



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Jean Noel

Interview Date: May 1, 2006
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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

BARNES: I'm interviewing Ms. Jean Noel for the Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project and we are at her home in Wheaton, Maryland. Good morning, Jean.

NOEL: Good morning.

BARNES: You want to start by telling us about the years that you lived in Washington, and you can start with your being born there. If you want to tell us your birthday, that's nice. If you would rather not, that's okay, too.

NOEL: I was born at 511 F Street NE, on August the 28th, 1923. We lived there for about three years.

BARNES: For three years?

NOEL: Three, three. My mother had moved from Kansas with her parents to the DC area and my father was born in DC. They met in 1914. My grandparents by this time were living at 619 Sixth Street NE. My dad lived around—still—at 511 F Street. And they used to tease my mother because she was always outside, as my grandfather would say, flirting with that fool.

BARNES: Oh, with that fool. [Laughs]

NOEL: Right. But, anyway, so, at this point they married—1915. And, lo and behold, after a while we moved again to 649 G Street NE, which is where I spent probably about eight years. The thing there was that we were on G Street, between Sixth and Seventh. And then [between?] G and H Street there was an alleyway and in that alley there were people living. Most of them were new immigrants from Ireland and they took in—a lot of the women took in washing, mostly sheets. The alleyway, the court in the alley was loaded. And, of course, at this time, they did not have water—only from one central pump. And, of course, there was no electricity. The people lived there for quite a few years. Later black people moved into there as they came into the area. The thing that was great is that we were all friends. In the evening, we'd sit down in those, what were shacks, and just talk and have very interesting conversations because we were learning about other countries. One of the main things that we did was we'd go down to H Street and there was Mr. Pike's, right at the corner of the alley. And it was a deli, with soda fountain, newspapers, magazines, and a couple of booths in the back. And Mr. Pike never once chased us kids out. We were there, we would have Coke and sit there for a couple of hours and just plain talk.

BARNES: And how old were you then?

NOEL: I was about eight, ten, in that general area. At that point, people didn't chase kids off. They enjoyed us, too, to a point where the place got popular and then we couldn't stay as long. But, so.

BARNES: And at that time you were going to school.

NOEL: Right. No, I wasn't ... I did sixth grade at Ludlow.

BARNES: All the way from first to sixth at Ludlow?

NOEL: No, uh uh.

BARNES: No.

NOEL: I went first three years at Ludlow. Fourth grade and fifth grade were at Taylor.

BARNES: Oh, fourth and fifth at Taylor.

NOEL: Right. And, then, sixth grade I started out at Madison, but then something with the teacher ... Anyhow, we transferred back to Ludlow. The final sixth grade was at Ludlow.

BARNES: Uh huh.

NOEL: Then, I went to Stuart Junior High for three years. And that would put us close to Union Station and also the Capitol which is where we spent a lot of lunch hours. We'd go up to Union Station. Go up, get a Coke, go up behind the statues and sit forever and watch people. And there were some very interesting people coming in. About this time was the 1939 era, and people were traveling into the station and as we got ... One of the times when we were up at the Capitol, and at that point you could roam all around inside the Capitol—I believe there was one guard and that was it. We used to go up as far as we could towards the dome, and there was the little ladder. So, you weren't supposed to go any further. Well, we did. We stepped over the ladder and went up. And so we could see right up and look right at the picture in the dome. One Saturday morning a workman came up and we thought we were going to be chased out. And he said, "Would you kids like to see DC from outside the Capitol dome?" And he took us ... Said, "Okay." He said, "I can give you about 15 minutes up here." But, he said, "I think this will surprise you." And it did. The city looked so pretty from up above. I don't know. I just practically lived in the Capitol for quite a few years.

BARNES: And was this when you were still in grade school?

NOEL: No.

BARNES: Oh, junior high.

NOEL: This was—Junior high.

BARNES: Junior high school.

NOEL: Right. And this continued for ... I was in ninth grade and we'd go up to the band concerts. And one of the boys from school came up one night, a whole bunch of us, and we just sat there, talked and everything. And the guard said, "What are you kids going to do in here?" And, we said, "Nothing much, just look around." And we did. And he didn't say anything to us. But, I also had an uncle who worked in the Capitol. And he would be taking shorthand. And, lo and behold, when he would see us—because we had gallery passes and he would see us up in the gallery—he would motion, meaning, when he was finished, come down. And we went down and the first thing that they did when these men finished taking their shorthand was to order sandwiches and beer. And that's where I had my first taste of beer, was in the Capitol. [Interviewer laughs.] I had about that much, about an inch in a small glass. Vile stuff.

BARNES: You didn't like it.

NOEL: No. He would always then walk us home from up there. But, it was, the Capitol was just like home to us. We had free run.

BARNES: And this was in the 30s, the late 30s.

NOEL: Right. Yeah, uh huh. So. Then came the war and we ...

BARNES: World War II.

NOEL: I was in high school. Right, I was in high school when that started. But ... and we kept thinking this couldn't possibly happen, couldn't possibly happen to us. And we lived through it. 1941, when it happened, we were thinking football and then all of a sudden things changed. Boys as they graduated from high school went off to war. We went to work. And ...

BARNES: So, you went to—did you go to Eastern High School?

NOEL: Yeah, yeah, uh huh.

BARNES: Oh. And ...

NOEL: I graduated in February of '42.

BARNES: Oh, in the middle of the year.

NOEL: Right. Yeah. Oh, yeah. We had double classes going, there were so many children. And that ... I had my 60th recently. I had my 60th class reunion—65th.

BARNES: 65th.

NOEL: Recently. Yeah. And it was ... There were probably, maybe, I'd say 80 students there.

BARNES: Was that this past year?

NOEL: Yeah, it sure was. Yeah, uh huh.

BARNES: In 2005.

NOEL: Yeah, uh huh. [unintelligible] a picture of.

BARNES: So ...

NOEL: We just had the ...

BARNES: When you were at Eastern, was it overcrowded? Was that why ... did you go full days or half days or what?

NOEL: We went half days.

BARNES: Half days.

NOEL: Half days.

BARNES: And this was because there were so many students?

NOEL: It was kids, um-hmm, it was crowded. I would say we went probably from 8:30 to 12:30, something like this. I've forgotten really.

BARNES: So, you had the morning shift.

NOEL: Yep, uh huh.

BARNES: Well, how did wartime change Washington?

NOEL: Ah. Washington changed because we were not used to having military on the streets. We had ration cards for some types of groceries. Sugar was rationed. We also had stamps for shoes, and that's when Brazil first started making sandals. Because they shipped them over here and we did not need ration stamps to get those.

BARNES: From Brazil.

NOEL: From Brazil. But, it was, it was a time of that. By that time, I was working for—went to work right after that ...

BARNES: I mean, when you graduated from high school, you went right to work.

NOEL: I went right to work and it was for the Capital Transit Company and they were a union company at that time. I worked in the schedule department with six other girls. We were typing on IBM typewriters that had 28-inch carriages. That was the first that were developed for this purpose. And ...

BARNES: They were the old standards.

NOEL: They were the standard ...

BARNES: But with the expanded carriage.

