvania Avenue.

MINGO: So they were distinct stores.

YOST: We spent a lot of time at the—like I said, now CVS but then Peoples—and the old Kresge's, because they had lunch counters in there.

MINGO: Oh, yes, tell me about the lunch counters.

YOST: Kresge's had one with little sections in it. I went to the old Hine Junior High School and every day after school we'd run across the street to Kresge's and drink chocolate Cokes.

MINGO: Chocolate Cokes! And did they have phosphates?

YOST: You know, I don't really know. I'm sure they did. But chocolate Cokes was kind of the thing to do. Every now and then, depending on how much money you had—because a chocolate Coke was only a nickel—so if you really wanted to spend a lot of money, you would go across the street to the old Peoples Drug Store, where if you had a dime, you'd get a root beer float. [Laughter.]

MINGO: Wow!

YOST: Like I said, it was just a different environment than what's on the Hill now. Of course, Eastern Market was always here. My parents bought Christmas trees at the market from a man who was a sheriff down in St. Mary's County, Mr. Perrigo, and they bought so many trees from this Mr. Perrigo that he would just come up from St. Mary's County and drop two trees on my mom's front porch, because he knew what we wanted. What he did with the money he made from these Christmas trees—well, he had adopted four boys from an orphanage. Of course, the boys helped him work on the market during the Christmas season with the trees, but any of the profits he made from these trees went back to the orphanage. And so my dad recommended Mr. Perrigo to somebody to buy a Christmas tree from who thought it was a little bit too expensive, and my father explained to them what the situation was and where the money later went, and they decided maybe it wasn't so bad after all. But back then, I guess a Christmas tree probably cost ten, maybe fifteen dollars, if that much! It wasn't 30, 40 or 50 dollars the way they sell them now.

MINGO: It was fresh cut.

YOST: It was fresh cut. They were wood pines, they weren't the generic type that you get now, with all the fancy names.

MINGO: Were there other kinds of stores—were there any bookstores at that time?

YOST: You know, I don't....Up on the Avenue, between—golly, what would that be—between 2nd and East Capitol, where the Annex to the Library of Congress is now, there used to be a row of stores in there. A lot of them moved up on the Avenue now, between 3rd and 2nd. There were bookstores and restaurants and things in there, but we just never went down that far. That was like another world. It was nine blocks away—we just couldn't go down there!

MINGO: So you didn't go down to the Capitol or—

YOST: Yes we did, we would go to the Capitol—let me see, Monday, Wednesdays and Friday nights in the summer, and I'm sure they still do it—the different service organizations had concerts there. So we would go down for some of them.

MINGO: That was the neighborhood thing to do, then?

YOST: That was the neighborhood thing to do, yes—for entertainment. You have to remember, I was almost in seventh grade before my parents bought a TV. My daughter says, “Mom, did you watch Sesame Street?” And I say, “No...” However, some friends of ours that lived around on 10th Street—I would go through the garage and down the alley across the street to 10th Street—they had a television where we watched Howdy Doody, Pick Temple and the Giant Ranger—which was sponsored by Giant Food—and

of course, there were like five or six kids in this room looking at a ten-inch screen. It was like looking through a keyhole! [Laughter.] Anyway, it was entertainment. And then there was Frontier Theater, where they played old Westerns. We would sit there and watch those. So the TV during the week took the place of the movies. But whoever had one, their house became very popular.

MINGO: Did you go the movies? I know there was the Penn Theater...

YOST: There was the Penn Theater. Let me see, right across the street from it—I guess there's a little shopping complex in there now—was the Avenue Grand. On 8th Street, there was the Academy. Over on 15th Street was the Beverly. On H Street, the Home and the Atlas. Farther up on 11th Street, right off Lincoln Park, was a theater called the Carolina that's long since gone, where the movie started at 12:00. There'd be a half-hour cartoon show, a double feature, a serial that had 15 segments—and heaven forbid you would miss a Saturday! I was distraught one time because I had watched this one serial faithfully for fourteen weeks, and then we went on vacation for the fifteenth week—I was ready to stay home! At that time, with the exception of the Penn—we didn't go there very often because it cost a whole quarter to get in, which was half of my week's allowance since I only got fifty cents allowance—all the other movies that I mentioned were twelve cents. So for twelve cents you could go to the movies.

MINGO: This was on Saturdays...

YOST: This was any time. You could go to the movies for twelve cents, popcorn was ten cents a bag, and you could get an ice cream sandwich and one other thing to eat. But, no matter what you got, it wasn't—well, you were in the theater almost three and a half hours with all this stuff going on, and no matter what you did, there was never enough food to last the entire time of the movies. [Laughter.]

MINGO: Now, the theaters, stores, and so forth—the population of Capitol Hill was racially mixed. Were these places integrated or not?

YOST: Ah, no. The integration came to Capitol Hill, I would say, after they started the renovation of Southwest. A lot of the integration took place in what was known as the projects, which was down at 6th and G. It's all torn down now—it's where they built those new townhouses along the freeway. But that was like maybe two and a half blocks or more of low-income housing, and when they started renovating Southwest, of course the blacks moved into the projects, which were later totally destroyed by neglect—either by the people living there or the D.C. Government itself. They just didn't care anymore. I guess they had gotten so bad there was no fixing them up anyway. And they've since been torn down. There was also a Safeway down there. You know, I can go by it and I know exactly where it was and I can't remember.... But it's set back, it had a parking lot and everything. Even that closed. After Southeast

became integrated, most of the white population found ways to shop in the suburbs, because everything just went downhill.

MINGO: And a lot of these stores apparently closed.

YOST: A lot of them closed because, like I said, the money wasn't there to keep them open. I'm sure a lot of small businesses—although I really don't know this—went out of business simply because they weren't selling or doing any business to speak of.

MINGO: As you say, business was moving away from the city.

YOST: Business was moving out of the city.

MINGO: The places even like the Kresge's, African-American people did not shop in those stores either?

YOST: They did, but not to the extent that the white population would. I think they just didn't have the money. Because like I said, the African-American population that moved into the projects and a lot that moved into homes in Southeast or Capitol Hill per se were basically low-income families that were just booted out of Southwest because Southwest was going to be a middle-income/low-income community...

MINGO: And a lot of business space was....

YOST: I mean, there's the Southwest Mall where there's a Safeway and everything, so a lot of that was down there. I guess the white people that moved in there shopped in Southwest rather than Southeast. A lot of the businesses on 8th Street closed. I mean, 8th Street used to be little restaurants, cleaners, stores, theaters...

MINGO: Dress shops, I think...

