



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Gary Peterson

Interview Dates: January 16 & January 25, 2008

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

DEUTSCH: This is Stephanie Deutsch. I am sitting with Gary Peterson in his house on Massachusetts Avenue. It is January 16th, 2008, 3:20 [pm].

PETERSON: If the clock boings, it's 15 minutes too early. I need to reset it, so...

DEUTSCH: Okay. Gary, where did you grow up?

PETERSON: I grew up in Sioux City, Iowa, but I was born in Fairbanks, Alaska.

DEUTSCH: Wow!

PETERSON: But I lived there only for the first two and a half years of my life so I don't...

DEUTSCH: Was your dad in the service?

PETERSON: No, he was actually working for a construction company that was doing military construction and they built the first Alaska pipeline which was going the opposite direction. It was pumping gasoline to Alaska so they could fuel the airplanes for the war in the Pacific.

DEUTSCH: So you moved to Iowa when you were two?

PETERSON: Yeah. And basically I grew up in Sioux City so I consider Iowa my origin rather than Alaska.

DEUTSCH: And grew up in town?

PETERSON: Yes, Sioux City in those days was 80 to 100,000 people. Today it's 65, 70,000.

DEUTSCH: Tell me a little about that. Did you have a big family—brothers and sisters?

PETERSON: I had one sister. My father was a bookkeeper and then ultimately became a CPA and had his own CPA firm. I went to the public school systems. You know, pretty mid western upbringing. I had a very good education in public schools. But the—at that time there were basically two high schools in town and I went to the oldest one which had been built as the central high school. That was its name [Central High School]. It was an old castle-type building, old brown stone castle.

DEUTSCH: Kind of the classic American high school.

PETERSON: Right.

DEUTSCH: And then, after high school?

PETERSON: And after high school I went to Iowa State University which is in Ames, Iowa, and majored in business. And that's where I met Trudy, my wife. She was there majoring in history and English.

DEUTSCH: And she also was from Iowa?

PETERSON: Yeah, she was a farm girl, so I married down. Because I was the city guy and I married the country bumpkin. So I married the farmer's daughter.

DEUTSCH: The country bumpkin who is now advising the government of Guatemala.

PETERSON: Right, so I married the farmer's daughter and found out that all of those stories about farmer's daughters weren't true. I was greatly disappointed. Yeah.

DEUTSCH: Okay, so what happened then?

PETERSON: Well we knew each other for four years of college. And I think we debate—we agree on one thing. We meet during our freshman year in English. But she says it was the first class and I say it was the end of the year. So we differ on which class it was in but we both agree that it was freshman English. But we didn't date. I thought she was a stuck-up person and she apparently told friends that I was an arrogant bastard.

DEUTSCH: Eww.

PETERSON: So you can see hit it right off at first. And we didn't date 'til April of our senior year. So I say—in those days people often got married their senior year or upon graduation—and I say she hadn't gotten engaged so she was desperate and I was still laying around. She picked me up. But—so we met and then we both had entered law school.

DEUTSCH: Right after college?

PETERSON: We both applied. You know taken the LSATs and applied. And I was admitted to the University of Iowa and she had been admitted to the University of Pennsylvania and so we went off to our respective...

DEUTSCH: You weren't married yet?

PETERSON: No, we went off to our respective law schools and I think I spent more on my phone bill than I did on room and board. And she decided after the first semester at Penn that she hated law and she

told me that she was going to drop out of law school and she was going to move to Iowa City and find a job. And me being the practical romantic that I am said “well, we might as well get married.” Because I know...

DEUTSCH: [Laughing] That is terribly romantic.

PETERSON: ...because I know where I am going to be spending all my time. So, so we got engaged at Christmas time and got married then the following April in a dust storm. Some of the guests to our wedding couldn't make it because the visibility was so bad they couldn't get there.

DEUTSCH: Wow! A real dust storm!

PETERSON: Oh yeah. So we got married in April of 1968. Our 40th wedding anniversary is coming up real quick. And then I continued in law school there and Trudy got a job at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Archives and Library.

DEUTSCH: Law school. You're at University of Iowa. So now we're in...

PETERSON: We're in Iowa City.

DEUTSCH: Iowa City. Right. So the Herbert Hoover...

PETERSON: The Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, which is at West Branch, Iowa, which is 10 miles east of Iowa City. And we lived in West Branch because it was much cheaper than Iowa City and it was only 10 miles, which means they're 10 minutes away. So... And then after my first year of law school, General Westmoreland said that he could see the light at the end of the tunnel and they dropped graduate school deferments from the draft and I and about half my law school got drafted. So...

DEUTSCH: [19]69?

PETERSON: Yeah. And so I think I went in about February of 1969 and we... I celebrated our first wedding anniversary in boot camp, in lovely Fort Ord, California, which is on Monterey Bay.

DEUTSCH: That's not so bad.

PETERSON: Well yeah, except if you stop and think about you were doing everything in sand.

DEUTSCH: Right.

PETERSON: It wasn't a lot of fun. Somehow the scenery didn't overwhelm me.

DEUTSCH: Right. So you were in the Army?

PETERSON: So I was in the army and I graduated from basic training despite the fact that I broke both heels and one toe. And...

DEUTSCH: How'd you do that?

PETERSON: Just running in wet sand.

DEUTSCH: Eww.

PETERSON: It's actually worse than running in concrete. And then I was sent to clerk-typist school there at Fort Ord. And I had already taken typing when I was in high school. The high school that I went to did not only college prep, but had courses for people where high school was going to be the end of their education so they had auto mechanics and they had secretarial and three of my friends and I decided that it would be good to know how to type if we went away to college and there was a typing class for the secretarial students who were all women at that time. And we decided that it would be a great way to meet some of the girls. And so the four of us signed up for typing and caused no end of anxiety on the part of the school administration because they had never had boys sign up for typing and they didn't know quite what to do with it, but finally we were allowed to enroll in the typing class. And the four of us graduated as the top typists in the class.

DEUTSCH: Really!

PETERSON: So, I say I came by it naturally. My mother was a secretary and she did typing competitions.

DEUTSCH: How many words a minute did she do?

PETERSON: She did something like 180 on a manual typewriter.

DEUTSCH: Boy, those were the days! I think when I took my civil service test I think I did 35 words a minute.

PETERSON: Well, for the army they want... We were put at typing class and we were actually given electric typewriters—which was the first time I had an electric typewriter—and all we had to do to graduate was to type 30 words per minute, error free. And of course I was used to doing 100-120 words per minute. So I became the top graduate of the Fort Ord clerk/typist school, because you had to know English grammar. It was like going back to high school basically.

DEUTSCH: At the Fort Ord?

PETERSON: Clerk/typist school. And they had a big ceremony with the garrison and I got to march out singly and get my award from the Commandant of Fort Ord.

DEUTSCH: Wow, so awards are old hat for you?

PETERSON: [Laughing] I used to keep it hung up in my office just as a joke, but I've lost the award somewhere along the line. But it's in my military record. So after having graduated I got orders that assigned me to—here's all the order said—"HQDLI Washington, DC." So the good news was, I was going to Washington, DC. The bad news is, nobody had a clue where. It gave no address.

DEUTSCH: Well HQ sounds good. That sounds like the headquarters of something.

PETERSON: Yes, headquarters of something. But you know I couldn't find out. Nobody seemed to know where I was supposed to go. It took a couple days and finally it was determined that I was to go to the headquarters of the Defense Language Institute, which at that time was headquartered in Washington, DC.

DEUTSCH: Rosslyn or...

PETERSON: Pardon?

DEUTSCH: Was it in Rosslyn or...

PETERSON: No, No. It was across the river from the Navy Yard. At that time it was known as the Anacostia Annex to the Navy Yard. So you just go off the 11th Street Bridge and right there immediately to your right along the Anacostia River were a bunch of buildings and that's where the headquarters was located. But of course it took a while to figure that out and the Army seemed very relaxed about when I would report and show up. And in fact, I am still wondering to this day if I hadn't shown up, if anybody would have noticed. But anyway, I showed up and I was in the Army, I was working on a Naval base and my quarters were at an Air Force base—so I was in the quarters there at Bolling— and my chain of command was not through the Army, DLI (Defense Language Institute) was under the Secretary of Defense, so we reported directly to the Secretary of Defense, not through the Army chain of command. And this group ran all of the language schools, which were Rosslyn, there were two in Texas and one in Monterey, California, at the time. And I was a clerk. The operation had something like 13 officers and seven enlisted men. And all of the officers were assigned there because they were going to retire within a year-and-a-half to two years. And so what the officers did was they wrote their resumes and went to job interviews. And the seven enlisted people ran the organization.

DEUTSCH: And you were one of them?

PETERSON: Right, and so that's

DEUTSCH: Sort of assigning people to language school and that kind of stuff?

PETERSON: Right, yeah, right. And, you know, dispersing promotions and making sure that the right languages were being taught. So, I mean it was stuff like when Nixon was saying we don't have anybody in Cambodia or Laos, and I'm looking at we just graduated 120 people who now speak Meo, which is one of the Laotian languages. Well what the hell are they doing then? [Laughs]

DEUTSCH: So it actually was a pretty interesting job?