NOEL: Carriage. Yes, uh huh. And this company, as I said, was unionized. The transit ... the bus drivers, the streetcar drivers were all unionized. They held a dance once a month at the Wardman Park Hotel. And we were, of course, part of the company, we got to go. So, we would go downtown. We would pick up soldiers, sailors, whatever, take them to the dance on the streetcar. And then after the dance, back on the streetcar, and say “Goodbye. Hope you enjoyed our evening.” But ...

BARNES: You were like a U.S.O.

NOEL: We did. Exactly. No. There was a group, there were about six of us girls that were working at the transit company and we just, the whole bunch of us would head downtown and pick up some guys. Try and do that today. Right. But, it was a good town. It always has been a good town. But, those days, I don't know, you were just ... your mind was elsewhere than in the city. You were thinking about the war overseas, what we were going to do. How we were getting beaten at that point.

BARNES: So, where did you shop at that time? Or ... you were still living at home ...

NOEL: Yeah, uh huh.

BARNES: ... while you were working ...

NOEL: Yes, um-hmm.

BARNES: ... during the war.

NOEL: Right. Once ... I had an aunt who was single and she shopped on H Street at what was the Piggly Wiggly which became the Sanitary which became the Safeway. And she would always go down there to shop. My mother shopped at the neighborhood grocery store at the corner of Sixth and F Street. And, while I think of that, there was a house, a large house catty-corner across F Street and there was one black man who lived with the people in that house. He came ... had his own entrance in the back. He worked at the Capitol, was a barber. And you never saw him come or go. You saw him come home from work, but you never saw him. He, evidently, went out very early in the morning. And he never had groceries so I assume he ate there. But, it was so unusual at that time to see a black man walking down F Street and going to work.

BARNES: So, the neighborhood at that time was not integrated.

NOEL: No, it was not. No, uh uh. It was much later.

BARNES: Much later. But, at one time it was ... you were speaking earlier about the children that you played with in the alley, but those were Irish. They were from Ireland.

NOEL: Right. Right. Yes, exactly.

BARNES: So, it was integrated with immigrants ...

NOEL: At that point.

BARNES: ... but not with blacks.

NOEL: No. That came later in the alleys.

BARNES: So, when ... after the war, it came. After the war? Or ...

NOEL: No. I think it was way before the war. Because they point blank decided this was not the right way to live, for people to live. And I think it was much before the war.

BARNES: That the black families were living in the alleys.

NOEL: Right. Uh huh. A long time before.

BARNES: A long time before the war.

NOEL: Yeah, I think so. Uh huh.

BARNES: Anyway, you were talking about what Washington was like during the war. Did it make a big difference in your family and your family's life? Did you have brothers that went to the war?

NOEL: I had one brother and he did go to war. Right out of high school. And he took pre-flight training in Pennsylvania, State College, Pennsylvania. And then went on to Wright-Pat [Patterson] Air Force Base. At that point, they determined that there was something wrong with one eye, so he did not become a pilot. He became a bombardier. Was out in Wenatchee, Washington, and the military had to pick the apple crop because so many of the men were at war. And, so, he was just set. He was on a ship, ready to ship out to the Pacific, and the war ended. So ...

BARNES: And he was able to come home?

NOEL: Yes. He ...

BARNES: He didn't stay in the Army.

NOEL: He did not stay in the service. No. He went to work when Goddard came in, the space program came into being. Before that he worked for radio. But, he worked for Goddard for many years.

BARNES: Well, after the war, did you continue working for the same company?

NOEL: Now let me go back and think. I worked for them ... that's where I met my husband. I worked for them for eight years. So, that was between, say, '42 and '50. In 1950 I stopped work, quit work for a short period of time, which is when we bought this house. And, then ...

BARNES: You met your husband when you were working for ...

NOEL: Capital Transit Company.

BARNES: Capital Transit. He was working there also.

NOEL: Yes, uh huh.

BARNES: And, was he a Washingtonian?

NOEL: No, he was from Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

BARNES: Oh.

NOEL: And had graduated from the University of Alabama. Ended up selling carpets in DC And, then, went to work for the transit company, which is where I met him. Uh. That wasn't my point. [Interviewee laughs.]

BARNES: But, you were married when? What year?

NOEL: We were married in September of 1946, after the war. During the war, he was in Alaska for three years. And when ...

BARNES: In the service?

NOEL: Yes. He was in the Army. He was paymaster up at Elmendorf Air Force Base. And one time they had to fly out to Aveck Island, which is where so many were stationed, to have the men sign for their pay. So that they could get paid while they were there. And, one time they were into a heavy fog, and they didn't have the type of equipment that we have today. They were shot at. And they were very fortunate. And he just thought then he would never fly again, and he didn't. No, never.

BARNES: Never in his life?

NOEL: No. After that, he did not. No. After we were married, I went overseas, visited. But, no. We traveled this country, all over the country. And we also traveled all of Canada, with the exception of the Northwest Territories. We went to Newfoundland five different times and up the coast of Labrador towards Greenland. But, no. And I'm off the track.

BARNES: Well, going back to being in Washington—when you were married, did you live in Washington at all after you were married?

NOEL: Yes. We lived at 3004 30th Street SE. The first year that we were married, the first few months, you could not get an apartment. There was still a shortage from the war. And we rented a room for the first few months that we were married. I think it was 30 V Street NW. I'm almost positive that's where it was. And then moved to 3004 30th Street SE.

BARNES: So, it was 3004 30th Street SE.

NOEL: Right, uh huh.

BARNES: So, that was across into Anacostia.

NOEL: No, this was further than that. Naylor Gardens. We were on the ... no, Naylor Gardens were here [apparently pointing out a location], we were across the road. And I want to say Hartford Street was in there also, but I can't be sure. But, no, uh uh.

BARNES: And you ... was it a house or an apartment?

NOEL: It was an apartment. There were six apartments there. And we were fortunate, we had a screened-in back porch at that time. And the rooms were nice sized. And I wish I had the closets in my house today that I had in that apartment. [Both laugh.]

BARNES: And, how long did you live there?

NOEL: Till 1950, when we bought this house.

BARNES: This house here in Wheaton ...

NOEL: Yes, uh huh.

BARNES: ... that you bought. And so you have been here ever since.

NOEL: Yep, I sure have. Right. We spent some time in Florida for several years, but we always came back here.

BARNES: Well, thinking again about your years in Washington. So, you were born there, and you didn't leave until 1950. So, there were a lot of changes in Washington from the days when you started, when you remember what life was like.

NOEL: Right. One thing that I truly remember is when they built the Supreme Court building. And they were hauling dirt out, they were hauling marble in. But, what they had done, before they even started that, was they put the most beautiful sidewalks completely around where that building was going to be. And you know what that meant. It meant that we skated. That was great skating. Within two weeks, they had signs up—No Skating, \$50 Fine.

BARNES: Oh.

NOEL: 50 dollars was a lot of money back in those days.

BARNES: Oh, yes.

NOEL: But, no, I remember that. And I remember, of course, when the Jefferson Memorial was built.

BARNES: You remember?

NOEL: That came later. Can't think of ...

BARNES: Oh, my goodness.

NOEL: Right. And I was working for Capital Transit at the time the Pentagon was being built. At that point, it was hectic at the Transit Company because we never got the amount of people that were going to be working there the following month until the middle of Saturday afternoon. And it meant changes to ...

BARNES: You mean the people that were going to be working on the Pentagon?

NOEL: *At* the Pentagon.

BARNES: Oh, at.