YOST: I think there was a dress shop there. There was one bar—I can't even remember the name of it, but the United States Marine Corps could tell you the name of it. I'm sure they tore it up more than once. Little restaurants and things like that. And that's kind of what it's gone back to now. As a matter of fact, about a month ago, we went to an Italian restaurant in the 500 block of 8th Street, which is right next door to the house where my best girlfriend lived. And they made a restaurant out of this house—it's so little!

MINGO: Yes, I know the one you mean, and it's a nice restaurant. But you said that you also shopped downtown. Even before—

YOST: Even after—you have to remember that when Southwest started the renovation, Southeast almost immediately became predominantly Afro-American, because of the influx of the low-income families from Southwest. Shopping downtown—you'll find this hard to believe—but when you went downtown to

shop, you got dressed up. It was an occasion. And you could catch the streetcar or the bus, depending upon which area you're talking about. And I remember both of them. Get off at 7th and Pennsylvania Avenue, right across from the Archives Building. There was a department store there, Kann's. Farther up on 7th Street there was Landsbergh's, and I think they've taken that now and converted it into apartments, maybe even a dinner theater is in there. Farther up at 7th and F was Hecht's, and if you went down F Street, there was Woodward and Lothrop's, which was between 10th and 11th on F Street. And Garfinckel's—where our family never shopped because it was just too expensive—was at 14th and F. Also on F Street, there were major theaters. There was the Loewe's Capitol, the Palace, the Metropolitan, and the Columbia. On 15th Street was the Translux—no, RKO Keith. The Translux was up—there again, I know where it was, I can take you to it, but I don't know the street it was on. But the Capitol—my father used to take me there in September, around my birthday, because Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians would always come. It was a stage show on Saturdays between the movies. And we would always go there, and I would sit and ponder this thought for hours: which one of the baby grands I wanted the most, the shiny white one or the shiny black one? And needless to say, I never got my baby grand! [Laughter.] So it really did me no good to wonder.

MINGO: The baby grand was in the theater?

YOST: Yes, the orchestra.

MINGO: So these were silent films?

YOST: No, this was a stage show between...And sometimes there was this guy who used to be on WJSV, on the radio—Art Brown—and he had these canaries. He would play the organ, it was a morning show, and these canaries would sing. But he also played the theater organ at the Capitol with the “follow the bouncing ball”-type thing.

MINGO: That's right, they did those in addition to the films.

YOST: It was entertainment between the films, but only on Saturdays. My girlfriend and I even went to the Capitol in the early '50s to see Johnny Ray. We stood in line for almost two hours to get in to see the stage show, to see Johnny Ray sing “The Little White Cloud that Cried.” I guess prior to Elvis or the Beatles! [Laughter.]

MINGO: Exactly. But at that time your reaction to the star wasn't as extreme—

YOST: Not as intense! Like I said, when you went downtown shopping, it was a dress-up occasion.

MINGO: And you took the bus or the streetcar. At what point did you say your father got a car?

YOST: I was a senior in high school at Eastern, which would have been in 1956 or '57, somewhere around there. My dad finally bought a car. During the war you didn't have a car, because gas was rationed. And so he had one before that, but he sold it during the war years. Instead of putting the car in the garage, we had chickens there, which we ate, because meat was also rationed.

MINGO: You had a garage...

YOST: We had the garage, but it was like a chicken coop!

MINGO: Did a lot of people do that, raise chickens?

YOST: I don't know. My dad was kind of a inventive-type person, kind of a beat-the-system-type person.

MINGO: Did they do victory gardens during the Second World War?

YOST: You know, my parents didn't. I can't remember anybody on 11th Street doing it, because there just wasn't that much room. But my grandfather, who lived at 1114 C Street, also kept rabbits, which was also good meat, and you didn't have to spend ration coupons for it. Because during the war everything was rationed. I still have old ration books—sugar, meat, butter, shoes...

MINGO: You still have ration books?

YOST: Somewhere!

MINGO: Well, if you find those, I'm sure there's somebody interested in them. I don't think you could use them for anything anymore!

YOST: I even have an old D.C. Transit bus token. To ride the streetcar on Sundays, you could buy a pass. I think it was like a dollar, dollar ten, something like that, and you could ride all week, anywhere you wanted to, on that pass. And I think streetcar fare and bus fare at the time was maybe twelve cents to ride.

MINGO: To go long distances?

YOST: Oh, yes. Glen Echo amusement park was located out Macarthur Boulevard, and you would take the #20 Cabin John from Union Station, go all the way through Georgetown, and you could go from 529 11th Street to Glen Echo Park for twelve cents.

MINGO: And you did that a lot? You said Glen Echo was a big resource for recreation?

YOST: Well, we went out there a lot because of the swimming pool.

MINGO: Was that the closest pool, or the most desirable?

YOST: Let me see, there was a pool at Anacostia Park, between Sousa and the 11th Street bridge. And I worked down there two summers as a lifeguard. But after they integrated—you have to remember that when they integrated the pools in D.C., Glen Echo was in Maryland, so their pool wasn't integrated. And I worked at Glen Echo a summer and a half as a guard out there. It was really silly, because it took us over an hour to get there by streetcar or bus, and on your day off, you would still go to the pool. It was totally stupid. And of course we probably invented blow-drying, because when you got out of the pool, if your hair was wet, two trips on the roller coaster and your hair was dry! Either that, or—they had these airplanes that were up on a platform that you allegedly steered. Toward the end of the season, the trees would grow over this platform, so the big deal was who could get the plane out farthest enough with these rudder-things that you steered with to either hit the tree or grab the tree. I think now it's just lucky none of us fell out of those stupid things. But you didn't think about it—I mean, you were sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, and you had the world by the tail—or by the airplane, whichever! [Laughter.]

MINGO: So they had amusement rides at Glen Echo, and the pool, and also—

YOST: There was also a Spanish ballroom where they had dancing, and later on in the '50s they had sock hops, and I guess in the mid-'50s, the park had an arcade, a little restaurant where you could buy hot dogs, hamburgers, cotton candy, the whole nine yards. Later on they put in a kiddies' park. When I was a kid, from maybe five up, the only thing a small child could ride out there was the carousel, which of course is still there. The carousel is really the only thing of the original amusement park that's still there. We were out there yesterday. The old guard house for the pool is still there, but the pool they filled in, because too many of the developments in the neighborhood had pools. It was just a huge pool—well, not by today's standards, but by '40s and '50s standards, it was a huge pool, with a big fountain and an island in the middle, a diving well, a big slide. Everybody wanted their kid to come down that slide. And the kid would get up there, and take one look, and of course from the top it looked a hundred times worse than what it really was. This was an old metal slide that had the water running down it, not like the slides you find in pools now. And the kid would get up there, and mom was standing at the bottom waiting for him to come down, and there was no way he was going to come down. And so, being a guard, that meant you backed up the line, you climbed up the ladder, and you grabbed the kid and you came down the slide with him! And he was screaming and yelling, and you figure, man, dunk him so he won't go up there again, because I'm really tired of going down the slide! Even if you didn't go under the water, you made sure he did! [Laughter.]