PETERSON: Yeah, it was about, I had every day about four hours of work. That's including making the coffee. So when I got here (I came in July of 1969) the congressman from our district was from Sioux City and had a son my age who I had known since junior high school and, you know, we hung out, we were close friends. In fact, my congressman was not my congressman at that time. He wasn't elected to Congress until I was in college. So, I mean I knew him pre...

DEUTSCH: Before he was in congress?

PETERSON: Yeah, and I called his wife and she said "Why don't you come over for dinner?" And I said "I'd be delighted."

DEUTSCH: This is the congressman?

PETERSON: Yeah, and they had a house, I think, in the 100 block of D Street SE.

DEUTSCH: What was his name?

PETERSON: Wiley Mayne, M-A-Y-NE, Wiley Mayne.

DEUTSCH: M-A-Y-NE.

PETERSON: And so I went over there and had dinner and said "Gee, this is a nice neighborhood."

DEUTSCH: Not much like Sioux City?

PETERSON: Oh, not at all, no. So I then started looking at the real estate rental ads in the Washington Post and realized that this was called Capitol Hill and there were lots of apartments and things for rent. And about that time—the Presidential Libraries are part of the National Archives system—so about that time Trudy was able to wrangle transferring from the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in here to DC

to the National Archives to work on the Kennedy oral history projects. So she was an editor on the John F. Kennedy oral history project at the National Archives.

DEUTSCH: Was that gathering oral histories about Kennedy? I mean doing interviews?

PETERSON: They contracted with—well they had people and I think they contracted with people to do interviews of various people in the administration. And then they were transcribed. And then they had editors that went through and... As you can imagine when you say somebody like Souvanna Phouma who was the King of Laos, well somebody who is typing that doesn't know how to spell it.

DEUTSCH: Like I was doing yesterday with Nancy's.

PETERSON: Right, right. So Trudy's job was to make sure that everything was correct. And so I decided, well this would be close to where she worked and also I was going down just across the 11th Street Bridge. So I started looking for houses to rent and there was an ad. I went and looked at a number of places and then I saw an ad and I called up the number and I got Inez Jones, who was a realtor up here who lived in the corner house. Both she and John both lived in the corner house and that was where their real estate office was as well.

DEUTSCH: The corner house just down...

PETERSON: Right here on the street. And I described my situation to her and she said, "Well, I've got a few places but I think my partner has a place that would suit you very well and we don't really have it listed because he lives in the house as well and so we're kind of picky on who we have go there, but let me put him on the phone." And that's how I met Austin Beall. So Austin lived across the street from where we live now. He lived at 813 Massachusetts Avenue [NE]. So I made arrangements on a weekend to come look. At that time Austin lived in the second floor of the house and the first floor and the basement was the rental unit. And I looked at the place and that location was perfect and the price was very good, that we could afford on my GI salary and Trudy's GS-5 salary, and so I rented it and Trudy didn't see it. I just took it. So we moved in. And the following summer, Austin had me as a jitney driver for the house and garden tour so that was sort of my first community service I guess you could say. So for the house tour of May—Mother's Day of 1970—I drove Austin's Buick convertible.

DEUTSCH: You probably don't remember that in my speech, when I won the award [Capitol Hill Community Achievement Award], I mentioned that my mother was a jitney driver, driving a truly disgusting—I was just so mortified—Buick convertible. That's nice!

PETERSON: Austin almost—well for many years Austin had convertibles. And so anyway I drove the convertible that year and I think he had Trudy working on a house somewhere.

DEUTSCH: I am sure he did.

PETERSON: So that was sort of our introduction to Capitol Hill. And then I got out of the military in 1971 and I had a year and a half of law school at Iowa and at that time the local law schools would only let me transfer a year's worth of credits. And so I decided I really didn't want to spend an extra semester going to law school. We liked the area and in fact this house that we are sitting in right now was for sale and Austin tried to convince us we should buy it. I think it was \$17,900. But of course in those days when you could buy a car for \$2,000 that looked like... Well, we couldn't afford it, point blank. So, we moved back to West Branch, Iowa. That's when Trudy decided that she would go to grad school and get her—ultimately first her masters and then her PhD in history while I finished out law school.

DEUTSCH: US history I assume?

PETERSON: Yeah. And I had the GI bill.

DEUTSCH: So that made your...

PETERSON: Well, it's a very funny story. It's almost like an O. Henry story except it has a little happier ending. But, we were clucking along on the GI bill and it became clear that we didn't have enough money to squeak by. And, on the same day, without telling the other person, we both went out and got part time jobs. And then came home to spring the surprise. So I said you see it's kind of like an O. Henry story with a happy ending.

DEUTSCH: Right, but she still had her hair; you still had your watch.

PETERSON: Right, right, exactly. But it was really kind of funny. And so she got a job with the university archives and I got a job with a local lawyer, just clerking for him. And then we had plenty of money. You know, because grad students really don't have that many demands on money. And we rented a ten-room farmhouse on five acres with a barn for \$100 a month. So we had more house and land than we knew what to do with. Had a big garden. So raised a lot of our own food. Trudy's parents had a cow-calf operation and so they would have a steer butchered and they'd give us half the meat. And so I mean...

DEUTSCH: ...you were in fat city.

PETERSON: Right, so we got through. And Trudy finished all of her class work within a year and a half. And I graduated and then I got a job with the Iowa Attorney General's office doing—I represented the Iowa State Highway Commission—which soon thereafter became the Iowa Department of Transportation. And so I was one of five attorneys who did all of their legal work and including going to court. And for them I did mostly trial work. And Trudy then moved. This position was, believe it or not, back in Ames, Iowa, where we had gone to undergraduate school.

DEUTSCH: So you moved back to Ames?

PETERSON: So we moved back to Ames. Sort of déjà vu. Moved back to Ames and I worked there for three years, and after about two and a half years there, Trudy was in the writing dissertation mode by this time and had almost finished it. Her boss, the person who had been her boss in Washington, DC before was out at the Herbert Hoover Library and said, "Why don't you come on over and we'll have dinner?" Of course that's a two and a half hour drive, but of course out there that's considered ordinary to go have dinner two and a half hours away. So we went over and had dinner with him and he said, "You know Trudy, I really need you to come back and work for me in Washington." And so we decided we liked Washington. We would have stayed if we could have made it work the first time. And we'd like to go back. And I took the ridiculous position of, "Hell I'm a lawyer. I can find a job anywhere." And you're a PhD in history and totally unemployable. So you got a job so let's go with that because this is the last job offer you will have for the rest of your life.

DEUTSCH: What did she write her dissertation on?

PETERSON: It's agricultural history and it was using... In the cold war, the US used shipping food to various countries as a lever to keep them from becoming communist. In other words, "If you won't become communist, we'll feed you. If you flirt with communism you can starve." It wasn't put that grossly, but it was just you couldn't get food aid

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

DEUTSCH: ...you can easily get a job.

PETERSON: Right. And so it took me about six months of looking. It's always an irony when you first graduate from law school the people you want to go for say, "No, no, we're looking for people with experience," then when you have experience, they're all saying, "No, no we're only looking for people who graduate from law school." You know, it's always....But in Iowa I had a wonderful education as a

trial lawyer, and I used to try a case a month or better, a civil case a month or better. And so I—Austin at that time, Austin Beall, always had a stable of girlfriends and one of his girlfriends' husband had died, had actually been killed in a boating accident probably about ten years before. And she said, "Well you know the lawyer who represented me when we sued, whoever it was, was really a nice guy. I think you should talk to him. I'm going to call him." And she called him and talked to him. Well it turns out he was a graduate of the University of Iowa, worked at, he was the managing partner of Arnold and Porter at that time. And so she called him, and I called him, and he said I want to meet you, and I went in and met him. And he said, "Well I don't know, we have this policy—I don't know if we're right—at Arnold and Porter, but we only hire people that clerked for Supreme Court justices." And I already knew that, so that was no big surprise. But he said, "You need to work in the Justice Department in the Land and Natural Resources Division." He said, "That's exactly where you belong and the Deputy there is retiring, and he's been out and about looking for a job and he's come and talked to me about a job. I think you should talk to him, and I'll call him and tell him you're calling him, and he'll give you an interview and that's where you should work."

DEUTSCH: And which division was it?

PETERSON: Land and Natural Resources. And so I called, and I was invited in for an interview, and met this person who left, retired soon thereafter. And he said, "Well, we have a section where you should work and they don't have any positions right now, but in three months' time they'll have positions and they should hire you. But I want you to go meet the chief of that section." And so I did, and I waited, and when three months were coming up, I called back, and they said come in for a second interview, and I got hired! [laughs] So I think it's pretty much a pretty classic, from my experience, Washington, DC story.

DEUTSCH: Yes. But Austin ...

PETERSON: It was Austin's girlfriend.

DEUTSCH: Austin's girlfriend. But he was pretty important—where you living at this point?