NOEL: Yes. As they finished parts of it, people, offices moved in. Before the whole thing was finished, people were moving in.

BARNES: So, how long did it take them to complete that? Do you remember?

NOEL: I don't remember.

BARNES: But, it was ... like you said, it was building one section at a time.

NOEL: Yeah, it was.

BARNES: And as they were built, they would put personnel in those. And it was your responsibility, your company ... Do we call it a company or an association? It's a company.

NOEL: A company.

BARNES: Company. It was their responsibility to ...

NOEL: Get the people to work.

BARNES: To get them to work. But also to keep payroll records and all of that. Did you have to do all of that, too?

NOEL: I did not do ... no. Because, you had so many operators and you had a separate payroll department. You also had a department for information, for claims, people getting hurt, that sort of thing. It was a big company.

BARNES: But, it would be what we would call like a personnel company today, where you hire people ...

NOEL: Yeah, I think so because your bus operators, streetcar operators, of which there were hundreds, were hired through that. Records were kept there.

BARNES: I see.

NOEL: Also, the change that people would put in the cash drawer, when they came to get on the streetcar and buses, all that money was brought into the building there. We were at 36th and M Street NW. But, we also had an entrance up on Prospect Street, which is right across from Georgetown University. A lot of times we would just wander over to Georgetown, sit around a tree, and eat lunch. We were not permitted to go down on M Street because they said there were too many drunks. It was that type of place then. In addition to that, we were not allowed to wear sandals to work or come without stockings on. That was absolute. But, during the war years, we just figured okay. We were having trouble getting shoes that we liked. So, one day, we all came in with leg makeup on and sandals, and nobody said a word to us.

BARNES: Because you couldn't get the shoes and you couldn't get the hose, the stockings.

NOEL: The stuff that they had was terrible. The old lisle stockings.

BARNES: What were they called?

NOEL: Lisle. L-I-S-L-E.

BARNES: Lisle stockings. So, they were heavy rayon, weren't they?

NOEL: Yes, they were and they were ugly. [Both laugh.]

BARNES: You didn't want to wear those.

NOEL: Right.

BARNES: So, I guess it would be your company became what we know today as the ...

NOEL: METRO.

BARNES: METRO system.

NOEL: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

BARNES: So, it just grew into that. But it was unionized from the beginning.

NOEL: It was, it certainly was. Right.

BARNES: That was really interesting. Because that would go back to 1942, is that when you started working for them?

NOEL: Yes, uh huh.

BARNES: In 1942.

NOEL: It went a lot further back than that, I'm sure.

BARNES: That it was unionized.

NOEL: Yes, it was.

BARNES: Well, when you got married then, did you stop working there?

NOEL: I worked there for four years after I was married.

BARNES: Uh huh.

NOEL: And then I quit. And then I was going to stay home.

BARNES: But.

NOEL: But—times changed. The Capital Transit Company was sold to a different owner and at that point they furloughed the entire schedule department. Which meant my husband was out of work. And he ended up going to work for the Veterans' Administration and that's when I went to work for what became NSA [National Security Agency].

BARNES: Oh, for what became NSA.

NOEL: Right. At that time, it was the Armed Forces Security Agency and we were at the Navy Communications Station on Nebraska Avenue NW.

BARNES: So, you continued to work in Washington.

NOEL: Yes. Till we moved in 1958. We moved to Fort Meade. And we could not say that we worked for NSA. You can now. But, we could not say that at that point. We said the Defense Department and everybody thought we were working at the Pentagon.

BARNES: I see.

NOEL: Which was interesting. You couldn't even tell your spouse what you were doing at this point. So, the people at NSA became your closest friends. [President Dwight D.] Eisenhower is the one who issued the order making the NSA.

BARNES: So, how many years did you work at NSA?

NOEL: It was over a period of—from 1950 until—I retired in '74. But I had a couple of year break in that period.

BARNES: Mm-hmm.

NOEL: So. Mm-hmm.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

[TAPE 1/SIDE 2 is blank]

TAPE 2/SIDE 1

BARNES: ... what summers were like for you and the kinds of things that you did on your summer breaks.

NOEL: We spent a lot of time, since my father did not get a vacation, we spent a lot of time in the museums. Also, in the Library of Congress and the Medical Museum. The Library of Congress intrigued us with all the books and, at that time, I believe there was only the one building. Once the Madison Building was built, it was easier to get in and out. But in the main building, there are—it's the art work when you first get into that museum. And, I don't remember anymore but there's something special on the left hand side where the escalator goes up. There's something special there. And, you turn to the back and look. There's another piece of artwork that is very special [unintelligible].

BARNES: So, the dome, the dome itself in the Jefferson Building is spectacular.

NOEL: It is. It really is.

BARNES: Yes.

NOEL: And ...

BARNES: So, then, didn't they build the Adams Building right behind it?

NOEL: Yes.

BARNES: It was the next one, right.

NOEL: Right.

BARNES: And, then, they built the Madison, which is the—

NOEL: Modern.

BARNES: The modern, law ... I always think of it as the law library.

NOEL: Exactly.

BARNES: Okay. Anyway, you would go to the Library of Congress, and then what other kinds of things?

NOEL: We would just walk from one museum to another. We would spend hours during the day in these various museums. One would be big diamonds, the rocks ...

BARNES: Oh, yes.

NOEL: Free, of course, that kind of stuff. We could see that type of stuff. The Medical Museum was so intriguing because you saw wooden legs, you saw wooden false teeth. You also saw actual fetuses preserved in formaldehyde. And I was so sorry when they moved that to Walter Reed. That is going to be moved back to Forest Glen. The decision has just been made within the last two weeks to do that.

BARNES: To Forest Glen?

NOEL: It will be in Forest Glen and they will have enough space that hopefully they'll be able to build a wing onto that building so they can update some things.

BARNES: So, when you went to—so, they were actually the Smithsonian buildings that ...

NOEL: Yes, they were. Mm-hmm.

BARNES: ... that you spent your summers exploring.

NOEL: Exploring.

BARNES: And you could go by yourselves.

NOEL: Yes, we could walk from home to the Mall and we did a lot of walking. We also, when my dad had time off, we visited—he'd take us down to Point Lookout Lighthouse once in a while. We were always going to the cherry blossoms. There wasn't any festival at that time, I don't believe. And to Annapolis. Up to Philadelphia to see the Liberty Bell. He was a great one for taking us and showing us these things.

BARNES: But, he didn't have a vacation. Was that—what was his—where did he work?

NOEL: He worked at this point for American Ice Company.

BARNES: American Ice.

NOEL: Right. Which was ...

BARNES: So, delivering ice.

NOEL: Yeah. And going in at 2:00 in the morning, making sure that things were right, that the ice was freezing.

BARNES: Uh huh.

NOEL: And [unintelligible].

BARNES: But, when electricity came in then you—did he lose his job? Or ...

NOEL: No.

BARNES: ... what he did.

NOEL: Oh, no, uh uh, no. Because that went on for years. He retired I think about age 70. And they had the magnificent retirement of, I think, about \$400 a month, something like that at that point.

BARNES: Mm-hmm.

NOEL: [Sighs.] Now, I thought of something else.

BARNES: But, anyway, so he worked for this ice company—and you mentioned that, earlier in the interview, that you didn't have, that other houses didn't have electricity or water. Did you all have electricity and water in your house?

NOEL: We had—this is when we lived on Morris Place NE.