MINGO: So that was part of your duty as a guard.

YOST: No, dunking the kid was not part of your duty, but it was certainly a way to keep away from the slide!

MINGO: Keeping the line moving, anyway...

YOST: They had a kiddies' pool and a 'sand beach.' And then they had this stream of shower things that you had to go through before you could go to the pool, and a place where you could wash off when you came off the sandy beach. Glen Echo was quite the place to go. I mean, it's nothing like Kings' Dominion or Busch Gardens or even Six Flags, but for its time it was very unique. There again, after integration in Maryland, it wasn't supported.

MINGO: Was admission charged?

YOST: No. When you went on the streetcar, I think it was twelve cents D.C. fare and maybe ten cents you had to pay from the Maryland fare for the ride from Georgetown out to Glen Echo. And that was the end of the car line, the Cabin John line. But there was no admission, none whatsoever. You would go out there on Sundays and the line would be forever to get into that pool.

MINGO: Did you pay for any of the rides—

YOST: Each ride—

MINGO: But the pool was free?

YOST: No, the pool you paid, I think it was 25 or 30 cents to swim, and the pool was open from 10:00 to 10:00. To be honest with you, I don't remember what it cost, because it didn't cost me anything—I worked there!

MINGO: What were you paid for that?

YOST: I think minimum wage was \$1.12 an hour...

MINGO: So that's what you got! And you probably worked about six hours?

YOST: It was an eight-hour day. And then you would rotate, one week you'd have a half-day off, the next week you'd have two whole days, I don't remember exactly...

MINGO: So when you went out there, would some of your family go along?

YOST: When I was little, my mom and dad would take me.

MINGO: But when you were working, you'd just go.

YOST: I was old enough to go by myself. As a matter of fact, we took my granddaughter out there yesterday and we really talked up riding on the carousel. The animals are three rows deep, and the outside row used to be stationary, because they used to have this thing where you could grab for the brass ring.

They have all kinds of animals on there. Yesterday we rode an ostrich and a rabbit and a tiger and a lion. What was so special to me about the lion was that every time I would go to Glen Echo, that was the only thing I wanted to ride was the lion. So my mother took me on the lion, I took my daughter on the lion, and yesterday I had my granddaughter on the lion! So there's four generations that have been on that carousel.

MINGO: On that lion! And I hope it continues with more. So, your schooling—up through high school anyway—was on the Hill, and initially you went to where?

YOST: I went to the old John Tyler, which they tore down and replaced with the new one. That was kindergarten, first, second and third grade. And then we crossed 11th Street to 12th and G where the old Cranch—I think it's now a telephone switching station that's located there, I'm not sure, it's telephone something. Cranch is torn down now. That was fourth, fifth and sixth grade. And most of the kids were within walking distance, in fact, all the kids were, because we all went home for lunch.

MINGO: Really? So your school day was, what, 8:00 to 4:00?

YOST: 9:00 to 12:00 and then you came back from 1:00 to 3:00, because you'd go home for lunch. At the new John Tyler we were the first class—sixth grade, either '49 or '50—to graduate. From John Tyler I went to the old Hine. When I went there, my homeroom was on the third floor, which was condemned and had been for two years. The old Hine towers were still there. You know, they tore it down but at one time they were thinking about making it a historical landmark because it was so old. In front of the old Hine, they tore down Wallach where my father, who was born and raised on the Hill, went to school. My dad was born in 1903 so I have no idea when he went to Wallach, but anyway, it was still there the first year I went to Hine. From Hine I graduated in the ninth grade, and tenth, eleventh, twelfth grade, then, were high school, where I went to Eastern.

MINGO: Was Eastern the closest high school for you then?

YOST: Yes, and there was no school bus. There again, we used public transportation. We went to the Car Barn or to the business office in the school to buy tickets—

MINGO: That's the Car Barn on East Capitol Street?

YOST: On East Capitol Street, yes. We rode the streetcar down to Barney Circle, which is no longer there.

MINGO: And where was it?

YOST: It was right before you crossed Sousa Bridge. So you rode the streetcar to Barney Circle, where you caught a Mount Rainier bus that stopped in front of Eastern. So we rode public transportation back and forth to school, or we walked.

MINGO: It would take you how long to walk?

YOST: Probably about a half hour. Now, when I went to Hine, I left my house, went through the alley, picked up my girlfriend who lived on 10th Street, went through the alley from 10th over to 9th and picked up my other girlfriend, went through the other alley to 8th Street, and there were five of us that all went to school together. When we got over to Eastern, they had a cafeteria over there and we did stay in school all day, with the school lunches and everything. I think the school lunch was maybe a quarter?. Anyway, for three years my mom packed two sandwiches for lunch and my friend Donna had lunch money which she never spent, which we saved, because the extra sandwich in my lunch—

[TAPE 1/SIDE 2]

MINGO: Now, at some point in your career is when school integration took place.

YOST: Yes.

MINGO: Excuse me, before we talk about that, though—you were going to the public schools. Were there also private schools on the Hill at the time?

YOST: Not that I know of.

MINGO: Any church-related schools?

YOST: Yes, St. Peter's, which is at 3rd and C, had a school—as a matter of fact, they still do. So that was a parochial school. St. John's and Gonzaga....

MINGO: High schools.

YOST: And then there was a Catholic girls' school somewhere downtown....

MINGO: So the only other things available would have been parochial schools. There weren't a lot of other schools.

YOST: Private schools, not that I recall.

MINGO: Those are more recent.

YOST: Yes.

MINGO: So most people were going to the public schools--

YOST: Oh, yes.

MINGO: And probably—how large was your average class size, do you think?

YOST: I graduated in January—we were the last class to graduate in mid-term—of '57, and there were probably 600, but at June graduation, there would be more, close to 800 or 900.

MINGO: And in the individual instruction classrooms, how many?

YOST: Probably, 25, 30 a class, depending upon the classes you were in and the program. You could take an academic program, which was college prep; you could take a business-related program, which for the boys included shop and that kind of thing, and for the girls would include typing and shorthand. And I think they had a general program, which was probably for people who were slow learners. I never knew anybody who was in it—I know it was there.