PETERSON: Well, when Trudy got her job offer, we came out for a couple weeks and stayed at Austin's house, of course. And then, I went back to Iowa to wind things up, and while I was gone Trudy found this house that we're sitting in, which is 810, directly across the street from Austin. And it was for rent. And so she rented this house. So we moved from 813, back to Iowa, and then back to 810, so we knew the block fairly well. And then the following year, the owner who had lived in this house had gotten a job at Princeton University and didn't know if she was going to like it there or whatever, so she rented the house in case she wanted to come back to Washington. Decided she wanted to stay in Princeton and so she

called me and said she was going to sell the house, and I said “Well why don’t we see if we can work out a deal and you don’t have to have a realtor, we’ll just—I’m a lawyer and I do real estate law so I’ll take care of getting the closing taken ...you know I can do all of the... I can get the financing and, you know, the usual kinds of services that a realtor, a real estate firm would provide.” And so we bought this house in 1976 for \$75,000 [laughs], having been able to buy it five years previously for 17.

DEUTSCH: Wow.

PETERSON: Yeah. 70.

DEUTSCH: But even 75 doesn’t sound so bad.

PETERSON: Well, that was a lot of money in those days.

DEUTSCH: Yep.

PETERSON: And what made it possible, of course, was the GI Bill because—I think I had to put down something like \$2000, so... and we’ve owned this house ever since.

DEUTSCH: And, so you stayed in that job? You started working at...

PETERSON: I stayed at the Justice Department for exactly 20 years, yeah.

DEUTSCH: All the time in the same division?

PETERSON: Yeah. Yeah.

DEUTSCH: Dealing mainly with?

PETERSON: When I first got there, the Metro system, subway system, was going great guns in construction and acquiring land. And there was a small group of about five attorneys who were assigned to take care of all of the land acquisition in the Washington metropolitan area no matter who did it, so our biggest amount of work was for the subway system, filing eminent domain condemnation cases and acquiring the land that way. And then when necessary have trials with expert witnesses and juries on how much the property was worth. So I, for the first ten years, tried numerous—I don’t even, I never have kept track—but you know upwards of a hundred cases involving the price, the value of land in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. So I tried cases in Baltimore and DC and Alexandria for the subway system. I also did the... At that same time period, the Park Service was acquiring scenic easements to protect the vista from the C&O Canal and so I worked on a number of those. Like when recently a year or so ago Dan Snyder cut down all of those trees and got in trouble out in—I don’t know

you saw that—well I'm sure I know the property and I'm sure I acquired the easement that prevented him from cutting down all of those trees. So I did that and then also represented Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation in developing Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to the White House, so those real estate acquisitions as well. And then the five of us were sort of like a stable of fire horses because we had a lot of trial experience and...

DEUTSCH: Fire horses?

PETERSON: Yeah, because what would happen is some US Attorney somewhere around the country would have a real estate case and would massively screw it up and it would be set for trial in a week's time and the US Attorney would call up and say, "Help." And so one of us, the bell would go off and we would hop a plane to Portland or Dallas or Miami or you pick the city, and would go in and pick up the case and try it, you know, and so, I mean yeah we were sort of the people who got sent in to...

DEUTSCH: To rescue.

PETERSON: Rescue the disasters or minimize in many cases the disaster that was occurring. So I did that for my first ten years and like many organizations—I mean, I was very good at trying that type of case, and so like a lot of organizations when you have somebody that's very good at what they're doing, you give them a promotion to something that has nothing to do with what they're very good at doing. [Laughter] And so I became the executive officer for the division, which is basically if you think of the managing partner in a law firm. So I did that for the next ten years. I took care of the management of the division, except the cases, so I was budget, personnel, finance, you know everything else.

DEUTSCH: Yeah. Meanwhile on Capitol Hill, you're getting involved in the community?

PETERSON: Yeah, well at first just because of Austin we had to become members of the Restoration Society because he wouldn't let us live on the block if we didn't become members. He was very good at recruiting people and so for a number of years we would just work on the house tour every year. We would, you know you always have a group of people who you rely on year after year to sit on houses. So we did that and then I'm blanking on the year but, oh, in the late 80's, Larry Monaco, I think, was president and they wanted—well, it was kind of interesting, they wanted a co-presidency. They wanted Trudy and me to be co-presidents of the Restoration Society and we had some arguments about whether or not you could have a co-president. And I said it didn't make any sense, so I said I'd be willing to be president but why not have Trudy be president first? She can be president and I'll be vice president and then ...

DEUTSCH: Then we'll switch?

PETERSON: Well, we'll see what happens, but let's not have co-presidents, it doesn't sound very good. And so she was president, and then we had, during her presidency, we had a number of horrific zoning things happen. Not horrific from the standpoint of they were bad zoning things but they were horrific because they got the community very angry.

DEUTSCH: What were some of them?

PETERSON: Well probably the one most people know about is the Capitol Hill Day School wanted to buy a house and expand into the house.

DEUTSCH: Which they subsequently did.

PETERSON: Which they subsequently did. But the Capitol Hill Restoration Society zoning committee voted to oppose and there was a vocal neighbor who lived next door and he was very vocal and argued against it as well, and in those days every zoning committee decision came before the membership meetings so the membership would have to pass on what the zoning committee recommended and so there was a meeting at [in] the basement of St. Peter's Church—the church was packed, literally packed with people and it was a very acrimonious meeting, nobody was happy, and the membership—there was even a big fight over who was a member and who wasn't, it was that—only members can vote and the membership overruled the zoning committee

DEUTSCH: And you were on the zoning committee.

PETERSON: No, I was not.

DEUTSCH: Oh, you were vice president.

PETERSON: Right.

DEUTSCH: Membership overruled the zoning committee.

PETERSON: Right. And but anyway it was a very...

DEUTSCH: Tense.

PETERSON: Tense zoning thing. And then I don't, you know, I really don't remember and I would have to go back into the minutes of the Society, but there was a meeting thereafter and Larry Monaco came to the meeting and just jumped all over the chairman of the zoning committee and I mean it was vicious, really ugly. And they had a huge fight and at the end of which the chairman of the zoning committee resigned and so Trudy turned to Larry and said, "Well, you're now the chairman of the zoning

committee.” And sort of to have some eyes and ears on it, I went on the committee to try and basically see if we couldn’t smooth things over a little bit. And then Trudy no longer was president and since I was up to my keister in zoning, I became the secretary of the Restoration Society and Pat Schauer became president.

DEUTSCH: You became secretary.

PETERSON: And I became secretary. And Pat Schauer never uttered a complete sentence in her entire lifetime and I was to take minutes at these meetings! And I think I deserve an award for having done the best set of minutes that have ever been done for the organization because basically because I wrote what I wanted them to say [laughs].

DEUTSCH: I’m not going to put that in.

PETERSON: [laughs]

DEUTSCH: I’m not going to put that in the program, you’ll be glad to hear.

PETERSON: [laughs]

DEUTSCH: Your clerical skills came in handy, put it that way.

PETERSON: Yes. And so I was secretary for two years and then I stayed on the zoning committee, and by that time I’d become chairman of the zoning committee and then when Pat Schauer left the presidency I became president, in ’91 I think. And I was president for three terms.

DEUTSCH: Three one year terms.

PETERSON: Yep. And I actually my goal was even in those days was to get younger people than even I was involved, and we had Brad Braden who lives, who lived around the corner at that time and so I had him as my vice president at that time with the idea that when I sat down he would become president. And he did. And I stopped being president and then I retired from the Justice Department and Trudy retired from the Archives. And she got a job offer, the one that she wasn’t supposed to get, and we moved to Budapest, Hungary.

DEUTSCH: And what was the job in Budapest?

PETERSON: She had read somewhere that George Soros was establishing a university, a graduate school, in Budapest because he was Hungarian, and that to build up his library and research facility for the university he had bought the records of the Radio Liberty Radio Free Europe and was moving those

from Munich to Budapest to put them in an archives. And Trudy had retired and she said, you know, well first she had checked to make sure that they weren't US government records.

DEUTSCH: Yeah, who do they belong to?

PETERSON: Yeah, who do they belong to? But it became clear that they weren't US government records and so then she said, "Well, you know, he really needs an archivist. I wonder if he has one." And she said, "I'm going to write him a letter and tell him he should hire an archivist and tell him I'm available." And she said, "What do you think?" And I said, "Well, it's only going to cost you a 32 cent stamp or something. Why don't you go ahead and do that." I was still working and she had retired, and the idea was to keep one of us employed, and so she wrote him a letter and a week later she was called and said can you come up to New York for an interview. So it was a cold, you know they weren't advertising for anything you know. She just...

DEUTSCH: She just...

PETERSON: Right, and within another week she had a job offer.

DEUTSCH: Wow.

PETERSON: So it was fish or cut bait time.

DEUTSCH: So you moved to Budapest.

PETERSON: Uh huh.

DEUTSCH: So this is '92, '93?

PETERSON: No this is '95 now.

DEUTSCH: '95. How exciting!

PETERSON: And we lived in Budapest from '95 to '98, and then she made the mistake—he wanted to know how long it was going to take to do this job, and she said three to five years to get everything set up. And she got it done in three years. She made the mistake of doing it ahead of time and on budget, and so she really she could have stayed but there wasn't that much, the fun part of the job had gone away. And so she then—any number of UN agencies were then coming up on their 50th anniversaries, were coming up, and the UN high commissioner for refugees in Geneva wanted to get an archives set up for their 50th anniversary celebration. And so she was hired by them to come in and set up an archives. So she worked for the UN.

DEUTSCH: So did you move to Geneva?

PETERSON: So we moved to Geneva...