BARNES: On Myers?

NOEL: Morris, M-O-R-R-

BARNES: Morris, Morris Place.

NOEL: And my grandmother lived right around the corner on Sixth Street. We had electricity at that point. But, I was always at my grandmother's at 4:00 in the afternoon in the winter so I could see the lamplighter coming to light the lights on Sixth Street, which seems strange.

BARNES: Mm-hmm.

NOEL: They had—at this point, they also had gas lights in the house. The big thing—and also in the bathroom. And for years they left that one in the bathroom because the backing of it was such a beautiful piece of porcelain. I often wonder, did they have—of course in the houses you turned the thing off and on yourself. Now, out on the street, I often wondered, did they have a central point where they could turn it off so you didn't have a lamplighter in the morning. I don't know that.

BARNES: Oh. That is an interesting question.

NOEL: I just wonder. You know, when I mention this, I often think, did they have a point? Because the gas company was in DC. The building itself was down around 26th Street and—down on the waterfront, somewhere in that area. But, I often wonder about that.

BARNES: Well, at that point in time, you seem to have had a house that had all of the modern conveniences, but that was not true in the ...

NOEL: No.

BARNES: ... in the alley houses, for instance.

NOEL: Right, exactly. Uh huh. We had a toilet that flushed. [Laughs.]

BARNES: You had a toilet that flushed instead of one that you go outside and use.

NOEL: [Unintelligible]. No, hmm-mm.

BARNES: So, in your memory from childhood on, you had indoor plumbing, you had water, and you had electricity.

NOEL: Yes, uh huh.

BARNES: In your memory.

NOEL: Right. Mm-hmm. Sure did.

BARNES: So—

NOEL: Not in my grandmother's house.

BARNES: But not in your grandmother's house!

NOEL: She was on Sixth Street and that's where they had gas lights.

BARNES: Uh huh. Only gas lights.

NOEL: Yep, mm-hmm.

BARNES: Do you recall when she got electricity?

NOEL: No, I don't.

BARNES: No, you don't. Well.

NOEL: No, I don't.

BARNES: Well, there's not any reason why you should except I was wondering if it came in during the period of time that it would have made an impression on you.

NOEL: Mm-hmm.

BARNES: And it would have, if it had ...

NOEL: Right.

BARNES: ... if it had come along in your youth when you were growing up.

NOEL: Mm-hmm. Right.

BARNES: Did you go to movies? Were there theaters?

NOEL: There were—we had the Apollo, which was on H Street. Also, the Princess Theater and, later, the Atlas came in. And I understand the Atlas is being refurbished and ...

BARNES: Yes. Part of it is already operating.

NOEL: Mm-hmm.

BARNES: And they have plays there and they have dance groups.

NOEL: Mm-hmm.

BARNES: And the actual theater itself is being renovated now.

NOEL: Right.

BARNES: So, it's done a lot for H Street.

NOEL: Mm-hmm. Good, because H Street was such a thriving community when I was growing up. The stores, Wahl's Department Store, I learned to knit at Wahl's Department Store.

BARNES: Was it Walls, W-A-

NOEL: W-A-H-L-S.

BARNES: H-L-S.

NOEL: Right.

BARNES: Wahl's Department Store.

NOEL: Yes. And, also, catty-corner across the street on H Street there was Blechmans, I think.

BARNES: What was it?

NOEL: I think it was Blechmans, B-L-E-C-H-M-A-N-S. I'm not positive that that's ...

BARNES: Blechmans, okay.

NOEL: I'm not positive of that spelling. But, they moved to Anacostia eventually.

BARNES: And what kind of store was that?

NOEL: Just general merchandise, just clothing ...

BARNES: Uh huh.

NOEL: This type of thing.

BARNES: And were there furniture stores on H Street?

NOEL: I think there may have been one. There was—no. I remember Worth [?], The Darling Shop. That was ...

BARNES: Darling?

NOEL: Darling Shop, and they had jewelry. I think that type—I don't remember.

BARNES: So you did most of your shopping, really ...

NOEL: On H.

BARNES: On H. And there was a shoe store there.

NOEL: Uh, Fletcher Shoe Store. As a matter of fact I have one of the shoe horns in my dresser right this minute.

BARNES: And how do you spell that?

NOEL: F-L-E-T-C-H-E-R.

BARNES: Fletcher.

NOEL: F-L-E-T-C-H-E-R.

BARNES: Because that came up in another interview that I did.

NOEL: Right. And there was also one called The Boot Shop.

BARNES: Oh. I haven't heard of that one.

NOEL: I think so. And, of course, there was Jenny's Ice Cream Parlor.

BARNES: Oh, my goodness.

NOEL: And it later became The Rendezvous when Prohibition went out.

BARNES: Uh huh.

NOEL: And what became Kavakos was also an ice cream parlor. And they were owned by the Chaconas family. [ed: Club Kavakos, 727 H Street NE; see interview of Goldie Mamakos.]

BARNES: Chaconas?

NOEL: Right, mm-hmm. Greek.

BARNES: Oh.

NOEL: Mm-hmm.

BARNES: I don't know how to spell their name.

NOEL: C-H-A-C-O-N-A-S. At that time, we had—there were a lot of Greek people in this DC area.

BARNES: Oh, really?

NOEL: Yes, there were.

BARNES: In fact, there were a lot of different ethnic groups.

NOEL: Yes, there were. Mm-hmm.

BARNES: So there—and you lived near the Irish immigrants.

NOEL: Right.

BARNES: And the Greek.

NOEL: The Greeks.

BARNES: And—

NOEL: We had a lot of Jewish people that were the storekeepers ...

BARNES: A lot of Jewish.

NOEL: ... that the children—whom we went to school with. When I thought—a lot of Italian families.
[Unintelligible name]

BARNES: Italians, yeah.

NOEL: Leonard Cacherrio [sp?], Philip Somebody. Right.

BARNES: So, the first Italian family you mentioned, what was the name?

NOEL: Cacherrio.

BARNES: Oh, my goodness.

NOEL: [Laughs.] I never—

BARNES: You'll never be able to spell that one.

NOEL: No, absolutely not.

BARNES: Cacherrio.

NOEL: Right. No. Uh huh. Leonard Giuffrida [sp?]. That was another.

BARNES: My goodness.

NOEL: Right. Mm-hmm.

BARNES: So, did you know any of the children. I mean, you went to school with the children ...

NOEL: Mm-hmm. Absolutely. We didn't realize we were the United Nations at that point.

BARNES: Oh, my goodness. And everybody cooperated and ...

NOEL: Sure.

BARNES: ... did things together. What kind of films were they showing? Did you go from early, like when you were six, seven, and eight, and on into high school? Did you go movies and films?

NOEL: Saturday afternoon.

BARNES: Oh, really?

NOEL: Saturday afternoons you could be in there from 12:00 till 6:00. It was just serials, variety shows, newsreels, like that, that type of thing. But, you saw a main feature. Probably—I remember when Buck Rogers came out—in the Twentieth Century. [Laughs.]

BARNES: Buck Rogers.

NOEL: Tom Mix.

BARNES: Tom Mix.

NOEL: The Green Hornet.

BARNES: Oh, yes.

NOEL: All those type things. Right.

BARNES: And did you go with your friends? Or your brother?

NOEL: Yeah, mm-hmm. My brother went, but there was also a group of us that went together.