MINGO: Were the class sizes about the same in your grade school?

YOST: Oh my God, that's been so long ago, I'm going to be honest with you, I don't remember. I can't remember a class being much more than 25, 30 kids. But you have to remember, too, that back then, I think the problems they're having in schools now, either in D.C. or no matter where you are, is discipline. And Lord knows, we were no angels. If there was trouble, we either started it or knew who did. At Eastern, there was detention. If you got into too much trouble, you stayed an hour after school in detention hall and you better show up there. So discipline was not a problem, and if there was a problem, it was solved the very day that the problem occurred. And this was true in grade school, junior high, everywhere. If a teacher said, "You'd better straighten up or I'm going to send you to the principal's office," you straightened up. That was the threat that you did not want to happen. And right now, it doesn't exist.

MINGO: Very different atmosphere, I think, in that regard. So when they integrated the schools, did it happen without any problem?

YOST: No. According to the newspaper, it happened without a problem. I think the biggest mistake that they made in integration, particularly in the public schools, was—it was all at once. With my friends, here we had been in school eleven years and it was an all-white school. And like I said, because of the redevelopment efforts in Southwest, Southeast became predominantly black very quickly—overnight. Well, not quite that bad—

MINGO: But within a year's time?

YOST: Absolutely. So, you left school on Friday and it was all white, and when you went back there on Monday, Eastern was over half black.

MINGO: Now, how could they do that in the same space?

YOST: They rezoned. A lot of the lower classes were rezoned to Spingarn or Cardozo, which were all-black high schools at the time. So there was a lot of rezoning done for the population shift. We stayed, but a lot of the white student population in the lower grades started using addresses in Anacostia to go to Anacostia High School, which in comparison to Eastern was all white at the time. At integration, Anacostia was not what it is today. Anacostia was the place to be, Anacostia, Congress Heights....anything across the river. But, integration—all social activities in the high schools were cancelled because there was just so much trouble. We had a senior prom that was very poorly attended. It was down at the Statler Hilton—the hotel is still there, it's at 16th and K somewhere—but it isn't the Statler Hilton anymore. And I don't even think half of the class went. I was a cheerleader, and my dad made me quit that because you had to get to and from the games on your own, and any football game, basketball game, baseball game, any sporting event was almost sure to end in a fight. And my dad said, "You're not doing this anymore because you're going to—" Well, he was actually afraid for my safety. For three years I played piano for the chorus, and they performed at local high schools and sometimes at functions at night, but then a parent would always get you there and bring you back. All the other social activities finally went through the local churches. Epworth Methodist Church, which is at East Capitol by Lincoln Park—it's not Epworth anymore—they had MYF, which was Methodist Youth Fellowship. St. Peter's had a youth organization. The church I attend, Reformation, had Luther League, and St. Mark's, the Episcopal Church, had a youth organization. And of course, at this point in time, a lot of the white families had moved out of D.C. to the suburbs. So that each of these different churches didn't have that much youth in there, so we would get together, the four groups, and go places and do things. And anything we did socially was more or less done that way, because at the schools, it just didn't happen. There were several incidents—my very good friend had her clothes stolen in the gym, another one was beaten up very badly in an alley, people were knifed in school. And you know, it's a sad scenario, but like I told my husband, the only thing that's really changed, I think, in the public schools, in terms of discipline for lack of a better word, is the choice of weapons. I mean, this is still happening in schools, and the sad part of it is that most of the schools that they wanted to integrate are still segregated. Eastern is 100 per cent black now. I graduated from Eastern High School in January of 1957, and you could not pay me enough money to walk back in that building. I would fear for my life.

MINGO: In your class, of the 600 who graduated, about half of those were African-American, half white, or--?

YOST: We were half white. It was the lower classes—I should have brought my yearbook. It's somewhere too.

MINGO: I'm sure the Project would be interested in things like yearbooks. Not having been here during that period, I'm wondering whether the students who were transferring—presumably, they were already having problems in those schools—

YOST: Well, what they were saying—and this was true—was that there was a difference in the educational levels. My senior year in high school, I never brought a book home. I didn't have to—it was relearning things that I had already learned, which really hurt me when I went to college, because it was—oh, my God, I have learn how to study again. Because I never did—for a year.

MINGO: Because the students in the influx were not up to your level?

YOST: The influx of students from Spingarn, Cardozo, wherever, in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade were just not at the same educational level as the students in the all-white school.

MINGO: And they couldn't be put back?

YOST: And they didn't put them back—they held the white population back trying to bring the black population up to par, and it's really a shame. I look at the kids in my neighborhood now—they get on the school bus, they don't have books. It really makes you wonder where the public school system—I don't care whether it's in the District or Maryland or even Virginia—where's it going? To me, it's a steady downhill process. My daughter went to kindergarten, when I decided to get up and get her there, but when I saw what was happening in kindergarten, I said no---and she went to private school for twelve years.

MINGO: In Maryland?

YOST: In Maryland. But when she was in twelfth grade, she was on what they call a concurrent enrollment program at Prince George's Community College, which there again is predominantly Afro-American, and she was taking English 101, and the professor in the class could not believe that she was still in the twelfth grade of high school. That was the difference between kids coming from public schools and private schools. And she went to a church-oriented school.

MINGO: As you describe this, it seems like obviously, a set-up that was not going to be successful, doing this so quickly.

YOST: Well, I think it was something that was just—it was accomplished overnight. And had they started, maybe, at the lower grades and gradually, year by year, month by month, even. But it just didn't work....

MINGO: And social mixing didn't happen either?

YOST: Oh, no, not at all. The whites and the blacks were very resentful of each other.

MINGO: I'm sure the black students didn't like being sent away from—

YOST: Well, they didn't like being sent away from their schools—

MINGO: In their senior year, for sure—

YOST: Well, I think for the most part, when integration occurred, if you were in your senior year, regardless of the redistricting or zoning that occurred, you were allowed to stay. But I am quite sure that my mother stood on the porch almost every day praying for me to come home in one piece. It was that bad. And like I said, up until then, Eastern—and probably Western, which is over in Georgetown—had always been the two top high schools in the District. I mean, they had the best of everything—education, football, baseball, you name it. And that was it. Actually, old Western High School is now Duke Ellington School for the Performing Arts.

MINGO: Oh, is it?

YOST: That's the old Western High School. And of course, our main rivals were across the river in Anacostia—the Anacostia Indians and the Eastern Ramblers. That was the big football game of the year, and not to be able to go to that was really a crushing blow [Laughter].

MINGO: I'm sure being a cheerleader, that was hard to take.

YOST: I still wanted to do it, but my father just said, "Absolutely no, you're not going to get involved with anything." Because like I said—

MINGO: Well, the total lack of familiarity of these populations just didn't help—

YOST: Like I said, it happened so fast that there was just a lot of resentment.

MINGO: Also, the moving of people from Southwest was because there was affordable housing in Southeast, I guess. And was the affordable housing already there?

YOST: In Southeast? Yes, there were the projects, and there's the Arthur Capper neighborhood down there on M Street. And then along M Street and 6th—you can see it when you come on 6th Street off of the Southeast/Southwest Freeway—they built a lot of high-rise apartments, but it was all low-income housing. And within ten, twelve years, it was all slums again. Within ten, twelve years, you ended up with the same thing they tried to clean up in Southwest. Southeast was in the same shape it is now. Like I said, a lot of people left the Hill because of that. As a matter of fact, all of my girlfriends that I went all the way

through school with, some of them from first grade—my best girlfriend from seventh grade, she lived over on Kentucky Avenue right off of Lincoln Park, once she graduated from high school, her family, everybody moved. I think the only reason my parents didn't was my dad was still working for the Department of Interior Geological Survey down at 18th and F. At the time they were talking about moving the whole facility to Denver, and I guess he maybe thought that that would be happening. Of course, instead, they moved it to Reston, Virginia, but anyway—close but no banana! And I was away at college at Western Maryland, which is no longer Western Maryland. They've since renamed it and I don't even know what the name is. But they stayed. He still had bus transportation back and forth to work.

MINGO: And you were the youngest child?

YOST: I'm the only child.

MINGO: So the school was not an issue, and they were active in this parish, at Reformation.

YOST: They were very active. Like I said, we joined Reformation in 1945.

MINGO: And you still come in on Sundays.

YOST: I come in every Sunday. I've sung in every choir they've ever had over there [laughter].

MINGO: Were you ever in the Capitol Hill Chorale?

YOST: No.

MINGO: I thought you might have been, with that background. Now, how does this beginning of the shift in population tie in with home rule? Did that start at about the same time?

YOST: I really don't know.

MINGO: Did people ever say, "If we had home rule, if we had situations where we could take care of District citizens rather than having to refer to Congress--" Did people talk that way, did they want to make that kind of change?

YOST: No, I honestly don't remember. I was away at school. And you have to remember, too, that when I was younger and I was growing up here, D.C. was run by commissioners, I think there were either three or five. I'm just not into politics at all. And I don't know—the first mayor was Walter Washington, and I don't even—well, that had to be the '60s, or somewhere around in there. And of course, after him was Marion Barry. I'm not sure how much good he did for D.C., but that's another story!

MINGO: Well, initially, he had—

YOST: He had some good ideas. And after him was that Sharon Pratt. And I think the guy that's the mayor now—what's his name?

MINGO: Anthony Williams.

YOST: Anthony Williams—he's the fourth mayor, because Barry served two terms. But in terms of politics and home rule...

MINGO: So that wasn't an issue for people.

YOST: No. If my parents ever got involved in it, I don't remember them talking about it. Like I said, I was gone by then.

MINGO: So you went to college, and you married right after college. So you never came back and lived here. But you came faithfully to church here.

YOST: Well, I came in D.C. a lot because my parents still lived here. And then probably more than most, because by that time my parents were up in age. I would come in and pick them up and take them to the grocery stores and things like that, over in our area. Or maybe just come in to sit on the front porch and swing! [Laughter.]

MINGO: Yes, we were talking earlier about the houses with front porches and what an asset that was.

YOST: My next house will have a front porch with a swing. That is one thing I miss most about—

MINGO: Well, now of course, there's air conditioning, and then there wasn't. So you must have spent a lot of time outside.

YOST: No, not really. My mom had a system. She was a housewife. When they were first married, she was a beautician, but decided when my dad made \$300 a month, she would quit work. If you can believe that! They were married 65 years, so I don't know when this big decision was made. But downstairs, she would open the house up in the morning when it was still cool outside, but then when the sun would come up and come in through the front windows, she would pull the shades down. In the dining room she had a big fan, which she kept going, which kept the air circulating. And that kept the downstairs cool. Of course, then you didn't have wall-to-wall carpeting, you took the wool rugs up in the summertime and you put linoleum rugs down. So the floor was always cold. If push came to shove, you could always sleep on the floor. Then in the kitchen, when she would be cooking dinner, there was another fan out there, which really didn't cool it off. I think it was mind over matter, but anyway... Then at nighttime, in the kitchen window we had a big exhaust fan—my father got it from some restaurant, don't ask me where. My father confiscated everything! He was the original packrat of Southeast. We would turn this exhaust

fan on, which would pull the hot air out of the house, and upstairs, it would cool it off within an hour. And by the time morning came you were sleeping under a sheet. It would cool it off that much. And the only thing these fans did was keep the air circulating, which is exactly what your ceiling fans are doing now. And the house that I lived in still isn't centrally air conditioned. There's ceiling fans in the bedrooms now, at least in the two bedrooms that they used, and in the living room downstairs. So they still have window units over there.

MINGO: But they still have that exhaust fan. I bet.

YOST: Oh, yes. The gentleman that bought the house is a landscaper on Capitol Hill. He lived there for two or three years before he bought it. Mark Holler—

MINGO: Oh, yes, I heard about this.

YOST: He had to move in a hurry. We had put it with Yarmouth Realtor up on 7th Street, and they called and said he had to leave in a hurry wherever he was living. The reason he loved 11th Street was that there was still a garage where he could keep all of his equipment. So we went over and started cleaning it up. The first guy that lived there just trashed it. There was a chandelier in the dining room and one lightbulb worked. I mean, does it take a college degree to screw in a lightbulb? And Mark had to get out and he needed a place to live. He was staying with a friend and he needed a place to live but he also needed a place to put all of his landscaping equipment. He put it in the yard. I said, "Mark, you can't put it in the garage, because we have Maryland tags and we can't park on the street." So as we finished, room by room, he moved in. This took about a month. He came over and helped us with some of it—I think he was eager, we were dragging our feet, let's hurry up and get this done, I want to move in. And at the end of the month, he was very upset and said, "Who's going to pay for the utilities and this and that? and I told him, "Mark, when the bill comes, you know what—we'll split it. I don't even care." And he lived there when we first rented the house. He lived there three years and I think the most he ever paid rent was \$825. And that's a three-bedroom house with living room, dining room, kitchen, with a garage that's very usable. And every time they'd say they were going to raise the rent, I'd say, "No, he'll move!" [Laughter] He paid his rent on time!

MINGO: There is something to be said for the faithful tenant, that's quite true. We were talking about the amenities like air conditioning, and I know you mentioned earlier an event at the end of World War II, when they turned the lights on again?

YOST: Oh, yes....

MINGO: Now, had they really kept a blackout situation? Streetlights were off and everything?

YOST: During World War II, there were no streetlights anywhere in D.C., and—

MINGO: There were lights but they were turned off?

YOST: There were lights, but they weren't used. My dad was an air raid warden. They had certain areas to patrol, and there were air raid drills. What you would have to do, when you would hear the sirens—most people had these God-awful green shades to keep the light in, and they were really tacky. My mom would never have them.

MINGO: Do you have any of those left?

YOST: No, never! My mom never even bought them. She said, "There's no way I'm putting those—" You don't even want to know what she called them! But anyway, you would pull these shades down, and then the air raid wardens would go around to be sure that there were no lights or anything shining through the windows—I mean, I guess that's what they were doing when they went around, I don't know. But I can remember, whenever there would be an air raid drill, we had an old radio, an RCA, and we would turn it on because the light from the dial—when it's really dark, you would be amazed what a little bit of light will let you do. And of course, this wasn't going to show through the shades. And the other thing we would do is we would go in the kitchen—we still had an old Arcola coalstove, furnace—and we would open the grates. So we had a little bit of light. And when it was all over, the first thing my mom would do would be to put those shades up. It was very different....And at the end of the Second World War, sailors were coming up from the Navy Yard, because that was an active barracks in the same way as 8th and I. And I didn't know why, because I was only six, seven years old, but anyway, everybody was cheering and we were out there with spoons beating on pans and all this other kind of thing. One of our neighbors had a car and took us down to—actually, it's 7th Street that runs between the Mall—and for the first time in how many years, the lights were on the Capitol and the Monument, the lights were on in D.C. And that's what my dad wanted to see.

MINGO: What a great moment.

YOST: Like I said, I don't know if I remember actually seeing it, or I remember—I know that's what we did, probably because I remember them talking about it.

MINGO: And lots of people, I assume, did that.

YOST: Oh, yes.

MINGO: And this was on V-E Day?

YOST: I don't know.

MINGO: You don't recall. But if you saw sailors marching, maybe that was actually the day.

YOST: I'm sure it was. I would imagine so.

MINGO: That was in August?

YOST: Something like that. 1944? I was probably six or seven years old, because I'll be 64 in September.

MINGO: Congratulations! That's very young these days....Do you recall other things about the war though you were only six or seven?

YOST: My father's brother was over in Europe during the war and—well, we don't have it anymore, but I had all these scrapbooks from when my Uncle Eddie would send me postcards and everything from Europe. And when he would write letters, you didn't get the letters, you got V-E mail, which was like a very beaten-up dark copy. Half of it you couldn't even read, but nevertheless, there was the letter from somebody.

MINGO: Because it had been censored and copied?

YOST: No, no, it was just copied. It was a cheaper, reduced in size—it didn't cost as much to mail, I would imagine.

MINGO: What was a letter then, three cents?

YOST: Oh, my goodness, yes, I think you're right.

MINGO: But they would have had to have been brought somehow by the military....

YOST: It was a military operation. They weren't censored in any way, it was just a copy. And some of them you could read, and some of them would just be all blurry. And I had kept a lot of those, too. As a matter of fact, a lot of the stuff was in the garage, and all went up in flames. We had a garage fire, I guess thirty-some years ago, and all my scrapbooks and all the stuff that I had from the Second World War—I said I had ration books, but I had them in the scrapbooks. The only thing I have left is the tokens, and I think the red ones were for butter and the blue ones were sugar.

MINGO: I don't remember. I remember the books of ration stamps, but I don't remember tokens.

YOST: And I think Daddy had to go someplace every month to get the books. Like I said, I really don't remember. I know meat was rationed—

MINGO: Gasoline was a big factor, and sugar. Did you collect things, like people used to collect fat and tinfoil?

YOST: Remember the old margarine you used to have, you'd buy it and it would be white, and you'd have to soften it and put the yellow coloring in it?

MINGO: For what purpose? I never did know...understand that.

YOST: Probably why my cholesterol is so high today--it's that yellow coloring!

MINGO: It could be.

YOST: I remember my mom doing that and then sitting there trying to make it square again to fit back in the box, which never happened. You'd just kind of wrap it up in wax paper, put it back in the fridge.

MINGO: You had to puncture that little gelatin capsule that had the yellow color in.

YOST: It was just powdery stuff. I remember when I was in first grade, I got rheumatic fever, and I couldn't go to school—in fact, I couldn't walk. And this medicine that I had to take was this powdery stuff that came in something that looked like a gum wrapper. I went to see *Sunrise at Campobello*, and it shows Roosevelt taking this medicine and I told my husband, my God, it's sixty years later and I can still taste that stuff. Like I said, my dad always had a connection, he was well-connected in Southeast. And a friend of his worked at Peoples at 7th and Pennsylvania. See, you couldn't buy a lot of candy, I guess because of the sugar. But this friend, whatever candy would come in, she would save him some. And if I took this medicine without too many complaints, then I got two sections of a Hershey bar to get the taste of it out of my mouth. [Laughter] The things you remember! But this went on for a year and a half.

MINGO: Speaking of having a friend working there, do you recall having relationships with people who were in the shops?

YOST: Well, my dad knew people who worked almost everywhere. If we would go shopping down at Kann's or Hecht's or Woodie's—for whatever reason, we never went to Landsbergh's much even if we had to walk right by it to get to Hecht's—my mom and dad had their clerk in every area of the department store. During the war, shoes were hard to come by because of the leather, and the woman who sold shoes at Kann's would call if she got some shoes in my mom's size. And Mom would go down and see if she liked them, and if she didn't she'd put them back on the shelf. In the meantime she would pull them and hold them for my mom. And of course, nylons—the real nylons that would run—I remember my mom taking beige-color thread and you got a little run that wasn't going to show anywhere, she'd sew them up.

MINGO: Or leg make-up?

YOST: Oh, yes. We tried that. We did it one night and I had on a white skirt, and when I got home the inside of that skirt was brown. My mother was about ready to kill me!

MINGO: We spoke of movies, later on television, going to Glen Echo. Were there entertainment things, neighborhood get-togethers of any sort?

YOST: I can remember down below where the old John Tyler was, there was a restaurant down there. I can't remember the name of it. But the people who lived next door, the Butlers, and then Miss Wright, who was my babysitter whenever I needed one and my grandmother wouldn't come down, and then the people who lived next—Well, most entertainment, for us at least, was centered around the home.