DEUTSCH: Now I just want to go back to Budapest for a minute. What did you do in Budapest?

PETERSON: I did a number of things. I know this is going to be hard to believe but about half my time was just dealing with living in Budapest.

DEUTSCH: Hmm. I used to live in Moscow. I gotcha.

PETERSON: OK. And so Trudy could work full time. I spent about half time taking care of the bureaucracy, and you had an Austro-Hungarian bureaucracy, then had a communist bureaucracy—not replac[ing] it, but put on top of it—and then now you had the new robber baron form of capitalism come in and you had some of the new agencies, or places had modern regulations, and you could do things fairly quickly. But other places had stuff, rules and regulations, and like you always had to go to the post office to buy stamps to put on documents. They were big on you had to have stamps, you had to pay your bills at the post office—you couldn't mail them in, you had to go in person.

DEUTSCH: So you spent a lot of your time standing in line.

PETERSON: Right. And then the other part of my time when we were both in Budapest and Geneva, I—there is something called the International Council on Archives, which is an organization of the head archivists of every country in the world.

DEUTSCH: International Council on Archives?

PETERSON: Archives, right, ICA for short. So this is an organization of national archivists and they had a legal committee that didn't have any lawyers on it [laughs], and Trudy and I in 1985 had done a hundred-page training manual for archivists on archives and law, so laws involved in archives and how to deal with them. Trudy had a teaching Fulbright in '84-'85—no '83-'84. She had a teaching Fulbright to Finland, and I stayed here and earned money so we could afford to live. And she went off and taught American history at the university in [unintelligible] Finland, and as our sort of project to keep us connected we decided to write this manual together because we could write—we divided up the chapters, and we could write them and mail the to each other.

DEUTSCH: So was the manual on ...

PETERSON: Archives and law.

DEUTSCH: Archives.

PETERSON: Right. So I did have some experience with archives. I don't want to—so, and the legal issues—and so I went on this legal committee and then subsequently became the secretary of the committee, so I was involved in... Our committee met once a, physically met once a year and then did publications.

DEUTSCH: And was it people from all different countries?

PETERSON: Yeah.

DEUTSCH: Yeah? Fun.

PETERSON: And I was the only native English speaker on the committee. The committee operates in two languages—well, ICA operates in two languages, French and English—and our committee, we had those, so to be on our committee you had to either speak French or you had to speak English, and you had to be able to comprehend the other language. Didn't have to be able to speak, but you had to at least be able to listen to a conversation and understand generally what was going on.

DEUTSCH: Chien m'echant, maitre feroce [a sign on Peterson's door].

PETERSON: Right. So our committee operated, basically we spoke French—you spoke French when you spoke, and I spoke English when I spoke, and it actually works, believe it or not. But I was the secretary for the committee, and then I was also the editor of the publications because the publications were all in English. And so you needed someone to be able to take what was written by people where English wasn't their first language and put it into more intelligible or more easier reading—I guess is what I would say, and so I did that until 2000, until actually when we moved back here

DEUTSCH: And when did you move back here?

PETERSON: 2001. So I was on that committee, planning the annual meeting, working, doing lots of publications and editing. And then while we were in Budapest, they had a department of environment, and I would do periodic short courses for that when invited. So these were people getting masters degrees and environmental studies and I would take...

DEUTSCH: And this was in English?

PETERSON: Yeah. Everything at Soros' university is in English.

DEUTSCH: Oh this is at Soros' university.

PETERSON: Yeah.

DEUTSCH: What's the university called?

PETERSON: Central European University. And I had worked on the Exxon Valdez oil spill in a management position, not as an attorney, and I took—I would take that case as a case study mainly with the dean of the ...

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

TAPE 2, SIDE 1

PETERSON: 17th.

DEUTSCH: 17th. Excuse me.

PETERSON: So these were all students coming from former communist countries and so the chairman of the department said he wanted me to do something that would show them—because they all thought the US environmental laws were perfect—and so he wanted me to sort of disabuse them of that. And so I used something like the Exxon Valdez oil spill as a way to show them that the US environmental laws and activities aren't perfect. So I did that. And then I was also in Budapest. There's the Franz Liszt Music Academy, which is like Juilliard, and it is it's a top-rated music academy in Europe. But post communism, the government didn't have money to give to the arts, you know to support this, and so it was grossly under funded. The professors stayed and taught because, basically, what were they going to do? But they got very poor wages and the music academy was becoming run-down, and so it was actually a group of diplomats [that] decided to form a foundation to be a charitable arm for the Franz Liszt Music Academy. And I got on the finance committee of the... The Canadian ambassador and, you may or may not know, but there are a lot of, a lot of Hungarians immigrated to the US in '56 and, but also, a hell of a lot of them went to Canada. So there's a huge Hungarian population in Canada. And so the Canadian Ambassador there was a woman and her husband accompanied her, so basically the husband of the Canadian ambassador and I and a few other people became the fundraisers for the Franz Liszt Music Academy. The problem was nobody knew how to raise money because they'd never had to.

DEUTSCH: It's not a skill you'd develop in a communist country.

PETERSON: Right. And so what we tried to do is we had a committee where there were equal number of westerners with Hungarians, and we tried to teach them how to raise money. And of course the hardest thing was to get them to ask for money.

DEUTSCH: Yeah. Totally. [phone rings]

PETERSON: I'm just going to let that ring through. And so that was the most difficult thing, but we got money to fix the concert organ and we got enough money to pay for concerts. But of course they had no mechanism to encourage donation, so there wasn't like a tax deduction if you made a donation. There was nothing to encourage individuals. They got nothing if they donated money. But businesses could take it as a business expense, so we did a lot more fundraising among the business community because they could at least write it off as a business expense. And we encouraged the government to pass a law that would induce people to give money, and what they finally came up with is you could designate a certain amount of your taxes that you were being paid—or a small portion—to a charitable organization, so it's a little different from the US law.

DEUTSCH: Yes.

PETERSON: But they did that. But actually we were pretty successful. There were a number of big businesses who wanted their name on cultural affairs—it was mostly banks and oil companies, pharmaceutical—and we would even put a sign on the stage. I can't imagine this at the Kennedy Center you know...

DEUTSCH: This concert is brought to you by...

PETERSON: ...HSBC or you know [laughter]. But that's what they wanted.

DEUTSCH: It worked.

PETERSON: And they paid for it you know.

DEUTSCH: So did you love living in Budapest?

PETERSON: I absolutely loved Budapest. When we went there, we told them... Well it's kind of interesting, Trudy, we immediately said, "Well, we've always talked about how we want to go off to Europe and live, and here's this opportunity. We've got to be idiots not to take advantage of it, and if we don't like it..."

DEUTSCH: We can come home!

PETERSON: "...we can come home!" I mean, and we kept the house and rented it out. And so off we went. The Soros Foundation wouldn't let her take the job until she had at least gone there and seen [laughs].

DEUTSCH: That was wise.

PETERSON: So we said alright, and so they paid for a trip for us to go over. And we were greeted and treated and wined and dined like visiting royalty and given a real—you know, it was like fraternity rush, you know, and we liked it. But while we were there we went looking for flats, and I had told them in advance that we lived in a historic district, we lived in the center of the city and we would like to look at places similar to that. And so when we get there, they have had a real estate company come up with a bunch of places, and none of them were in the center of city. They were all out in the Buda Hills, very nice neighborhoods, villas in the Buda Hills. And I said to the realtor, “This isn’t what we want to do, we want a place in the center of the city.” And she said, “No no no no, all of the foreigners live in the Buda Hills! That’s where you want to be, you can have your car, you can have....”

DEUTSCH: You’re an American, you want a car!

PETERSON: Right. Well, a foreigner. And I said, “Well, I’m selling the car.” [laughs] And I said, “No no no, we want to look in the center of the city.” So we didn’t go to any of the villas in the Buda Hills, and a day later they came up with a bunch of flats in the center of the city. And so we found one in a building that was two and a half blocks from the Danube, right in the heart of Budapest. I mean, couldn’t be more centrally located, and we were the first non-Hungarians to live in this building. And in fact, the building still had the Housemeister—I don’t know if you know what—the Housemeister was the secret police person that lived in the building in an apartment at the entrance, sort of like the concierge.

DEUTSCH: The concierge, slightly more sinister.

PETERSON: Well, not more sinister, it’s just they kept track of who came and went and whatever. Called the Housemeister. So they still had the Housemeister still living in the... I don’t know who she reported to, or if she just lived there now. But anyway, so we were the first non-Hungarians and they... I’m rather gregarious, and so when I see somebody, I say “hello” and “good morning” and “how are you?” and these people at first wouldn’t respond because they had never had this happen to them in their whole life. And it took about six months to a year before I could get them to...

DEUTSCH: It’s interesting. We don’t realize what an American trait that is, that just talking to people.

PETERSON: Right.

DEUTSCH: They came around?

PETERSON: Eventually most of them came around. And then I discovered most of them even spoke English so... But I loved the city. It was in post communist chaos. There was a huge black market and I

thrived in the black market [laughter]. I loved shopping and wheeling and dealing in the black market. Trudy couldn't do that where she worked because of course Soros was an American foundation and they couldn't deal.