BARNES: A group went. So, you didn't have to go with your parents.

NOEL: Oh, no. My parents very seldom went to a movie.

BARNES: Oh. What did they do for recreation? Did they go to dances or what?

NOEL: At this point, my father went to work at two o'clock in the morning. And he sometimes didn't get home—in summertime, he may not get home till three in the afternoon.

BARNES: Oh, my.

NOEL: So. More than that, the recreation, really, was going to my grandmother's. This is when I was eight or nine years old. Was going to my grandmother's on Sunday afternoon, every other Sunday was go to grandmother's. And the men played cards in the afternoon. That was recreation for them. And the recreation for the women was talking or quilting. My mother did a lot of quilting. They did that. My mother did a lot of embroidery type work.

BARNES: So, a lot of handwork.

NOEL: A lot [unintelligible] handwork.

BARNES: And, so, you learned that as well.

NOEL: Yes, we did. And another thing, in the summer, hot summer afternoons, we were in the house. The curtains were drawn. And we had to do something. We learned to embroider. My brother embroidered scarves. [Laughs.]

BARNES: Um-hmm.

NOEL: And it was—you learned. My mother tried to teach me to knit, but she was right handed and I was left handed. And I took the knitting lessons at Wahl's Department Store because she couldn't teach me.

BARNES: No, well.

NOEL: And I'd get impatient.

BARNES: Uh huh.

NOEL: But that was, geez, that's a long time ago.

BARNES: Yes, but you continued to knit. Once you learn, you don't forget.

NOEL: I know. I've got stuff going in there now.

BARNES: Did you have bicycles?

NOEL: Yes, we did. But—I don't know whether my brother had one or not. But, the girl who moved in next door to me, Anita Long, she had a bike. And I had a bike. And we used to ride to Anacostia on the bikes. We'd stop at a grocery store, pick up a bottle of ginger ale, and head over there, and just wander around. And then we'd ride back. And didn't think anything of it. Another thing, you've got me going now—another thing that we did, we skated, of course, a lot. So, one day we had friends in Brookland—and, so, one day Anita said "Let's go visit [whoever it was]." And, so, I said, "Okay." So we headed—we went down Sixth Street, we went across the railroad tracks on skates. We walked across there. But, we did walk from there. We walked to Rhode Island Avenue, 12th and Rhode Island Avenue NE. And then walked back, then skated back.

BARNES: And skated.

NOEL: And skated. Yep. My mother had a fit when she heard what I had done.

BARNES: But, you probably did lots of those kinds of things.

NOEL: Yep, we did.

BARNES: Because it was free and open and you didn't have to be concerned about safety.

NOEL: No, you did not. No, uh uh. It was after the war that you really had to watch and be concerned really. That's when traffic increased so much, once cars were available. And cars increased and, of course, crime increased. That's when you had to really watch out.

BARNES: But your parents remained in their same house.

NOEL: My parents were at 612 Lexington Street [NE].

BARNES: And they stayed there until their death? Or—

NOEL: No, no. My mother was struck by a car. She was on the sidewalk. And after that—

BARNES: At what age?

NOEL: I—She had been to a—

BARNES: ... were you. What age were you when that happened?

NOEL: I was probably between—I'm trying to put myself back. I was probably mid 30s, late 30s when this happened. But, she had been to an Eastern Star picnic with a friend. They were walking down Sixth Street and the car went out of control, up on the sidewalk, and my mother was dragged and the woman with her was crushed up against one of the stone walls. So, anyway.

BARNES: But, you mother survived?

NOEL: My mother survived. But she was not supposed to be going up and down stairs.

BARNES: So they moved.

NOEL: So they moved to Maryland Courts Apartment at Ninth and Maryland Avenue NE. And they have cleaned those bricks and that place looks so nice now.

BARNES: [Laughs.]

NOEL: But, no. They lived there. My mother died there.

BARNES: Mm-hmm. So you had—when did you all have a car?

NOEL: Yep. We got—

BARNES: You had a car, your father had a car.

NOEL: But, my father at that point was not able to drive.

BARNES: Well, I was thinking when you were a young girl growing up in Washington, your father had a car?

NOEL: We had a Hudson at that point.

BARNES: Oh.

NOEL: A green—green, green machine.

BARNES: Four door?

NOEL: Four door. Vases inside, on either side. Yep. We had that. Then, he turned it in, got a newer model, and that's when—no, that can't be. Anyway, at this point there wasn't enough money, he missed the car payment, and one night they repossessed the car. They were still using lanterns on the street to mark where your cars were. And that was the end of my father's driving days really.

BARNES: Oh. And you were still living ...

NOEL: I was still at home. Mm-hmm.

BARNES: ... living at home.

NOEL: Right, mm-hmm.

BARNES: So, did you learn to drive on his car?

NOEL: No, I did not. No, I didn't learn to drive until after the war when I was married and we could—we had our name in for a car for about a year and a half before we could get one, because of war shortages. So, uh uh.

BARNES: And then—but in Washington you really didn't need a car because you could go everywhere by public transportation.

NOEL: Exactly. Right. Or walk.

BARNES: Or walk.

NOEL: We did a lot of walking in those days.

BARNES: And your bicycle.

NOEL: Right, mm-hmm. Yeah, mm-hmm.

BARNES: So, Union Station—and did you travel by train at all?

NOEL: We went up to Pennsylvania, up by train; up to Boston, took the train up to Boston. Transferred to the—what was it?—B & M train that was running by coal still. Uh!

BARNES: Coal?

NOEL: A dirty—by the time you got there ...

BARNES: Mm-hmm. Was that—they were still using coal fired trains out of Union Station?

NOEL: No, not out of Union Station, but up in Boston they were.

BARNES: Out of Boston.

NOEL: Yeah, mm-hmm. Right, mm-hmm. It was good. One of the men at our church has a whole history and he keeps saying, whenever you're ready. It's a history of the transit company as well as, like, the B & O Railroad, this type of thing. And he says, "Whenever you're ready for it." And I keep putting him off.

BARNES: Oh, because the transit company that you worked for is what he's talking about.

NOEL: Right, yes, uh huh.

BARNES: But, that didn't have anything to do with the trains. That was only the streetcars and the buses.

NOEL: No, he had—

BARNES: He has. But, I mean, the company you worked for ...

NOEL: No, didn't have anything to do with—

BARNES: ... had nothing to do with the trains.

NOEL: No. No, this was the B & O Railroad.

BARNES: Right.

NOEL: And, whatever railroad ran to Chesapeake Beach from—

BARNES: Oh, so you went to the beach.

NOEL: No, we—no, because by the time I was there, the run to the beach, I believe, had been over a year or two years and no. But it left from 15th and H Street NE, and went to Chesapeake Beach back—I wish I had been on it. It would have been interesting.

BARNES: It would have been nice, wouldn't it?

NOEL: It would have been interesting now, to say.

BARNES: Yes. But, you didn't go. Were there swimming pools, like—

NOEL: Sure, McKinley Tech. We walked to McKinley Tech as children.

BARNES: McKinley Tech.

NOEL: Right. And took lessons. They had lessons, I think they were a quarter a week or something like that in the summertime. And one of the early Hot Shoppes was on our way on Florida Avenue. We usually tried to stop there on the way home. This type of thing.