[TAPE 2/SIDE 1]

MINGO: Back to your entertainment—

YOST: A lot of it was just sitting on the porch, just talking. This is probably way before TV, because I think TV kind of cut down on people going back and forth, and being outside. But we would go get a gallon of ice cream, and everybody would sit out there and eat it until it was gone. And if we were still hungry, we just walked down there and got another gallon.

MINGO: By everybody, you mean neighbors, also?

YOST: For whatever reason, our house was always like Grand Central Station. There was always somebody there. And I think it was because my dad just had a way with people. My mom never worked, and whenever we needed extra money, Daddy would always take the three-to-eleven shift and paint. He was kind of a Mr. Fix-It, handyman type. So a lot of people in the neighborhood knew that, so therefore he got to know a wider range of people than just on our particular block. I think for the most part, blocks kind of stayed together. But even after I went away to school—as a matter of fact, even after I got married and left—people that I knew still would come by to see my parents. And when things went wrong, they would come and either want my dad to fix it or borrow some of his tools. He had a garage full of tools, he had his tools, his father's tools...He was just a general handyman. So there was always something happening at 11th Street.

MINGO: So there was a real community feeling in that sense. Did people have things like block parties?

YOST: We never did. I'm sure there were. According to things I've heard, and I'm not a historical person at all, there's Philadelphia Row, up off 11th Street by Lincoln Park, that was the first row houses built in the District. Later on, the houses that my parents lived in—they're on 11th Street, but they're the ones with the little front yards, I think they're seven or nine of them, (I lived there 22 years and I don't know

how many houses there are!) Anyway, they had porches and there is a front yard. Those houses were called Queen Anne's Row, so I've been told, and were there when Booth shot Lincoln. They went down to the Navy Yard. There are plaster walls, the floors are just plank wood, and they're very old houses. Now whether they're the second houses built in Southeast or for that matter, even if they're really called Queen Anne's Row, I don't know. The house that I lived in is the only one with brick steps and a concrete porch. My dad had that done before we came up with Southeast Historical Society, when you could make your own changes. He got tired of replacing the wood on the porch and painting it, so he put in that brick and concrete! [Laughter]

MINGO: A practical man! So, your parents lived here a long while, and I imagine a lot of their neighbors did, too?

YOST: My parents lived in that house from 1939 until 1990, when they moved into a retirement community over in Northern Virginia. By that time, the neighborhood had changed. It was becoming the white middle-class development again. Actually, if it hadn't been for some of the neighbors on the block—when I couldn't do it, they would take my mom to the grocery store, and there were two guys who lived across the street who would check on them, and this type of thing—they would never have been able to stay there as long as they did. 11th Street was never really that integrated, and what helped our particular block was that Chambers Undertakers was there. And Chambers owned either three or four houses that he rented. I know that 531, he owned, and I think, 533. So they bought up a lot of the property with the idea that he would tear it down and make parking for the funeral home. Of course, my dad knew old man Chambers, and told him if he tore the damn house down, he'd kill him [laughter].

MINGO: Well, that left no doubt!

YOST: They jokingly called my dad the mayor of 11th Street. As a matter of fact, he was born on 10th Street, one block from where he lived. But he doesn't remember the house, and we have no record of it. So he has always, from 1903 to 1990, lived on Capitol Hill.

MINGO: That's a remarkable story.

YOST: Unfortunately, you missed HIS historical—

MINGO: Yes, that is really a loss. Well, you were a young person most of the time, so what did you do as a young person? For instance, swimming—where did you learn to swim? Was there something through the school?

YOST: No, no. Schools didn't have swimming pools then. I learned to swim at the Ambassador Hotel, which at that time was at 14th and K. It's no longer there. The reason I started swimming was that, having

had rheumatic fever, being in the water and kicking and swimming strengthened my legs. So that's where I learned to swim. And of course, before they integrated the pools, we went almost every Saturday and Sunday, during the summer months, to the one down at Anacostia Park—that pool was still there. And then, like I said, I was a guard there and at Glen Echo. During the winter months, I swam competitively eight years for the Ambassador Swim Club, which later became Walter Reed. My swimming was the means to my walking.

MINGO: So this was a recuperating thing.

YOST: My dad would come home from work, fix dinner, and then take me by streetcar and then later bus, up to the Ambassador. What was really bad there is that the ladies' dressing room was on the upper level, and you had to go down steps to the pool, which I couldn't do. So I would have to come out, and then he would have to, well, I could kind of lean against him and come down the steps, using the railing. Then I had to take my braces off, and he'd just kind of throw me in the pool.

MINGO: This was from rheumatic fever—

YOST: Yes. I guess from second grade on, I really didn't do that much running and playing. And then he would have to bring me home in a cab, because there was no way to dry my hair from swimming, and this was during the winter months. But we went up there two nights a week for me to swim. Like I said, swimming was therapy.

MINGO: How long did it take you to be able to walk without braces?

YOST: I was in the seventh grade when I went to Hine, and I told my dad, "I'm not going to junior high school in braces." I would balance myself up the stairs without my braces—there's a railing over the stair well. And that's how I would balance myself and try to walk. But the first year that I had rheumatic fever, they brought me downstairs, set me down on the bottom step, because I wanted to see the Christmas tree, and I told my dad, "I'm going to walk, I'm six years old." And this I do remember, because it was a very humiliating experience. I said, "I'm going to walk into the living room to see this tree." And I pulled myself up on the bannister, but when I let go of that bannister, I just fell flat on my butt—I got nowhere fast! [Laughter].

MINGO: You knew you needed therapy!

YOST: I knew I needed help.

MINGO: What a blow for a youngster. So the neighborhood game playing came when you were older, then?

YOST: Well, I did a lot of sitting on the front steps watching.

MINGO: That may have contributed a lot to the popularity of your front steps, too.

YOST: Yes, I'm sure. I could play hopscotch. I couldn't run, I could walk, but when it came to running, I was always dead last. Oh, I forgot—we used to sit on the front porch and play jacks. I used to have blisters and scrapes from that concrete, sitting on the porch playing jacks. A couple years ago, I tried to play jacks—let me tell you, you cannot play jacks with bifocals! When I take them off, I can't see the jacks or the ball. That's a game that's no longer.

MINGO: Jacks were popular. How about jackstraws, that game where you had to move one straw without causing the others to fall, you tried to pull them out of a pile.

YOST: Are you talking about pick-up sticks?

MINGO: Oh, pick-up sticks, yes.

YOST: Yes. The other thing we used to play, particularly on our street because it was concrete, was cross-tag, where you had to keep your feet on two blocks of concrete and if somebody would double-cross you, you would have to run and you'd always get tagged and be 'It.' That was one of our invented games.