DEUTSCH: When you say you loved wheeling and dealing in the black market, what do you mean? Like selling American CD's or....

PETERSON: No, no, part of what Trudy had to do was... She was to do a lot of entertaining. She had to do a lot of business entertaining for the Foundation, and so we had a lot of receptions and dinner parties in our flat. And directly across the street, in other words about 40 feet away, was one of the best restaurants in Budapest, and so I of course... I was walking the dog and I would stop and talk to the waiters and, you know, the chef and everything during the day, and finally I said to them, "Would you cater a reception or cater a dinner party?" And they said, "Oh yeah, all we would have to do is just walk it across the street. You know that's no different... it just comes out of the kitchen and instead of going to the table, we'll just bring it up to your apartment and serve it." And so I said to them, "Well, how much will it cost?" They said, "Well, do you want a receipt or not?" And I said, "Well what's the difference in price if I ask for a receipt or I don't get a receipt?" And they said about half.

DEUTSCH: Wow.

PETERSON: And so I could do like a reception, just a reception with heavy hors d'oeuvres, so basically a standing dinner with wine, and it would be like 30 dollars a head without a receipt.

DEUTSCH: Without a receipt.

PETERSON: So that's what I mean by...

DEUTSCH: Right. Sort of working the system.

PETERSON: Right.

DEUTSCH: Did you take—was it this dog? Did you take him or did you have a Hungarian dog?

PETERSON: No no no, we've had English setters since 1972, so we took his father—so his father actually went from Washington, DC to Budapest to Geneva, where he sired this one, and then back here before he died.

DEUTSCH: So what was his name, the well-traveled dog?

PETERSON: He was OB.

DEUTSCH: O-B-I-E?

PETERSON: Just OB.

DEUTSCH: OB. Oh, like O-B. Okay.

PETERSON: He was an—orange Belton is his color.

DEUTSCH: And his son is now...

PETERSON: Beall. Named after Austin Beall.

DEUTSCH: Aw. That's nice. Ok, so you came [laughter]—it's very nice.

PETERSON: Austin didn't like dogs except he liked our dogs. That was his one concession to us and so after he died this puppy was born and we said—you know, sort of in the fashion of naming someone after the relative who most recently died—and so he was named after Austin.

DEUTSCH: Ok. So you come back to the States, 2001?

PETERSON: 2001 [sound of dog moving]...

DEUTSCH: Oh, he heard us talking about him.

PETERSON: Yeah. And Trudy decides then to start a consulting business—yes, we said your name didn't we? Yeah, you're a good dog. Yeah, see, he went away when I told him to.

DEUTSCH: A very good dog. I'm most impressed.

PETERSON: A very good—he's the best one we've ever had. He is just the best disciplined.

DEUTSCH: And very beautiful.

PETERSON: You know Marie Hertzberg of course?

DEUTSCH: Yes, of course.

PETERSON: She has Devon, her, he's an English setter too.

DEUTSCH: I see Devon all the time.

PETERSON: But, and—[to the dog] no, go on—and so we came back here, and I got back involved with the Restoration Society. Went back on the zoning—Lyle Schauer had taken over the zoning committee. When I left, he had been a member of the committee all that time and he took over and Lyle said he was

ready to pass the baton back. And because Lyle was also treasurer, and so I went on the zoning committee and have been doing that...

DEUTSCH: You're still on it?

PETERSON: I'm still the chairman of the zoning committee and I've been also on a crusade to straighten out DCRA which is Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs.

DEUTSCH: How's that going? Department of Consumer Regulatory...

PETERSON: Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. Like if you want a building permit.

DEUTSCH: Right.

PETERSON: Well, it's like, it's like dealing with a lot of entrenched bureaucracies. There's progress, but it's slow. Yeah. And actually, I've been doing that for about four years—yeah, four years, five years—and we've actually had a lot of progress. It's just that given the time span it's taken, people don't notice it. But actually things are much better, they have a long ways to go because it's basically a dysfunctional agency and it's just hard to, you know... I mean, if you were running a business, what you would do is you would sell it off to some fool who would buy it and then you would recreate it and start all over.

DEUTSCH: Um. But you can't do that.

PETERSON: But you can't do that as a city so, I mean...

DEUTSCH: Let's talk about the Market.

PETERSON: Ok.

DEUTSCH: Unless there's something important—unless there's something about this that you want to...

PETERSON: You're the...

DEUTSCH: Boss? OK, so last spring...

PETERSON: Yeah, gee, I'm blanking on the date, I thought I had that memorized.

DEUTSCH: Wasn't it April 30th?

PETERSON: Yeah, I think it was April 30th. Well actually it was kind of funny. When I go to bed, the only question I have is: am I going to go to sleep before my head hits the pillow or after my head hits the pillow?

DEUTSCH: [laughs] You're not a lie-awake-tossing-and-turning guy?

PETERSON: I go sleep that's it, I'm out.

DEUTSCH: Yeah.

PETERSON: And I don't wake up for anything, I sleep very nicely. But Trudy is just 180 degrees from that. So she woke me up about 2:00, 2:30 in the morning saying "I smell smoke." And being a typical worry wart she does that occasionally. She'll wake me up and say there's something wrong, and then I go look and there's nothing wrong. So I'm about ready to say oh, it's alright...But I could smell smoke too, so I got up and I wandered all over the house first, of course, to make sure ...

DEUTSCH: The house isn't on fire.

PETERSON: ...we weren't smoking. And then I went outside to see if one of the neighbors was on fire and I could hear fire trucks, and so I could tell there was a big fire somewhere. But it wasn't us, and it wasn't any of our neighbors that I could see, so I went back upstairs and told her, "Yeah, you're right, there's a fire somewhere. I can hear fire trucks so..."

DEUTSCH: Go back to sleep.

PETERSON: Yeah. Go back to sleep. It's fine. And I promptly went back to sleep and woke up the next morning. And Trudy has a contract where she works for the World Bank advising them on archives, and when she's in town she usually goes there every morning, and so the dog and I walk her to the Metro, Eastern Market Metro. And so we're walking down the street and—I can't remember but—somebody comes our way and says, "Are you on your way to the fire?" And I said, "What do you mean?" "Oh, the Eastern Market burned." And so then I go "Oh, that's what we smelled," and I'm going, "Oh no," you know.

And so we walk on down there, and you know the rest is history from the standpoint of... You saw the building was—the street was all blocked off and the fire trucks were still there. And in fact at that time, 8:30 in the morning or so, they were still knocking down flare ups that were occurring. But the fire was basically out, and they were pulling off parts of the burned roof to make sure that, you know, that there wasn't stuff burning.

And a number of us were standing around, and the conversation got going about, well you know, the city can replace the Market—in fact we have plans to replace the Market—I mean, so this can happen. And, but, we were talking and saying, “Well, gee, what are the merchants going to do?” because we all agreed that, you know, you can replace the Market but if you don’t have those merchants, it’s not a market. I mean, it’s... [laughs] And we were also talking about, “Gee, I don’t want to see this become a Dean and Deluca outlet, or...” You know, there was some concern about [how] we need to keep our merchants together because they’re as much the Market as the building is. And we were sitting having coffee in the tables and chairs in front of Port City Java. Dick Wolf was there, and we said, “Well, we need... there are going to be people interested in giving money,” because we’d had several people already come up and say, “Where do I make the donation?” [laughs]

DEUTSCH: Isn’t that interesting!

PETERSON: Yeah, and we decided, you know, we should get ahead of the curve and form something that could act as the place to give money, as opposed to having 16 places spring up all at once, because everybody’s going to want to do something. Not that 16 was bad, it just showed how concerned people were. And so Dick and I talked, and we agreed that the Restoration Society would put in 10,000 as seed money. And the more we talked about it, we thought, you know, we really... the Restoration Society wants to help, but this is really an issue that’s much bigger than the Restoration Society. And at that point, I called Steve Cymrot and told him what we were thinking of doing, and I said, “I think this is what the Foundation should do because the Foundation in a way represents money raising, fund raising and giving...”

DEUTSCH: Across the...

PETERSON: Community, right. And I told him the Restoration Society will put in 10,000 as sort of a, well we’ve already got 10 so let’s, you know... Because what that does is you can go to CHAMPS and then say, “Well, we got 10,000 from the Restoration Society, what can you guys do?” It just helps. So Steve talk[ed] to Nicky, and they said “We’re coming over!” And so we sat with Steve and Nicky, and they agreed, yeah this makes good sense, and, yes, we should do it right away so that we’re first and word gets out and stuff like that. And then Nicky walked down the street and Melissa was there, and Melissa says “Oh great, we’ll put a story in the RAG and, but, what are we going to call it?” [laughs] And so on the spot Nicky and Melissa decide it was “Eastern Market—Keep it Going.” And I said, “Oh, this is really good.” And there was going to be a press conference the next day. “Let’s have some handouts for that.” And I came back home with the dog—the dog had been there the whole time—and then the next thing I

know is the phone is ringing and it's Nicky, and she says "You have to be the chairman of the committee." And I go basically, "Oh shit."

DEUTSCH: [laughs] I won't put that in the article.

PETERSON: But she said, "Well, it was your idea, and if you're going to think it up you've got to..."

DEUTSCH: And when Nicky says jump...