BARNES: So, you were able to use that during the summer. So that was another—

NOEL: Yes, it was.

BARNES: —recreation for you in the summer.

NOEL: Mm-hmm, right. Mm-hmm.

BARNES: Was it open in the winter?

NOEL: No.

BARNES: No, only in the summer.

NOEL: It was not enclosed.

BARNES: Oh, it wasn't. It was an outdoor pool.

NOEL: No. It was open air pool. Right, mm-hmm, no. And I'll tell you one more thing about that. It was that the black children could not go in when we could, when we were there. We were there in the mornings. And they had certain days when they could use it. I didn't know this until a few years ago and I

took part in a discussion on growing up in DC in the summer, and one of the ladies brought that up. The fact that they had certain days only that they could be in the pool and for a couple of hours only.

BARNES: Well, were there other things that you'd like to tell us about growing up in Washington in the summer? [Laughs.]

NOEL: We used to take picnics when my dad was driving. We'd go out to Rock Creek Park and have a picnic, the whole family. And if he was working on a Sunday, then—they always had a collie dog at the company. It was down on 23rd Street NW, and we would go down there and have dinner. Sometimes we were lucky enough that we had money to go out and buy dinner. We could use [?] like fried chicken down there someplace. But, it was something to do after church on Sunday.

BARNES: Oh, speaking of churches, where did you go to church?

NOEL: I went to Eastern Presbyterian Church at Sixth and Maryland Avenue NE, which is a big stone building with a tower. And that tower at night always had a light and we were known as the lighthouse on Capitol Hill. It is now the Temple Imani and the window upstairs have been boarded up. So, there isn't a light.

BARNES: There's no light anymore.

NOEL: There's no light anymore. No.

BARNES: So, was it just services on Sunday? Or did you have services during the week.

NOEL: Right, right. We were very much involved in Christian Endeavor. We had that type of thing. We had bowling leagues, dinners at the church, this type of thing. It was—

BARNES: So there was a lot of—

NOEL: Activity.

BARNES: —activity going on with the church.

NOEL: Mm-hmm.

BARNES: Now, when you say bowling, where did you bowl.

NOEL: We bowled on 11th Street NW. There were a lot of bowling alleys around then. There was one out on Rhode Island Avenue that I think was the last one. But, this was—we bowled duck pins, not ten.

BARNES: Oh, duck pins.

NOEL: No, uh uh.

BARNES: Those were the—

NOEL: The little—

BARNES: The small balls.

NOEL: Right. Mm-hmm.

BARNES: So did you go always with a group?

NOEL: We had leagues.

BARNES: You had leagues. Through the church.

NOEL: Yep. On Saturday night, there were leagues from various other churches around the area. And we had quite a big league. We took the whole bowling alley over. I think there had to have been maybe 15 or 16 alleys at least.

BARNES: Now, did you go to baseball games?

NOEL: Oh, yes. Griffith Stadium.

BARNES: Tell us about the baseball in Washington.

NOEL: That is where I had my first date with my husband. He came up to me at work, because we were working till noontime. And he came up to me one day and he said—Saturday—“Would you like to go to a baseball game this afternoon?” I said “Sure.” And we went. Cleveland was playing DC Senators.

BARNES: The Nationals. Nationals now, the Senators then.

NOEL: Right. And, by gosh, the Senators won. Which was unusual. They were not much of a baseball team at this point. I understood that maybe back in 1924 or something like that they had a good team. But, no, not in my day. No.

BARNES: Mm-hmm. But, the Senators—I don’t recall—when did they stop playing? When did baseball leave Washington?

NOEL: I think it was about ’68, somewhere around there.

BARNES: Uh huh. So, you must have gone to a lot of games.

NOEL: Yes, absolutely. And to some games that weren't in the regular league, the American League. There were other games going on, also.

BARNES: Like small leagues in the city area.

NOEL: Yeah, uh huh. That's right. And some groups—and I can't think what it was. I have a banner downstairs yet from one of those that I can't pull up what the sponsor was that day. But they—

BARNES: Well, we have a lot of softball leagues now.

NOEL: Yes, mm-hmm.

BARNES: That play on the Mall. And often they are associated with the Senate and the House of Representatives. They put together their own teams. Library of Congress has one, and so on.

NOEL: Mm-hmm.

BARNES: So they may have had teams like that back when you were growing up as well.

NOEL: I can't think.

BARNES: Were families really interested in baseball?

NOEL: Mine was. I don't know whether my mother was that interested in it, but my dad certainly was. And, of course, my brother was.

BARNES: Yeah. And they did get to go to games? Or they listened to it on radio?

NOEL: They listened. My dad and my brother went to games. Another thing, more interesting than that, was the races, the horse races.

BARNES: Oh. In Washington?

NOEL: In Washington. See my father in his younger days had been a farrier and he just loved horses. No, the horse races were Laurel and Bowie, which you still have.

BARNES: Oh, Laurel.

NOEL: Right. But, no, he loved those. After he retired, my mother and dad would go out to the races and my father would spend hours in the morning looking at the Morning Telegram, which gave all the race scores. And my mother would go out there and he'd say "Now this horse will do this and this." And my

mother would look. She'd say "That looks like a good horse." She said, "I think I'll bet on him." She came home with money every time and he came home with nothing.

BARNES: [Laughs.] When you say a farrier, was that—

NOEL: Shoeing horses. Shoed horses.

BARNES: Shoeing horses.

NOEL: Right, uh huh. Just like a blacksmith would be.

BARNES: Right.

NOEL: And the shop was at Tenth and C Streets NW, Clark's Horseshoeing Parlor.

BARNES: And your father worked there, too, part time?

NOEL: Yeah. He worked there before he went with the ice company. When horses went out.

END OF TAPE 2/SIDE 1

TAPE 2/SIDE 2

BARNES: ... father was 65.

NOEL: He had a phone call one afternoon from St. Elizabeth's Hospital. Wanted to know if he could come out and shoe their horses. And my father said "I have not shoed a horse for 25, 30 years and I cannot do it anymore." But they were still using horses out there.

BARNES: Probably for riding. Carriages or something.

NOEL: Recreation. Yeah, uh huh.

BARNES: So, when you were a child then, did you all ever have a horse and buggy?

NOEL: Oh, no.

BARNES: No.

NOEL: No, uh uh. But there were plenty of them around, like for—

BARNES: Oh, really?

NOEL: Holmes Bread man used to come in a horse and buggy.

BARNES: It was what?

NOEL: The Holmes—H-O-L-M-E-S—Bread Company.

BARNES: Holmes Bread Company came.

NOEL: They used—right. They came. And you had your huckster's that came with bananas, with fruits. The fish man came with a cart on Fridays. This type of thing.

BARNES: And what about milk?

NOEL: Milk was delivered to your door.

BARNES: By—

NOEL: By Thompson's Dairy.

BARNES: They didn't use horse and buggy?

NOEL: No. They didn't.

BARNES: No. They had a truck.

NOEL: You know they did have a horse and buggy at one time. Exactly. Because I think that's one of the horse and buggies that could be stored in a warehouse in DC There was a lot of that type of stuff, fire plugs, all sorts of things that are stored.

BARNES: Mm-hmm.

NOEL: In DC

BARNES: But by then they had fire trucks. They were no longer using fire wagons and horses when you grew up.