MINGO: I guess all you had to have was the sidewalk to do that.

YOST: So, tag, and of course, we played a lot of jump rope. A lot of jump rope.

MINGO: Could you do that out in the street?

YOST: No, on the sidewalk. Like I said, there was about four other girls in the neighborhood. Joyce, Barbara, Charlotte, and I can't remember the other girl's name. We were all about the same age. And so we kind of palled around together. But like I said, once they started moving to the suburbs—what happened with me is once people moved to the suburbs, for whatever reason, they never came back in D.C., because it was a place not to be. And I was away at school. So most of the kids I grew up with, I totally lost track of. There's only one that I still keep in contact with.

MINGO: You said going down to the Capitol after the war was a big event, but it wasn't such a big distance. Did you make use of the Smithsonian much as a youngster?

YOST: My dad took me there a lot. Most of the places I went, I went with my dad. My mom just wasn't into that. She was into the house—she got upset when her dust was out of place! [Laughter] Not necessarily the way her daughter keeps house, but anyway—

MINGO: Among the neighbors, were they, like your father, mostly government employees?

YOST: Yes, the D.C. government was a big employer. My girlfriend's father worked for a savings and loan—I want to say Jefferson, but it was even before Jefferson—off of Thomas Circle. They were the ones that lived off of Lincoln Park. Some other good friends of my parents lived on 12th Street, their son is about my age, in fact, they still go to Reformation, too, the daughter does. So two of my friends' fathers worked for savings and loans, and most everybody else was federal employees. The people who lived next to us, their daughter worked at Acacia Life Insurance, which was somewhere around Union Station. It's probably gone now. I know the building, but I don't know that Acacia is still there

MINGO: And you were speaking one time about a gas station. Now, with gas rationing, were there many gas stations?

YOST: Well, Distad's over at 10th and Pennsylvania has always been there. The Exxon station—I don't know when they built that. Downtown, there was a Exxon station—it was a big station. I know it was on Constitution Avenue. But the whole thing is torn down. I think it's where the Department of Labor is now. I have to go back—this is prehistoric! There's not only changes in buildings in Southeast—it's all over the city. The funniest thing for me is travelling Metro. I mean, I was born and raised in Southeast and I went every place by public transportation. And sometimes when I get on Metro and I come up out of that hole, I have no clue where I am. Because all my landmarks—and this is what I travel by—are gone! The big thing is the Beltway. As many times as I drive the Beltway, I invariably get off going the wrong way. I have absolutely, positively no sense of direction [laughter].

MINGO: And it's just a circle, so it's confusing.

YOST: My husband was on the Metropolitan Police, so he takes me places in Washington that I never even knew existed. I tease him and say, "Well, this is where the rich people live. We were never allowed in this neighborhood!" But he'll give me directions, and he'll name streets, and—well, if you give me landmarks, I'll find it. But for whatever reason, we just never bothered with street names.

MINGO: Well, you were very familiar with your environment.

YOST: Like I said, you were also above ground and could see what was happening—that helped!
[Laughter]

MINGO: Well, I think we've covered a lot of wonderful information. I think recommending you was a great stroke of genius on Karen Carlson's part.

YOST: The other thing we used to do a lot—this was when I was in junior high and high school—we used to go out somewhere off of Kalorama Road to the National Skating Arena. We used to roller skate. Now, National is since gone and the neighborhood got to be really bad, so we stopped going there and started going out to Bladensburg, which took us over an hour to get to by bus and streetcar.

MINGO: But you could go with a group of friends.

YOST: Yes, we went with a group of friends, and later on in high school, this one friend of mine had a car and we would go there. Roller skating was very popular. The rinks were always crowded. And the irony of this whole thing is that my daughter ended up being a competitive skater because one year when we were trimming the Christmas tree, she found my old roller skates and started skating around on them. It was right after Peggy Fleming won the Olympics, and she was trying to do all the jumps and spins, and I thought, “If you’re going to do this, let’s go and do it right.” So she started taking lessons over at old National Arena, which was in Alexandria, and skated competitively for fourteen years. So I guess I should have thrown my old roller skates away!

MINGO: I’m sure that was a wonderful experience for her and for the family. Well, having wonderful memories about being here, was there anything negative about your life on the Hill?

YOST: I don’t really think so. Of course, we sold the house two years ago, and in a way, I’m really sorry we did because I think if 529 11th Street was still rented, I would move back in a heartbeat. I would move right back into that house. My husband says he would never do it because every time he turned a corner or tried to fix anything, my father would be standing there telling him, “Damn it, you did it wrong!”

MINGO: Of course, this is familiar territory for your husband, too. He was in the Marines—

YOST: He was in the Marine Corps at 8th and I, and for two years, he was with the Metropolitan Police, up in old Number 6 Precinct. As a matter of fact, the first time I ever went to pick him up at Number 6, I drove by the precinct three times because it looked too good to be a police precinct. I was used to old Number 5, which had been falling down for 100 years. Of course, back then, everything was precincts, rather than districts like now.

MINGO: I guess this is still First District. I’m not too familiar with the boundaries.

YOST: I have no clue whatsoever.

MINGO: Well, your familiarity with places is wonderful.

YOST: If we lived on the other side of Southern Avenue, we would still live in Southeast.

MINGO: Well, this has been a very interesting and fruitful interview, and I thank you on behalf of the Overbeck History Project. If you do come up with any of these pictures or memorabilia that you'd like to share, I'm sure they'd be very happy to hear about that.

YOST: Like I said, I have pictures somewhere of Lincoln Park in the early '40s. The only thing I have that's really historical is my yearbook from Eastern, which is 1957. Oh, I have a newspaper that—well, Anacostia used to have an all-night prom. It was at the school. You'd start out formal and at some point in time, you could either go to the movies or go down to Anacostia and swim, whichever you want to do, or there was a miniature golf place down there, you could do that, too. Then you went back to the school, dressed informally, where they had a sock hop, if you remember sock hops, and then after that, they served breakfast and you went home. So the prom lasted from 8:00 on a Friday until 8:00 or 9:00 Saturday morning. So I have pictures of that.

MINGO: That would be very nice to share those with the people doing this project.

YOST: I didn't bring it because I wasn't sure what you would be looking for, but I can bring the yearbook and that over. That much I know where it is! Lincoln Park, I've lost. [laughter]

MINGO: Well, this interview will eventually be transcribed, and you'll get to look that over. So thank you—these have been wonderful recollections and I thank Karen Carlson for recommending you.

YOST: Well, thank you for having me.

END OF INTERVIEW