PETERSON: Right. Well I've always known that. So I sort of became, I was sort of Shanghaied into being chairman, and I really enjoyed it, had a lot of fun. So even out of a tragedy you can enjoy yourself, I guess.

DEUTSCH: Well, it seemed to me that from the end of April through, well you know, the next three months, that's pretty much what you did. I mean you were pretty busy

PETERSON: Right. Right. I was busy daily, yeah. And you know, we're very lucky on Capitol Hill in that we have a ton of resources. We typically... if you have any field of expertise, we ordinarily have at least two people who are world-wide, acknowledged experts in whatever it is. We had a number of, small number of organizations jump up to raise money and to do things, but once they found out the Foundation was doing something, they all universally, every one of them, said "That's great, we'll help, we'll do advertising, we'll, you know..." So there was not even one organization says, "Well we want to..." I mean it was, you know, everybody had their eye on the ball, where they wanted to go, and as long as someone was willing to do it, that was what was important. It was a very unusual community effort. There were no dissenters. I mean, there were no arguments, there were no, you know ...

DEUTSCH: This is so important.

PETERSON: Yeah, I mean everybody said, "This is what we've got to do, let's do it!" And at least for the first two months, cash just sort of flowed in the door. You know, you can almost back the Brinks truck up and just have them load it directly. It was just an amazing outpouring! And I had people come up to me, crying about the Market, and [saying] "Where do I give money?" I remember one woman came to the booth saying, "Oh, this is the reason I moved to the Hill! I feel so awful it burned!" And she stood there and wrote me a check for \$2000.

DEUTSCH: Wow!

PETERSON: So, I mean, it was just, it really touched the hearts of everybody. It really was... I would never have guessed that, that it would have been that touching to people. I knew it would be important, but I never...

DEUTSCH: The depth of the emotion?

PETERSON: Yeah. So as a fundraiser it was ideal job. Here you had all these people who wanted to do something and all they were looking for is where can they give their money!

DEUTSCH: Right. It wasn't hard.

PETERSON: It wasn't hard, and when you went to ask people for money, they knew why you were there, and before you could even ask for it, they were already saying, "Well, we're going to host a party, or we're going to do this," you know.

DEUTSCH: Were you at the booth every, every weekend, every weekend day all summer, pretty much, or...

PETERSON: Yes, except for a couple times when I was out of town. But even then, we had one company volunteer, and so for the first two months, every Saturday this company staffed the booth.

DEUTSCH: What was the company?

PETERSON: I was afraid you were going to ask me that! [ed: Corporate Executive Board]

DEUTSCH: It doesn't matter.

PETERSON: But they would just send me an email every week saying, "Here are the people who are coming on Saturday and the time periods they are going to be there."

DEUTSCH: Incredible.

PETERSON: Yeah.

END OF TAPE 2/SIDE 1

TAPE 2, SIDE 2

PETERSON: My management style at the Justice Department was the style that's been written... It was not mine, I didn't invent it, but it was called "management by walking around." And the theory is, if you're a manager, people don't come into your office and tell you what's going wrong, but if you show up in their office and say "What's up?" odds are they'll tell you. And so I spent a lot of time walking

around the Justice Department going into people's offices to discover what needed to be taken care of or fixed. It's just a thing if you're there, they'll talk to you.

DEUTSCH: So you transferred that to the Market?

PETERSON: So I transferred that to the Market, and so I would try to go by there twice a day and just talk to people.

DEUTSCH: The merchants?

PETERSON: The merchants. And I made up the usual phone list so I could call them and got their emails, because it was—they just needed to tell you what was going on and lots of times it was like being the psychiatrist, Dr. Freud. All I had to do was listen. But I think they felt they could talk to me and they could complain, and often I couldn't do anything about it, but I think it helped to establish a relationship then that when there were things I actually could take care of they would tell me about it. And that's how we found out, sort of, what needed to be... we could start setting priorities and we could start getting estimates. I tried to... the business people at the market are wonderful people and they know their particular business very well. However, having said all of that, they are horrible small businessmen.

DEUTSCH: In other words, they know vegetables but they don't know...

PETERSON: How to be a small business person. And so a lot of what I was doing was forcing them to go through the kinds of things that a small business would go through: What have we lost? What do we need to replace? What do we actually need? Because you really didn't want to go in and duplicate what they, what they had before because they had obsolete equipment. They had obsolete ways of setting up. If you go in the market now, in fact, and look you'll see that the Calomirises have set up a lot differently than they were set up in the old Market. But this gave the sons a chance to set up the business the way they would like to run it and not the way the old man wants to run it. And they have set it up in a much better way and they have started carrying different products and... [laughs] yeah.

DEUTSCH: Out of the ashes...

PETERSON: Right. But you know, I discovered the fish people, you know they're just lucky people buy fish.

DEUTSCH: Meaning?

PETERSON: They don't have a clue how to run a business.

DEUTSCH: [laughs] I won't say that.

PETERSON: No. They know how to clean fish.

DEUTSCH: Yeah. And they're all characters. I mean everybody in there's got, they're all opinionated and they've all got their ideas.

PETERSON: Right. So...

DEUTSCH: So someone to listen to them was a big.

PETERSON: Right, it was important.

DEUTSCH: And they felt that for years nobody had been listening to them.

PETERSON: Right. And then we started to discover, oh, how many illegal aliens were working there, and we began to discover who hadn't paid their taxes...

DEUTSCH: Was there a lot of that?

PETERSON: Oh, a lot of some things and not so much of other things. But a lot of skeletons. The fire made a lot of skeletons have to come out of the closet. And so I have seen too much in my lifetime to be shocked by any of this. I wasn't shocked at all, I was expecting it, in fact. It was anguish by some of them to have to 'fess up to some of this stuff and to come clean, and I worked with them on... We got a couple of volunteer lawyers to work with them and we got it all taken care of [laughs].

DEUTSCH: Volunteer lawyers. And then I love the story of getting the Korean translator for the...

PETERSON: Well, yeah. Trudy gets credit for this to an extent. She has taught in Korea and taught in Asia a number of times, and I have gone with her. In fact she lived in Korea for, what, six weeks one time teaching. And so I have, through that and having gone and visited her when she was over there—I can't say I totally understand Asian mentality and social psychology, but I have a passing acquaintance with it. And so I could tell fairly quickly that the Jungs' language skills were not up to the task, that they didn't understand a hell of a lot of what was going on, and no one was looking out for them and they could end up being left behind. And they really didn't want to ask for help, but they really needed help, and so I tried to figure out a way to do it in such a fashion that I wouldn't insult them, but we would still get them the help. And Nicky actually gets the credit for this. She discovered that the guy who runs Yes! [local organic grocery store]. He's Korean, we all knew that, but he also happens to be the president of the Korean Chamber of Commerce. So it was very easy to say to them, "Look, this is getting complicated. We've got this guy who's the president of the Korean Chamber of Commerce. He wants to help with translation." And they were very relieved. And so we got him to come in and... Plus, I would spend a lot

of time with them to make sure they understood what I was saying and doing and then I asked the Calomiris family, “When you find out something, there’s going to be a meeting or there’s something going to happen, would you do me a favor? I know they’re your competitors, but would you make sure they understand?” And they agreed to do that.

DEUTSCH: That was brilliant.

PETERSON: So that they wouldn’t be left out. So. So. Yeah, well the Calomirises are actually pretty generous people under all that.

DEUTSCH: Yeah.

PETERSON: So, but we sort of got... It was really touching because at one point the Jungs told, I’m blanking on his name, told the guy who owns Yes! “This would never happen in Korea.” They were so stunned at the public response and how people wanted to help them. They were just, well, they came to tears of joy. I mean, truly, they were crying, but it was just, you know, this emotion of “How can people do this for us?”

DEUTSCH: Yeah, wow.

PETERSON: [laughs]

DEUTSCH: So do you remember the statistic, how much money you gave out in small grants?

PETERSON: Well, we’ve done close to \$450,000 [ed: \$400,000] in small grants.

DEUTSCH: To the merchants?

PETERSON: Uh huh. Well, when you say to the merchants, sometimes we paid it directly to the vendor, sometimes we gave it to the merchant. I mean, but, yeah.

DEUTSCH: To cover their expenses.

PETERSON: Right.

DEUTSCH: It’s an incredible story isn’t?

PETERSON: Oh, I think it’s remarkable. I’m delighted to have been a part of it. And I’m always embarrassed when people give me credit for it because this is something that truly the community did. You know, it’s sort of like I held the money bag while they poured it in, and I’m getting the credit! But, I

mean, the community really—they would have done this whether I'd been the one there holding the bag. You know what I'm saying?

DEUTSCH: Yeah. But you, there were a lot of details that you attended to.

PETERSON: I agree. But all I'm saying is the community—it was easy because the community was so responsive, you know, so it's really the community [that] should all pat themselves on the back and say "You know, we really did a good job here."

DEUTSCH: [laughs] Do you know Dan Tangherlini?

PETERSON: Oh sure. When I was president of the Restoration Society, he was the chairman of our environment committee. He was sort of this fuzzy-bearded little kid who was ...[laughs]. Why do you ask?

DEUTSCH: Because he is your co-honoree. You know that?

PETERSON: Yeah.