NOEL: When I grew up, I remember the poor horses on Labor Day parades, this type of thing. They always had horse drawn fire equipment. And they still have that equipment. And some of the first that DC had was loaned to Alexandria for their museum because we didn't have any place to store it at that time. And, lo and behold, we'd like to have it back now.

BARNES: Mm-hmm.

NOEL: And it's hopeless.

BARNES: It's hopeless.

NOEL: Right.

BARNES: Yeah.

NOEL: Yeah, uh huh. But there is a lot of equipment stored in warehouses around.

BARNES: Do you remember anything about breweries on the Hill?

NOEL: Heurich.

BARNES: Heurich.

NOEL: Heurich Brewery.

BARNES: Was one. And then there was Carry, but I don't remember the name of—

NOEL: I don't—was Senate in DC?

BARNES: Senate? Yes.

NOEL: Okay. No, uh uh. No. But there was no—there was a gambling joint out at Bladensburg and New York Avenue. I don't know what ...

BARNES: When you were growing up?

NOEL: Yeah. And I can't tell you what the name of it is.

BARNES: But, they actually had games, like card games and so on?

NOEL: Yep, they did.

BARNES: And it was legal?

NOEL: Yep, I guess it must have been.

BARNES: Must have been. [Laughs.] It must have been. But, they were able to sell wine and whiskey and beer.

NOEL: Not during Prohibition.

BARNES: Not during Prohibition. But prior to that.

NOEL: Yes, prior to that they ... yes, mm-hmm.

BARNES: So, you lived through part of the time when it was legal and then ...

NOEL: Prohibition.

BARNES: Then Prohibition came in.

NOEL: And now, it's wide open.

BARNES: And the Heurich Brewery Company, all of those breweries actually had become something else, whether it was an ice cream factory or whatever.

NOEL: No. And isn't one of those the Arena Stage?

BARNES: Oh, where it's located now? It may have.

NOEL: Right in ...

BARNES: The only home that's left is the Heurich House. That's the only one that's left. The Heurich family, but other homes are no longer in existence from the breweries.

NOEL: No, uh uh. I've been to the Heurich House frequently.

BARNES: From the breweries. But was alcohol a problem with students back then as it is now?

NOEL: No. No, uh uh. No. It was a problem for one of my mother's brothers, the one who worked in the Capitol building, because it was available. And, no ... and he did. He died from ...

BARNES: Died from the effects of alcohol?

NOEL: Yep, uh huh.

BARNES: But smoking was probably a problem.

NOEL: Well, of course, then, smoking was not deemed to be a problem.

BARNES: Right. A health issue.

NOEL: No. My father smoked a pipe and cigars and my uncles smoked cigarettes. And, you know, it was just automatic. You didn't think anything about it. And my husband and I—he smoked and I took it up after my youngest son was born because he drove me to it. He never slept more than fifteen minutes at a time. When the kids were about four years old, we were up in New York and we said, “You know, this is crazy.” And we threw the cigarettes in the trash. And that was the end of that. And this was right before all the stuff came out about cancers and this type of thing.

BARNES: Mm-hmm. But, it was so accepted ...

NOEL: It was.

BARNES: ... when you were growing up.

NOEL: Oh, sure. The long cigarette holders and all these movie stars ...

BARNES: Right, right.

NOEL: ... with their—that's another thing that we had. We had good movies. We had stage shows.

BARNES: Stage?

NOEL: Absolutely. Glenn Miller was here. Tommy Dorsey. They took roll call down on F Street when Glenn Miller was here. The first time that he was here. Absolutely. There were kids lined up way around the block. And threes and fours at a crack. It was just—it was so good, but, hey, you went to school the next day and you were—the teacher read roll call and your name would be, "Were you at the movies yesterday?" "Yes."

BARNES: Uh huh.

NOEL: [Laughs.]

BARNES: You had to tell.

NOEL: Yeah. Because the name was there.

BARNES: Right.

NOEL: But it was—

BARNES: Those were wonderful shows.

NOEL: They were. They were really good.

BARNES: And you had circuses and ...

NOEL: Yep.

BARNES: ... that came to town as well ...

NOEL: That's right, mm-hmm.

BARNES: ... during that period of time.

NOEL: Yeah. They went to Uline Arena, but I don't know where they were held before that.

BARNES: Went to what arena?

NOEL: Uline, at Third and M Street NE.

BARNES: Oh, that's not there anymore. [ed: Uline Arena still exists; its most recent use was as a trash transfer station.]

NOEL: I know.

BARNES: Uline. Is it U, like the letter U? L-I-N-E?

NOEL: Mm-hmm.

BARNES: Uline Arena.

NOEL: Right, mm-hmm. Yeah, mm-hmm.

BARNES: Third and F. Third and N.

NOEL: M, M Street.

BARNES: Third and M.

NOEL: Mm-hmm, yeah, mm-hmm.

BARNES: Well, see all of those buildings that no longer exist, I'm sure there're many, many others as well that you recall ...

NOEL: Oh, yes. Mm-hmm.

BARNES: ... that was part of your youth and part of growing up.

NOEL: Right, yes, mm-hmm.

BARNES: Did you see presidents inaugurated during that time?

NOEL: Yeah, absolutely. Yes, as a matter of fact, an aunt and an uncle, when I was five years old, took me to [Herbert] Hoover's inauguration. It was in March and we were in what was the Earl Building, at that time, on there, which is now the Warner. And ...

BARNES: Oh, the Warner. Oh, the Earl is now the Warner. That's right, the theater.

NOEL: Right.

BARNES: Mm-hmm.

NOEL: We were up on the top floor and it was not a very nice day. It was cold, it was very cold. But I saw him. I saw [Franklin D.] Roosevelt. I saw [Dwight D.] Eisenhower. And, shall I go anymore? And then I watched it on—when television came in. When [Harry S] Truman was inaugurated and my husband and I were in the apartment, I bet we had 20 people in there to watch. Because we had a great big 13-inch television. [Both laugh.] But, it was—it got crowded. It did. And my mother and father even took the streetcar and came over. I was so surprised.

BARNES: So, they didn't have a television.

NOEL: Exactly. Hey, we were—no.

BARNES: So, you all were the first and this was nineteen forty- ...

NOEL: [unintelligible] When Truman was inaugurated, it had to have been '48 ...

BARNES: Right.

NOEL: ... because Eisenhower was in in '52, I know that. So, at any rate.

BARNES: Yeah.

NOEL: But, it was—no.

BARNES: And you were watching on TV.

NOEL: And you would see Truman, walked every morning on Pennsylvania Avenue. He'd be with his Secret Service, two Secret Service agents. But, he was out there walking every single morning because we'd be riding the streetcar by going to work. And he would ...

BARNES: He was out walking on the streets.

NOEL: He was out walking with two Secret Service men, on either side.

BARNES: And that was it.

NOEL: And that was it. Yep, mm-hmm.

BARNES: How the world has changed.

NOEL: Hasn't it. Geez. I don't know.

BARNES: Yes.

NOEL: I don't where we're headed in this world.

BARNES: You have seen a lot and done a lot.

NOEL: I know. That's the way I feel about it. My husband and I did a lot of traveling in this country once he retired and in Canada. And I just felt, geez, this is such a great place to live and to see the so many natural, beautiful things that we have here in this country. And, now, I just wonder where we are going. I think someday—I think someday we will have to inhabit another planet. I love this type of thing.