DEUTSCH: Yeah. So it's kind of nice you'll be sharing the—

PETERSON: Yeah, I've had my run-ins with Dan, and I actually had one run-in once with Emily [laughs].

DEUTSCH: Really?

PETERSON: I was telling Nicky this is quite ironic.

DEUTSCH: Should I turn the machine off?

PETERSON: No, I don't care.

DEUTSCH: What was your run-in with Emily?

PETERSON: Oh, they were, she was letting homeless people sleep on the steps and in the parking lot of the Methodist Church because they needed some place to sleep. And they were basically trashing the area and I called her, as the vice president of the Restoration Society, and I called her and said "You know, I'm fully sympathetic with giving homeless people a place to sleep but I don't think this is appropriate, and they're making a mess, they're noisy at night. It's just not appropriate. She got very, not angry, but huffy with me a little bit. And I said "Well I'm just calling to tell you, this is not good and it's not very good publicity for your organization, and I think you should take care of it." And she did.

DEUTSCH: Yeah.

PETERSON: But we had a few...

DEUTSCH: Moments.

PETERSON: Moments, yeah [laughs].

DEUTSCH: Are there any other Hill organizations that you've been involved with that you want to mention?

PETERSON: Well, it's kind of funny, this is one that most people don't remember or never even knew existed, but we had something called the "New Music Orchestra."

DEUTSCH: I certainly have not heard of that.

PETERSON: That in the early '80's, the concept was composers write things but they seldom get to hear them played. So you write something for an orchestra but unless you can convince some conductor to take it on you never get to hear it. So the idea of the New Music Orchestra was to give composers an opportunity to hear their works. And we would give free concerts of new works.

DEUTSCH: Are you a musician?

PETERSON: Not really. I have played a number of musical instruments—I'm a big music fan but I'm not a...

DEUTSCH: You were involved in organizing this?

PETERSON: Right. I was the drum major. I was the drum major in high school.

DEUTSCH: That's important.

PETERSON: But, anyway, so we had a guy who was a composer himself who lived on the Hill and taught music and so this was his idea. And I got together with him and we formed a 501(C)(3) so we could get donations, and I got it all set up as a proper organization. We did fundraising. And then about four times a year we would do a concert in the North Hall at the Eastern Market. This went on for about three or four years. I can say that for one of the concerts I had to haul a virginal in my car, and it's not everybody that can say they had a virginal [laughter] in their car. But...

DEUTSCH: Where'd you get the virginal?

PETERSON: The virginal player came with virginal, but it had to be hauled, you know. But, so the concerts were free, and actually surprisingly well-attended considering the type of music that was being played. The musicians were all Capitol Hill, not all but mostly from Capitol Hill, and they volunteered, they were unpaid. We had to pay a few principals, but most of the musicians were gratis. We had to pay ASCAP [American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers] fees, of course, because we were performing music, so we joined ASCAP. Because in the concerts we would always play something traditional so it wasn't a whole concert of new music, you actually had some traditional stuff. And actually some of the stuff that was composed, I thought was quite good. But whether it was ever performed again or went into the dead file, I don't know.

DEUTSCH: Was Sis McCay involved at all?

PETERSON: I don't recognize that name but...

DEUTSCH: She's a composer who ...

PETERSON: Yeah. Anyway, so we, actually we had one person, a composer who actually had stuff played by Bernstein in the New York Philharmonic. He had one that he had written and he wanted to hear it. And he paid, he actually made a donation, I mean he wasn't just, you know... He made a nice donation so that we could have a concert and he really had fun. He talked, and told about the piece. You know, this went on for about four or five years.

DEUTSCH: And how many musicians would you say?

PETERSON: Oh, upwards of 40. So that's a little different...

DEUTSCH: That is a little different. Anything else?

PETERSON: No, I don't think so. I mean right now, I'm involved in the rewrite... The DC zoning regulations are 50 years old this year. And they have become a hodgepodge of regulations and, I mean, there are regulations for penny arcades and ice house and, you know, boarding house, you know, and it's just become a mess. And so there's a...the city is going to rewrite the zoning regulations and each ward council member gets to, got to appoint someone to be on task force that oversees the rewrite, and so Tommy appointed me to that. At my request [laughs]. But...

DEUTSCH: Sounds like a very appropriate...

PETERSON: No, I'm looking forward to it. We've had our first meeting and I'm going to have a lot of fun, so...I mean my view on stuff now is if I'm not going to have any fun, I'm not going to do it, so you know...

DEUTSCH: And is the market thing finished? Do you anticipate...

PETERSON: No, the market isn't finished. There are two reasons it's not finished. One, we have money, and so people are always trying to get at our money. And, two, when the merchants move back to the restored market, we're going to have expenses then to pick up.

DEUTSCH: Right.

PETERSON: So we got a grant from the city of \$100,000 for this year and we're going, already I've gotten requests, what's happening now is the city is making requests to me to spend money because they don't have money for things.

DEUTSCH: What is the city requesting?

PETERSON: Well, they'd like to put ceiling fans in the temporary building, for instance. They'd like to put a bike rack on the Eighth Street side. Piddly stuff. But my strategy to date has been to sort of say, "Well, I'm really interested in this." And then stall.

DEUTSCH: [laughs]

PETERSON: To see if they really can't come up with the money.

DEUTSCH: Right.

PETERSON: Because we're talking about such small amounts. Typically in a budget you spill more than they need.

DEUTSCH: Right, they ought to be able to do it.

PETERSON: Right. So I've just sort of pleasantly stalled, I guess would be the way to do it. So, but we will have what I consider really legitimate needs when people move—equipment will be broken in the move, it'll have to be installed differently. I mean, there'll be all kinds of things that just come up.

DEUTSCH: Do you have views on the closing of Seventh Street versus the non?

PETERSON: Well, right now, yeah, I have views. Right now the only way to accommodate everybody is by closing Seventh Street.

DEUTSCH: Yeah.

PETERSON: So to say Seventh Street shouldn't be closed on the weekends, the question becomes "Well, what do you do with the vendors that need to set up, that used to set up in front of the Market or beside the Market? Where are you going to put them?" And the only place to put them, frankly, is in the street. So, even if they don't like it and they would like the street open, we don't have any place to put vendors, so it's... Now long term, I'd like to see some things happen there so that the street could be closed on the weekends. But there's a lot of things that need to happen before that's true. And the big one would be Hine Junior High is going to—by all, everything we know—is probably going to become vacant next year, and I would like to see us do one of the things Montgomery County does and has done very successfully in Bethesda and places like that—where they put in parking garages that during the day serve the business community and on nights and weekends serve the theater and the restaurants.

DEUTSCH: Yeah.

PETERSON: In other words, so that—and the apartments—so that basically you have a parking garage, but it's used 24 hours.

DEUTSCH: Yeah.

PETERSON: It's full, or near full, 24 hours. And I'd like to see some development on Hine's site that would include parking that would be good parking for the Market on the weekends. And then I think you could have ...[tape stops]

TAPE 3/SIDE 1

DEUTSCH: Now why is it—this is Stephanie Deutsch, January 25, 2008, second interview with Gary Peterson. Can you just say something into your microphone?

PETERSON: Like something very stupid.

DEUTSCH: Yeah.

PETERSON: And it works?

DEUTSCH: It works. Just speak up, okay?

PETERSON: Okay.

DEUTSCH: Great. Okay. Wonderful. I introduced the thing before you came. Often when I see you, you wear a lapel pin of a frying pan. Can you tell me why that is?

PETERSON: [laughs] Sure. Well, let's see. Almost a year ago—it'll be on the 31st of January, in fact, today is the 25th, so we're not too far away—about 9:30, 9:45 in the evening, I was upstairs watching The Sopranos reruns because we had been living in Europe during the whole time of the Sopranos and didn't see any of them, and so I was catching up.

DEUTSCH: Catching up.

PETERSON: And Trudy was in her office working and we heard police car sirens and a helicopter and Trudy hollered at me, "There's something going on. You'd better go look." And so I was grumbling because it was interrupting my viewing the Sopranos episode and got up and reluctantly went downstairs and went into our kitchen, which has the door to the backyard. And I looked out and I could see people running around on Constitution Avenue, policemen with drawn guns running up and down. And I could see the helicopter search light bouncing off houses and places.

And we have a light to the back porch and the backyard that would assist the police, so I looked carefully to make sure no one was on our back porch and opened the back door and flipped on the lights for the police. And I heard—the door to our kitchen is directly across the room from the door to the outside—and I heard the door from the basement coming into the kitchen open, and a guy came through the door. And I quickly hollered out the door to the police, "He's in here!" And there was a dirty frying pan sitting on the sink that Trudy had earlier braised leeks in...

DEUTSCH: [laughs]

PETERSON: And without thinking, I grabbed the frying pan and literally jumped across the room and hit him on the head with the frying pan. The only thing I remember thinking was “follow through,” which is a golf thing to make sure you hit the ball properly. You don’t stop when you hit the ball, you continue on your swing. And I wanted to make sure that I just didn’t come to his head with it and then stop, that I actually followed through. And I started screaming at him to get back down in the basement, and he turned around and staggered back down in the basement, and I slammed the basement door. There’s no lock to it, but by this time Trudy was coming down the stairs, and I screamed to her to hurry up. Our dog, of course, was right behind her and of absolutely no use.

And she came down, and by this time the police were pounding on the front door, which was locked, and I was afraid they were going to knock the door down. And so I told her to brace against the kitchen door to the basement because it’s—there’s a refrigerator right there, she could put her body between the door and the refrigerator and it would be hard for someone to get the door open. And I quickly ran and opened up the door for the police. And then they were knocking down our fence in the backyard, so I ran out and ran down and unlocked the gate so they wouldn’t knock the gate down. And they came charging up the stairs that way. And they took Trudy and took her out the back door and out the back gate. And they had a number of questions for me quickly: Was he armed? Did you see a gun? Was he armed?

DEUTSCH: Was he?

PETERSON: I didn’t see any gun. So I told them no, and then they took me and the dog out the front door, and I very carefully on our way out the door lay the frying pan down. I had gripped the frying pan throughout this. I hadn’t let go of it even when letting the police in and everything, I still had a death grip on the frying pan. And as I went out the door, I lay the frying pan on our antique sofa [laughs] and I had a hold of the dog. I didn’t have a leash, I just had him by the collar. He’s a big dog, an English setter. And they put me in an unmarked squad, police car with an undercover agent. And a detective came over and wanted to ask me questions, and I said, “Just a minute, I’m hyperventilating, let me slow my breathing and my heartbeat down,” which I could do just by concentrating, “before I answer your questions.” And he immediately said, “Do you want an ambulance?” And I said, “No, I’m only hyperventilating!” [laughs] I suspect he didn’t know what hyperventilating was.

DEUTSCH: Right.

PETERSON: And so I was able to calm myself down and, you know, stop heavy breathing and answer his questions. And they said, “What would you like?” And I said, “Well, one, I’d like to find my wife., where is she?” And so they got on the radio and discovered where she was. She was in a police car parked on Ninth Street, so that’s about a half a block away. But because of all the police barricades and

everything, we had to drive around all this stuff to get to her. We were reunited in the police car, so there sat the three of us, the dog included. And by that time, the Chief of Police was there, or at that time she was Acting, Lanier. And Dan Tangherlini was there, he lives in the neighborhood. Tommy Wells was there. The United States Attorney was there because he lives on 12th Street.

DEUTSCH: That's quite a gathering!

PETERSON: They all came over and said "Hello" and "How are you doing?"

DEUTSCH: And meanwhile the guy is still trapped in your house.

PETERSON: He's still trapped in the basement. By this time the police have the house surrounded. They start evacuating the houses on either side because, as we found out later, he and two or three other guys had stuck up a carryout or a convenience store around the corner from the Benning Road police station. Not exactly the smartest thing to do. They had one or more guns at that time, had been chased by the police and shot at the police. By the Florida Avenue market, they ran over some poor guy on a bicycle who was elderly.

DEUTSCH: Was he okay?

PETERSON: Well, he didn't die. He was really pretty well beaten up.

DEUTSCH: So there had been a chase?

PETERSON: Well, then they crashed the car and had a shootout with the police, and this person ran and hijacked another car.

DEUTSCH: Oh dear.

PETERSON: And was chased by the police, who shot out his tires, and he was running just on the rims. And he crashed the car at the corner of Ninth [ed: Eighth] and Constitution and Mass. And when he jumped out of the car, they thought he still had a gun, and apparently he did because they found it in the bushes of my neighbor's house. So he had tossed the gun while running down the street. So they were still concerned at this time. They hadn't found the gun, and so they have to treat it as if he has a gun, I mean. So they evacuated neighbors' houses, went around, told everybody to stay inside.

And they kept asking us if there was anything we wanted or needed, and I finally said, "Well, yeah, I need a bathroom." [laughs] "Can we arrange a bathroom?" And they said, "Just a minute," and they went and talked to the US Attorney who lives on 12th Street. And we walked over to his house and [laughs] used his

powder room, and then came back. And they put us in the Chief of Police's car, and she came and talked to us and was very nice.

And by this time the SWAT team truck had shown up, and this truck is so armored and so heavy that they told me if they leave it sitting in one spot it sinks into the ground. They have to keep moving it because of the weight. And all kinds of police officers showed up, and they proceeded to put on all kinds of body armor, and they looked like Ninja Turtles, you know. And the Police Chief told us, "Well, what they'll do next is they'll throw stun grenades and tear gas into the house." And we collect Chinese porcelains! And we're going, "Oh, no, we don't, we don't need that." And apparently the person had a cell phone, and he called his grandmother. And he was afraid to surrender, he was afraid the police were going to kill him.

DEUTSCH: It sounds like that was a valid fear.

PETERSON: I think it was a reasonable fear. I do too. And so the grandmother came and showed up, and the police were able to use her to convince him that he wouldn't be killed and that he should give up.

DEUTSCH: How long did that take?

PETERSON: That was about 12:30 in the morning on February 1, my birthday. And you would think, well, that's it, but then they were afraid that he had stashed the gun in the house, so they sent in a team of people who search our entire house to make sure that the gun wasn't there. And then they had a couple photographers show up to take pictures of everything. And, of course, he had thrown his shoulder into the back door to our English basement, and so that was off the hinges and everything. The fortunate thing is we were having our basement redone.

DEUTSCH: That was perfect.

PETERSON: And we were going to replace that door, so at 7:00 the next morning I called the contractor and said, "By the way, when you come today would you board up the back door?" So I mean fortunately that happened. And so we didn't get to sleep until about 3:00 in the morning because of all the other stuff. And then at 7:00, the phone started ringing with television stations out front wanting me to step out and give an interview, press, neighbors wanting to know if everything's okay.

DEUTSCH: Your moment of fame.

PETERSON: Yes, well, the interesting thing is I had used up so much adrenaline, that for about five days after that I was exhausted. It's really remarkable. I was exhausted and just couldn't get even enough sleep at night. And about two nights later I dreamed about it and thought someone was coming up the stairs, and I leaped out of bed and ran to the head of the stairs and, you know, was ready to take on...

DEUTSCH: Well there is something particularly, I mean, it's terrifying to confront someone when you don't quite what the deal is, but to have it in your own house

PETERSON: Right, but fortunately I've never had that happen again, so I consider that just a normal way of the body processing the tension and...because there was certainly a lot of that.

DEUTSCH: Yeah. Yeah.

PETERSON: But any way, so then over a period of weeks it went from the publicity and everything, and then people started giving me a bad time about hitting somebody with a frying pan. And so to sort of turn that around, I went online and found a place that does lapel pins and things. And I wrote them an email saying I wanted a frying pan about an inch in size and they drew up a prototype and sent it to me, and I approved it and ordered 500. And they're enameled pins, and two days later they showed up Air Express from China so I assume they were made by slave labor in prison camps or something, you know. Anyway, so then, when people would tease me about it—I gave away a frying pan pin to everybody who mentioned it, and I'm down to about 100 pins left [laughs]. So I've made a game of the...

DEUTSCH: Did you follow the case at all? Do you know what happened to the man?

PETERSON: Yeah. I didn't have to follow it, the US Attorney's office keeps sending letters. And since Trudy and I were both involved, she would get a letter and I would get a letter. So, you know, and he finally pled guilty and was sentenced to seven or eight years so. He was 17 years old and was a fugitive, so I mean one of the things I thought about later was what kind of life is this person going to have, I mean, being a fugitive at age 17?

DEUTSCH: But probably the luckiest thing for both of you was that he for some reason he threw that gun so when you confronted him he did not have a gun.

PETERSON: Right. And he didn't have time to size me up either, because he was young and strong, and if he had been able to size me up he would have said "I can take that old man."

DEUTSCH: You may be old but you're big.

PETERSON: Right. That's what I mean, and all he saw was this stork coming across the room swinging a frying pan, and he decided to retreat.

DEUTSCH: Which was probably smart.

PETERSON: Which was, I'm delighted that he did. And the scary thing of course is that I didn't think.

DEUTSCH: Right.

PETERSON: You know, I didn't...then the interesting thing is one of the reporters called back like six months later wanting to do a follow up story, and he said, "Did you know you've become a poster child for the NRA?" [National Rifle Association] And I didn't realize this, but [in] one of the chat rooms that the NRA runs, people were all talking about, "Gee, if he'd had a gun, you know, this wouldn't have happened." Or, you know, were using me as another reason why DC's handgun law needed to be abolished

DEUTSCH: Which seems to me like you were a poster child for the opposite.

PETERSON: Well, me too.

DEUTSCH: I mean, if you'd had a gun, the kid would have died and you might have died. You know, is that better?

PETERSON: Right. And also, what the other thing is, what am I going to do, say "King's X, I need to go get my pistol," unlock the cabinet, take the lock off it. I mean, it's absurd.

DEUTSCH: It's absurd, yeah.

PETERSON: But anyway, so... and then, what was it, the VOICE or the HILL RAG did the top news stories of the year and I made number Ten [laughs].

DEUTSCH: Well, it was an exciting year for you. Between that and the market, you had a big year.

PETERSON: Right. So, I think that's about...

DEUTSCH: Is there anything else that we didn't talk about?

PETERSON: I don't think so.

DEUTSCH: About your work with the zoning committees, is there anything that...

END OF INTERVIEW