BARNES: You were talking earlier about, I think before we started recording, about computers and how you worked with the first computer that came out and how big it was.

NOEL: Right, exactly. No. We had ...

BARNES: And this was when you were working for NSA?

NOEL: Right, yes. And in the basement of that building they were life testing computers. We must have had about 150, they were about three to a rack. So, then, Baltimore Gas and Electric was not getting enough power because we were taking more than anyone else in the state. NSA still uses more electricity than any other company in the state of Maryland. And it was just that these things kept running and running till they ran out. But, one of the things that really happened was we turned the computers off on Friday night when they left work. And so you'd turn them on on Monday morning and they wouldn't come on. There wasn't enough electricity available for all of that extra electricity that was needed.

BARNES: So, they were testing those ...

NOEL: Yeah, Mm-hmm.

BARNES: ... for a company or just for ...

NOEL: For military.

BARNES: For the military.

NOEL: For the military. Right.

BARNES: So, they re- ...

NOEL: Right, mm-hmm.

BARNES: When you say ...

NOEL: Blaze testing, life sensitive [?].

BARNES: Life? See how long they would ...

NOEL: Last.

BARNES: Last.

NOEL: Mm-hmm. It was interesting. But, one Monday morning, no computers had come up. Some guys were walking through the area. They had a load of stainless steel on a dolly. When they turned a corner, the load shifted. It crashed to the floor. By golly, the computers came up and on. So, from then on, on Monday morning, you didn't want to be anywhere near the basement. Because they were playing marches, loud as they possibly could, with more noise than you could ever imagine.

BARNES: To get the computers to come up.

NOEL: To get the computers to come up. It was—no, it was ...

BARNES: Was this in the 50s?

NOEL: This was in—It had to have been the late 50s because we didn't move out to Fort Meade until 1957.

BARNES: Uh huh.

NOEL: So, it had to be, you know, in the late 50s ...

BARNES: Late 50s.

NOEL: ... when they were doing all that.

BARNES: So, that's why you don't want to have anything to do with computers.

NOEL: It's just, they drove me crazy. No. I have one of my brother's that's in storage. [Both laugh.] No, but I just think, oh, my gosh, no. No. I wired [?] one Prentice [?] circuit board when that first came out. And I wanted, because I knew I was going to be reporting on this stuff, and so I wired one board. And the main problem with that was that you used solder to attach your wiring and, lo and behold, of course you used silver solder. And silver, as you know, is the conductor. So, lo and behold, we had to come up with a chemical that would take away the use of the silver. And that was a hard draft [?]. It took a long period of time to develop which chemicals would work and which were not healthy. And, as it was, two of the

engineers had their lungs—their lungs were affected even with wearing masks. It was just a hard thing to do.

BARNES: Soldering with silver.

NOEL: It was, mm-hmm. Yeah. There's a lot—I had a lot of good experiences at NSA.

BARNES: Well you certainly did.

NOEL: Right.

BARNES: And, thinking back, and I guess this has been kind of like going home again for you to talk about your youth and all of the years that you were in Washington ...

NOEL: Right, mm-hmm.

BARNES: ... what were the things that you remember most, that meant the most to you about living and being able to grow up in Washington, in the nation's capital.

NOEL: Oh, gosh. That is hard because there was so much and you loved the city. You loved being in that city and downtown. And the stores, the shopping downtown, and the museums and the Mall. It was a fabulous place to grow up. It was like a small Southern town. We had two mail deliveries a day, one by 8:30 in the morning, another by about 12:30. It was just great. It really, it was really—it was a wonderful place to grow up. There was so—you had the zoo. Just a lot of things to go and to do. You had band concerts and that was interesting. You could walk to the band concert and walk home. And it was just a great and glorious place. I love it. And I still, every time I—I belong to the A. O. I. [Association of the Oldest Inhabitants]—and every time I go in for a meeting once a month, I go in early. And I drive around the old neighborhoods, and to see the changes. And recently—I don't know what the name of Stuart Junior High is anymore. It's not that. [ed: Stuart Hobson Middle School] But, the thing, too, is that the houses right on E Street there had been painted pastel, several had been painted pastel colors, and I think they look so great. Just, that's the good sort [?] that really ...

BARNES: So, it is like going home again.

NOEL: It is. If I had my way, and I could afford it, I'd be living right down at Sixth and Pennsylvania Avenue. [Both laugh.] There's so much to do.

BARNES: Well, yes.

NOEL: And so much of it is great.

BARNES: And Eastern Market.

NOEL: Yeah.

BARNES: Was Eastern Market—well, Eastern Market was there when you ...

NOEL: Yeah, sure.

BARNES: ... were growing up. Did your mother shop there?

NOEL: Yeah, we did. Mm-hmm, we sure did. And, also, there was the Safeway, there was a Safeway ...

BARNES: Across the street.

NOEL: ... on Seventh Street. Yes, exactly. But it was just a good place to go. You got fresh vegetables and that sort of thing. And that was before they started having antiques and what have you ...

BARNES: Yes.

NOEL: ... that type of thing. But, it was still ...

BARNES: And they didn't have the outdoor market. You were talking about the indoor market that they had, the big indoor market.

NOEL: Right, mm-hmm. And also the Florida Avenue Market.

BARNES: Oh, that was existing then, too. Yes.

NOEL: Yeah, it was.

BARNES: Still is.

NOEL: Right. We used to go up there to buy flowers for Memorial Day. We'd come home with buckets of flowers to take to the different cemeteries.

BARNES: To the different?

NOEL: Different cemeteries.

BARNES: Oh, cemeteries.

NOEL: Right. We had people buried on Prospect Hill, in Arlington. And, I think, what's the other one up that way? Quindley [ed: name not verified], isn't it? No. But, anyways, that was a big deal and a big day.

My grandfather's birthday was the 29th of May. He was a Civil War veteran and was buried in Arlington. Saw some big battles.

BARNES: Was that your mother's father?

NOEL: Yes, mm-hmm.

BARNES: And they were the ones that lived around the corner ...

NOEL: Right, yes, uh huh. Exactly.

BARNES: ... from you. So you grew up with them.

NOEL: Yes, sure did. Right. It was a good life.

BARNES: It was a really good life.

NOEL: Good life. Right, mm-hmm.

BARNES: Good schools.

NOEL: The schools were good. They were excellent. And the teachers cared and you learned. Now, like one of my teachers told my brother, she said "You know what. You're not half as good as your sister was." And he came home, he was, "Ma, teacher's telling me Jean's better than I was." No. We don't go into all that.

BARNES: [Laughs.] Well, it's just—sisters are always supposedly good in school, at least the boys always said so.

NOEL: Right. No.

BARNES: Well, if there's anything else that you would like to add before we close the interview ...

NOEL: I don't, I couldn't—not off the top ...

BARNES: Well, it has been just a delight to have an opportunity to meet you, Jean, and to learn all the things that you had access to in Washington. All the cultural things, even the Senators baseball games. And the exposure that I'm sure has enriched your life as it continues to enrich the lives of the people who are still there,

NOEL: Right, yeah. It really does.

BARNES: Yes.

NOEL: It really is a big effect on me still.

BARNES: Still to this day.

NOEL: Right, yeah.

BARNES: That's wonderful.

NOEL: Mm-hmm.

BARNES: Thank you so much.

NOEL: You are so welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW