THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviews with Frank Taylor

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[Location of interview: Mr. Taylor's home, at his home, 6605 32nd Street NW, Washington, D.C.]

TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAYLOR: My family moved around in clusters on Capitol Hill. We had three locations over the years with two or three households of the family at each location. The first was at First Street NE, between C and D. At the peak of our occupancy there we were in about seven houses on each side of First Street between C and D. This grew out of the enterprise of my maternal grandfather, Edward Kubel, who was born in Bayreuth in Bavaria and studied instrument making in Germany. I have his Bavarian passport from 1844 when he was about 20 years old. The authorities permitted him to go around Europe and perfect his trade. I don't have his passport for coming here. I think maybe, like many of them, they were slipping out of the country just ahead of the consolidation. At any rate, he came to Washington in 1849 and immediately became foreman of an existing instrument shop. After 25 years of working for that man who retired, my grandfather was prepared to open his own shop. That was 25 years after 1849 so it would be 1874. So in the course of his work he prospered and he either built or purchased three houses across the street which were for three of his children and he made a business of the others. I was born in one of those—number 327.

This was a period of building of Union Station and the Senate Office Building and pretty soon all of these buildings were wiped out—the shop site, my grandfather's residence and my father's residence on the west side of the street. Now they are all part of the park. The three houses on the other side of the street were torn down by the Veterans of Foreign Wars to build a headquarters there. Before they could do it the Senate moved in and took the property from them for a parking place for the staff. And then by chance they [Veterans of Foreign Wars] went up to Second and Maryland Avenue where my father and two of his business associates had built an apartment house, an old apartment house, and they bought that property and tore it down and put up their headquarters. So for historical purposes, people like to know who lived in these old houses, the houses are all gone.

METZGER: So there was another set where you all lived, after the first group?

TAYLOR: In 1909 I was six years old we moved to the general vicinity of Tenth and Massachusetts Avenue NE. My oldest uncle had a quite imposing house at the corner of Tenth and East Capitol Street, which seemed very large to me when I was young. It is large enough to have been a church since and now it is an apartment house I believe—all within the original.

METZGER: That was just your uncle's house...

TAYLOR: Yes, that was my uncle's house—Stephen Kubel, 1000 East Capitol Street. And my father bought a new house at 909 Massachusetts Avenue. Just across the street was my other uncle Ernest Kubel. He moved in his in 1908 and we moved in 1909. [Note: City records show Ernest Kubel's house at 908 Massachusetts Avenue NE was built for him in 1901.]

METZGER: It was wonderful to have uncles, aunts, and cousins I presume...

TAYLOR: It was a very close-knit family—that's not the total family—but later we all went to Northwest. It's not of any interest to you I'm sure, but two families located on Kenyon Street and two of us on Upshur Street. So we were all in walking distance there—more spread out. My mother's two brothers and her sisters came to our house so it was that kind of an atmosphere that I grew up in. Everybody's birthday meant that everybody came to dinner—no invitations were ever sent out.

METZGER: Everyone knew that it was so-and-so's birthday and you showed up… I presume you ran around with your cousins, or were there big age gaps?

TAYLOR: Oh no, of course we were together in generations. My oldest cousin was Herbert Kubel, Stephen's son. Like his father he had studied in Germany and was getting into aerial map making. He was commissioned in the Signal Corps and was experimenting with aerial surveying but contracted pneumonia and died right when the war was ending. It was very sad, a very handsome man.

My Uncle Stephen had a nice boat. We were frequently on that, many of us together... During the Jamestown World's Fair in 1907 my uncle let my cousin have the boat down at Jamestown and he ferried people from the mainland to the Island. We had a ride in that too, so we did mingle quite a bit. No generation gap—when parties were held everybody was there. If thirteen were there, one of my aunts wouldn't sit down so we had to peel the children off to sit at a card table.

METZGER: One of the things the [Historic District] committee [of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society] is interested in is how houses were used. There is often in Capitol Hill houses a very small room in the back—on the second floor, often about 10 x 10. I don't know if any of your houses had such a room…

TAYLOR: There was a serving area for the dining room, which moved up to the second floor (the kitchen remained in the basement). We had one of those in the back of our house that I think was added by my father as the best place for his brother to live. His brother was retarded and lived with us in that little back room. I wonder if you would like me to describe our house.

METZGER: Yes—this would be the one at 327 First Street?

TAYLOR: It was what was then called an English basement house—about half a story down in the ground. And on that floor there was a dining room and in back of that the kitchen. The dining room had a Latrobe in it, which was a stove that was designed to be built into an existing fireplace and use coal. Have you heard of that? [Metzger indicates yes.] In the kitchen was a coal range that heated the upper floors over the back of the house and the Latrobe heated the upper floors in the front of the house. It was three stories, with the dining room and kitchen in the basement; the front parlor and back parlor on the second floor, with this room you mentioned added on the back. The third floor had a hall room and two bedrooms. The hall room had the stairs that went through the house and when it got to the top floor the hall ended in a room that was not very wide but it was a room. This was the subject of jokes in vaudeville and so on about boys in the hall room.

METZGER: Was it just you and your brother?

TAYLOR: I had a sister. My brother was six years older than I and my sister was three years younger. They're both gone now.

The front parlor was heated by the Latrobe below. A nice room in the front with bay windows that looked out on a sea of mud left from the excavation for the tunnel to Union Station. My first memory was of a big mound of clay across the street. My first memory was being lost in the tunnel excavation.

METZGER: You mentioned that—I did go to the Historical Society and got a copy of the article [*Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, Vol. 50 (1980), pages 508-521]. This is wonderful.

TAYLOR: That article told about the diversity of the neighborhood—what I passed walking to school—and that was the focus. I did leave out a few businesses I wished to put in.

METZGER: We'll get them this time.

TAYLOR: One was the dairy…

METZGER: That was one of my questions—the Swiss Dairy on East Capitol or another one?

TAYLOR: No, this was Castle's on C Street NE. As an aside here, this is a problem I've had with most of the people who have interviewed me—they're from the Southeast and they're interested in the Southeast. To me the Southeast was another neighborhood but the Northeast was my neighborhood. At any rate, Mr. Castle had a typical dairy of the time. He received his milk by railroad. He had a wagon and he'd ride down Second Street to about H where there were freight yards. He'd collect the number of cans that he was sent by his suppliers. Then he brought those cans back to his store, which was a ground-floor store. He had an area that was surrounded by a berm of concrete so that it could be flooded with water, about six or seven, maybe eight inches deep. He ran city water through that all the time and set the cans in that. That was his refrigeration. He had dippers of different sizes—pint, quart and so on. When we went to his store (usually we went to his dairy) we had a pitcher with us and we would get a quart or so. He did have a wagon—he delivered to a few customers. But most of his business was people going to the dairy. And this was when it was largely unpasteurized milk which worried my father. He didn't like unpasteurized milk, even in those days. At any rate, it was whole milk which would rise and separate into cream and all. It was good. Mr. Castle lived up over his dairy, as many of the businessmen did in those days.

METZGER: In some things I've read I've seen references to "dairy lunches". The Swiss Dairy on East Capitol Street used to have a lunch room. Does that ring any bells—of dairies having lunch rooms?

TAYLOR: No, it doesn't really. I'm not familiar with that. Every neighborhood had its own fish market. The fish markets would have a little area where you could sit down and have a bowl of chowder or fried oysters. One was over in Southeast on Second Street—Captain Snow or Mister Snow, although sometimes we called him Captain—a tall, gray-bearded, handsome man. He had a fish counter and a row of maybe four tables on the other side of the room. While he was getting your order together you could have a bowl of chowder or fried oysters.

METZGER: And that was over on...

TAYLOR: I think it was on Second Street, between A and B on the east side of the street. My father frequently, when he was closing his store at night, would go there and get a dozen fried oysters. Mr. Snow kept stale loaves of bread and he could slice off the top and hollow out the bread and put the hot fried oysters in the loaf of bread and put the lid back on. When my Dad got home my mother would be waiting up for him and they'd sit around and have hot fried oysters.

METZGER: That sounds great.

TAYLOR: It was—pretty nice. The interesting thing about the city at that time was that there were many neighborhoods and usually the neighborhood was sort of anchored by the drugstore. In the area we're talking about where my Dad's store was, there was a drug store every four blocks in three directions. In the Southeast it was Sprucebank's at Second and Pennsylvania Avenue in Southeast. Has the name come up? He had a very fine drug store there.

METZGER: Bank?

TAYLOR: Sprucebank. And that reminds me that every drug store had a number coded from 1 to 10 that they marked the wholesale price of every item they sold before they put it on the shelf. Dr. Sprucebank's was the same as his name—1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10. Ours was. Well, at any rate these neighborhoods were quite small and usually anchored by the drugstores that were only four blocks apart. Of course they were lighted and were open fairly late at night, so they made the city quite safe. You could see what was going on—the lights were on. That was the characteristic of the city. The reason that the neighborhoods were so small is that everyone walked. The neighborhood was distinguished primarily by transportation—the streetcars as much as anything.

METZGER: Were there cabs? I mean, most people probably didn't have horse and carriage. Could you hire...

TAYLOR: Hacks. Speaking of cabs, for a long time here the taxicab control body in the city that issued licenses and checked on cabs and drivers was called the Hack Department. I can remember my mother and father getting dressed up in the evening and calling a hack, driving off in style to the theater downtown. I can still smell my mother's fur when she would come in. They enjoyed that. That was one of their recreations. My Dad worked long hours—odd hours. So that was their relaxation—maybe not as often as once a week but every ten days or so. One of them was the Columbia, which was a repertory theatre on F Street between Ninth and Tenth on the south side of the street, that was popular with everybody. Housewives would go downtown to shop; make dates with somebody else who was going down to shop, then they'd meet for lunch and go to a matinee.

METZGER: Were there any theatres on the Hill? I know that later there were movie theatres. But…

TAYLOR: That was something I wanted to tell you about. One movie theatre—I thought you were going to ask me names of people who were prominent in the neighborhood. One of them was E. Lawrence Phillips whose claim to notoriety was that he was an announcer at the baseball park—at the major league baseball park. In the days before the public address systems you had to have a man with a good strong voice and a megaphone who would come out in front of the stands and tell people who the pitcher would be, the catcher would be, the battery—that was all the announcements that had to be made --and then if substitutions were made somebody would have to announce that. That was one of his jobs.

He owned a theatre—the Stanton Theatre which was on Stanton Park—on C Street that went by Peabody School. It began with movies that were very, very new—thrillers, cowboys and Indians—but he had a very interesting invention. When summer came, people stopped going to movies because it was so hot. So he started an open-air movie in the same block as his theatre. Of course later they did that with cars—the drive-in movie became a fixture of the landscape. But this was not a drive-in but just an outdoor movie. You went in and set on benches, looked at the stage with the screen, sat in the open and watched the movies. I don't know if that is still there or not.

METZGER: Is it on the same side—right by Peabody?

TAYLOR: Yes, on the same side of the park. I think it would probably be Fifth.

METZGER: Between Fifth and Sixth or Fifth and Fourth?

TAYLOR: No, on Fifth between B & A, I think it was. And it was interesting because once a week he had a country store in the intermission for changing the film. He would come out on the stage dressed in overalls and a straw hat, a floppy straw hat and bandanna—dressed like a farmer. He had tickets that had stubs on them and the stubs had been put in a big basket. They would shake them up and then reach in and pull one out, and whoever had the ticket would win a prize. The prize was announced first. I actually won a prize there once—a rustic lawn swing made of small tree trunks with bark peeled off. We would have had trouble getting it up to the apartment house where we lived then. It was near the drugstore so we promised them a soda. We carried it up and it sat on the lawn of that apartment house for quite a while. People used it.

METZGER: I have never heard of an outdoor movie.

TAYLOR: I don't think I ever have either. He was a smart, inventive man. I'll mention one of the prizes that he gave were deeds to lots. My father said, Don't ever to take one of those—he says they were near the district line but he means the District line that's over on the other side of Arlington County, way over in Virginia. My Dad says, "There'll never be any building over there. All you'll do is pay taxes on it and it'll never be worth anything." I never won one, so I didn't have to turn it down.

At any rate one of the subjects that I thought ought to be mentioned was the vacant lots. The city at the time when I was growing up wasn't all filled up. There were at least one or two big vacant lots on every block. Right across the street from the Capitol Grounds at Maryland Avenue and First Street was a huge lot and that was where we played baseball, trained for football; you could pole vault, you could do all kinds of things. My brother, being older than I, was more involved in it than I was. But his colleagues formed the Roland Athletic Club, named for the apartment house my father built at Second and Maryland Avenue.

METZGER: I noticed you had the Roland News too. Is that a family name or...

TAYLOR: No, that's just a name that my father and his colleague picked out of the air, I think, when they built the apartment house. It might have been suggested by a section of Baltimore at that time that was very upscale.

METZGER: Yes, Roland Park, I think.

TAYLOR: At any rate, these lots were everywhere. The city was not finished. Imagine if there was actually a huge lot right across from the Capitol grounds today. Later I think the Methodist building was put there. That was just around the corner from my Dad's store, one on B Street. The athletes would train and we would drag our high-wheel bicycles out of the basement and ride down the path that came down off the lot. Then east of Stanton Park along Massachusetts Avenue (I've forgotten the exact street) was a lot on top of a very high cliff. That lot even had a name –Activ. On top of this bluff there was a ball diamond and some semi-professional games were played there. There was a league—a Christian league—churches played churches. That was well known. If you told people in the neighborhood you were going to the game they'd know you were at the Activ lot. My brother played a very good game of baseball and he played there. There were rivalries between the Northeast and the Southeast.

By the way, I'll ask you what the limits of Capitol Hill are now.

METZGER: (Laughing) It all depends on if you're a real estate agent or not. The Historic District goes just a little bit beyond Lincoln Park, then down to F Street on the Northeast side, and to I Street, now the Freeway, on the Southeast side. That's the basic, but it meanders a bit on the edges—goes to about Fourteenth, not as far as Seventeenth.

TAYLOR: My father had a drugstore at Eleventh Street and East Capitol and then he was in some competition with the Peoples Drug Store on the other side, at Thirteenth Street.

METZGER: Facing each other across the Park.... Speaking of Lincoln Park, were there any special... How did people use the parks? Did they take carriage rides through it? Promenades? As adults, that's different than what you were doing as a child...

TAYLOR: I guess they were used mostly by the domestic servants—nursemaids we'd call them today—with the small children and babies. They'd meet other maids and talk while the children played around.

METZGER: So it really wasn't a spot for the boys to hang out in—because you had vacant lots to do more fun things in.

TAYLOR: In more recent times, it became a place where men took off their shirts and got sunburns, suntans, lie around in the grass. People took folding chairs there, sat in the grass, and read in the shade and it was very pleasant.

METZGER: You don't remember any concerts?

TAYLOR: The concerts were all on the Capitol grounds, the Marine Band.... One of the scenes that I remember that no longer exists, where my Dad's store was at Second and Maryland Avenue and what's now Constitution Avenue (we called it B Street)—they all intersect there. This meant that between Second and Third there was a nice triangular park with grass and flowers and between Second and First, it was the same thing and so it was wide open—a square really, like a square in a European town where people gathered and talked and ate. You can see a picture of my father's store [in the Historical Society article]. We had tables out in the summer time and we always had a long bench.

There was always a crowd around the store; people would always come—the boys on the drug store corner. It became such an institution that when some of those young men, when they became a little older, they organized a club called the Renroc Club, which is "corner" spelled backwards. They actually rented a small hotel on First Street near East Capitol to play poker, so they had a place to go to and play cards. The Renroc Club—I looked it up in the directory.

The crowd that hung around the drugstore—it was more than a place to hang out; it was really an institution. You learned about where to get a job. If you could play baseball they might say, "Go down and see the chief clerk at the Department of Agriculture. He'll hire you if you're a baseball player." They had an interdepartmental league then, and this is the kind of information that was always available in that corner.

METZGER: Was that crowd segregated ethnically? Was it mostly German fellows?

TAYLOR: No, it was all nationalities—very cosmopolitan—English, Irish, German. I don't remember any French people.

METZGER: Italian?

TAYLOR: Yes, Italian—that was a part of the scene too. There was a large Italian community in the alley between First and Second, C and D, really a nice residential alley that was occupied largely by Italians. They opened that up later and made it Schott's Court and Congressmen lived there in the same houses that were brought up to date. So much for living in an alley. It was a nice place to live--like the mews in London. They were very expensive. At any rate, no woman would hang out. Many times a young man would bring his date up and have a soda. When they were leaving, he'd stop and say, "Let me see if so-and-so is here." She would walk on a little way and he'd say "Has anyone seen Harry?" and they'd say "Well, he was here a little while ago and we think he's gone home..." You know, there were no phones.

METZGER: Did your father have one of the early phones?

TAYLOR: Yes, as a matter of fact, when they built the [Roland] apartment he had the switchboard for the apartment house in our store. It was the Lincoln exchange. That was an early exchange but not as early as Main, East, West or North. I thought I'd write a story sometime about the drugstore and the crowd on the corner.

Sometimes they would get a little noisy. My father would walk to the door and just stand there, looking out. Somebody would see him and say "Doctor Taylor is looking at us." So they'd go sit in the park or go down the street a ways. Either way it would get quieter. But that was a square—it's all cut up now with traffic, traffic lights.

METZGER: It's very difficult to get across.

TAYLOR: I can remember a time, in the nice weather, the young housewives would get dressed up, maybe with a child, walk down to the streetcar to meet their husbands, coming home at 4:30 or quarter to five. That was a nice time, in the evening, very colorful. Three or four of these ladies would walk by. Now you ask me a question.

METZGER: Did your family have domestic help or did your mom basically run the house by herself?

TAYLOR: Oh, we always had somebody. For example in the First Street house, we had several black women who were part—they didn't live there—but they were part of the family. One would come in and do laundry, and she would work late. She'd be my babysitter when my parents were out late. She'd put me to bed, give me a bath in a tin tub and put me to bed.

METZGER: Was there indoor plumbing at that point?

TAYLOR: Yes. But in the block that had the apartment house was an alley that had water but not indoors. They had a faucet that every one went to and got water.

One of the scenes that I may have described, I'm not sure. One of the partnership that built the apartment was a doctor who built himself a nice apartment with an office below. He prospered. He was a doctor to the upper-scale people—rich politicians and so on. He had a nice car when cars became nice (not like the Brush that we had). His was the next generation, a much nicer car. He would park it on Second Street. He had a contract with Standard Oil Company to come by and put oil and gasoline in his car. This wagon was very pretty—green and gold wagon with a small tank, maybe 100 gallons or so. On the side and back were the standard kerosene cans that everybody bought to light their lamps. We used to watch this wagon putting gasoline in the car. In those days they had chamois to clean the cars.

METZGER: It would be wonderful… All these things to watch…

TAYLOR: Yes, that was the neighborhood. Then the huckster wagons would come in from the farms across the Branch. We used to call the men east of the Anacostia River “hucksters”. We called the Anacostia River the Eastern Branch or Branch. People would say, The Branch pears are in or the Branch peaches are in, Branch what not...

METZGER: Ok—when you said in your article about the Branch fruit, I thought you meant—I had never heard the expression so I thought you meant apples are on a branch—but that explains it.

TAYLOR: The Anacostia River was always called the Eastern Branch and Rock Creek was the Western Branch. It never had that name but that was what we called it.

METZGER: Did you—in the article you talk about men of the household going down to Center Market and getting food and then coming back. I gather, given the location where you were, Center Market was probably closer or as close as Eastern Market—or you just didn’t use Eastern Market?

TAYLOR: Center Market was about nine blocks away because we were at Second and C and the market was at Seventh and F [Streets] NW.

METZGER: Going down wasn’t so bad but coming back up...

TAYLOR: I guess I mentioned that we did that about twice a week, with a boy’s wagon.

METZGER: Did most people use Center Market?

TAYLOR: Well, the prices were better and there was more to choose from; the produce was fresh, brought in every day. Many little grocery stores started out selling only staples; they didn’t have fresh foods. They’d sell maybe a slice of ham or bacon. They’d sell flour, salt, coffee, canned goods.

[END TAPE 1/SIDE A]

[TAPE 2/SIDE A]

METZGER: One of my interests is landscaping. What were the front yards like? How were the back yards used?

TAYLOR: On Capitol Hill the city blocks are very large. Out here they’re half the size where we have Thirty-first Street and Thirty-second Street with Thirty-first Place in between, so the blocks have been cut in half practically. On Capitol Hill there on First Street and on Massachusetts Avenue where we were, the blocks were very deep. Usually in the front yard we had grass and iris or flags. In the back we had grass down the center with wide borders of annuals on the side. There was always a shed at the end of the yard where we kept tools and sometimes coal. My father used ours for canning the Branch fruit. Those blocks were quite deep.

At any rate, everyone planted certain flowers. There were always arguments about the names of the flowers. I can't remember all the names—like zinnias,

METZGER: Roses?

TAYLOR: Yes, roses. Usually people had a rose arbor with roses growing over it, maybe leading to the back door. On First Street we had a shed and my brother kept pigeons on the roof. Later there was a shop in the back where my Uncle Ernest carried on the instrument making. In the alley back of the house, for example, there was another shop where they ground copper plates. There was also a stable where a man lived who had a horse and wagon. He would do hauling for people.

One of the interesting figures of the city at that time was Henry P. Blair. Does that name sound familiar?

METZGER: I don't remember it.

TAYLOR: Henry P. Blair was president of the Board of Education in the city for a very long time. He was a bachelor and lived in one of the row houses that was taken down for the Folger Library—Grant's Row. His father had been a senator and had built or purchased one of those—he may have had something to do with the building. Mr. Blair lived in this house alone—with no heat.

METZGER: No heat?

TAYLOR: He'd walk around the city with no overcoat. He was a man who did a lot of good deeds. For example, he encouraged a lot of the boys in the choir at St. Marks (there at Second and A) and Good Shepherd—I don't know remember where that was. He encouraged the boys' choirs by giving every boy that came to the practice a token that was so big—quarter size—good for a soda at Taylor's Pharmacy. If I remember correctly, when they had choir practice [was] on Wednesday night, and we could tell when choir was let out. We'd have the sodas prepared for them.

METZGER: Did your family attend St. Mark's?

TAYLOR: No—we went to St. Joseph's. At any rate, Mr. Blair also provided the two choirs a camp at vacation time. My father was the surgeon of the camp. He never went to the camp but he was known as the surgeon of the camp. Mr. Blair would just tell my father how many boys would be there and my father would pack a big box and fill it with what they would need: first aid, sun burning and all the things that the kids might need. The man who lived in the back with the horse and wagon—he did that kind of hauling for my father. When that box was packed—it was almost as big as this dining room table—it was loaded on Frank Howard's wagon. Frank Howard would get up on the front seat and start off. I'd crawl up on the front seat beside him and we'd ride out to the steamboat wharf and put it on the steamboat. It would be floated down and eventually it would be put off at Piney Point and then they'd take it on a small boat to Point Lookout. They had a camp there every summer. Mr. Blair and his father had a boat—a small boat—and take the boys sailing. They'd learn a little bit about sailing and a little bit about the geography. He'd do that every summer.

Frank Howard always said I was named for him. He used to come to the back door to our kitchen—on a holiday or for no reason at all—and he was always good for a hot dinner. He'd take it back to his quarters and eat it.

METZGER: I was supposed to remind you about St. Joseph's.

TAYLOR: Yes, I wanted to know if anyone doing what you're doing had been to the rector of St. Joseph's asking about history. There was a pastor there at one time whose name was McAdams who was doing a history of the parish, including the history of the area around there. He was very serious about it; he worked quite a long time at it. I never saw anything but it would be worth asking if Father McAdams…

METZGER: I will ask if it's available in any form. I know they're planning to do some renovation.

TAYLOR: Do you have a good history of the Belmont House?

METZGER: I worked several years ago with the Belmont House people—more on the landscape, but we had a lot of questions about the families there before the Belmont time.

TAYLOR: We called it the Daingerfield House.

METZGER: Was that part of the Alexandria Daingerfields?

TAYLOR: I don't know. The reason I'm interested in it is that I was trying to connect my uncle that lived at Tenth and East Capitol. I think he was involved with the first church to be built.

There was a joke. There were several German people in the neighborhood, and we always used to joke about German people. This one man objected to spending a lot of money for a new church. The man said, "After all Christ was born in a stable." The pastor said, "Yes, but he didn't spend 40 years there." That was a family joke. I have an idea that they may have been using the stables at the Belmont house for church services.

METZGER: I didn't hear of that—it's quite possible. The other thing that came up in looking at old pictures of the Belmont house was the difference in height between the street now and then. You mentioned about how it had been re-graded. I have to see what you said and look at the old pictures and see if that is what we were talking about. That's an interesting thought about the stables. The stables are now the library—and it's quite a lovely room.

TAYLOR: Henry P. Blair—he also sent a lot of youngsters to college. He was quite well-to-do. He didn't have anything to spend his money on but himself.

There was another family—the Brights—they had a nice house up on Massachusetts Avenue and they would take young men into their house; put white coats on them and then train them as house servants. They observed these young men—and some they'd help go to college.

METZGER: So a lot of what we think of as social services today were undertaken by individuals. Did the churches play much of a role in that kind of thing? For instance, food baskets for the poor?

TAYLOR: Well, sometimes when I'd go by the church with my little wagon the priest would pop out and say "Frank, we've been looking for you. Come up here and bring your wagon." I'd go up to the rectory; they had nice grounds. He'd heave up a bag of flour and put it in my wagon and say, "Take this to Mrs. So-and-so. Do you know where she lives? Don't take it anyplace else—she needs this to make biscuits." There was that kind of direct help.

My father used to complain about the man who came to his store and said his family was freezing and he needed help to get a ton of coal. There was a coal yard on A Street between Second and Third—a feed store and coal yard, part of this diverse neighborhood. My father said he'd go half and half with him. So they came and dumped the coal at the curb, which they very often did. And this man came and complained that they hadn't put it away for him.

We had the Little Sisters of the Poor who were at Second and H Street NE—they came around with their prescriptions. They rode in a buggy to C Street where my father had another store—one would go to the grocery store and one to the pharmacy.

Hydrangeas were part of the landscape.

METZGER: You mentioned your brother and the pigeons. Did he raise them for pets or for squab? I read another article by someone who grew up on Capitol Hill probably 20 years before you grew up on Capitol Hill and he raised them for squab.

TAYLOR: We had squab occasionally but he raised them for racing. He'd take them out somewhere and let them go, then come running home, timing the time it took them to get back. It was a competitive sport. He always got upset with me because I couldn't recognize a desirable pigeon from an ordinary one. They all looked alike to me and he'd get very upset with me.

METZGER: Did you have any pets?

TAYLOR: We always had a dog. I started writing yesterday—I've finished writing about the German side, but my father left a lot of notes and I'll try to finish those. What I'm going to do is write up these stories in the first person—and I'm going to write it in sections. I wrote yesterday about our first automobile. I'll do this for other events in his life. I worked with him pretty closely from the time I was 13 or 14 until I left to go to the Smithsonian.

METZGER: Did you go to college here in Washington?

TAYLOR: I went to George Washington at night and took several summer courses. I got to the point where my grades were adequate and I could finish in a year.

[Digression into GW/ MIT courses]

METZGER: I was going to ask you about the gang fight between the Northeast and the Southeast the night of the Post Office dedication. [*Records of the Columbia Historical Society* 50 (1980), pages 508-521] Was there much fighting?

TAYLOR: There was a lot of rock throwing and a few shots fired, undoubtedly from the Southeast. There were some pretty tough people.

One of the pastimes of the day for people was roller skating. There were a lot of streets being paved with asphalt. They'd keep the street closed while the asphalt cured with stanchions up and people would come from all over to skate. That's where it all began—this fight.

METZGER: This one sounds like it was much bigger. Did people hustle others out of their little four-block neighborhood?

TAYLOR: I don't remember anything like that. There was some tolerance. I was trying to think of the date of that building the other day. The Smithsonian Museum now has that building. I read recently somewhere about a Federal bank—I don't know why they did away with the Postal Savings Bank. That building was built almost like a bank—the tellers and all. It was a very, very popular place for people to save their money where it would be safe. They had a little book to keep a record in—and they could draw it out. I thought it was very great. I guess the banks didn't think it was so good—unfair competition.

METZGER: When we talked earlier and I said I lived near Christ Church, you said, "Oh, Southeast is a much older area." Did you have a sense when you were growing up that Capitol Hill was an historic neighborhood?

TAYLOR: We knew it was historical because of the buildings that were around First Street facing the Capitol where they kept the people who were charged in the Lincoln assassination and before that where Congress stayed when the Capitol was burned—the Old Brick Capitol—and the Belmont House, where the man in the alley fired a shot when the British troops were coming up.

[Digressions on historical accuracy and Anthony Pitch's book on the Burning of Washington.]

TAYLOR: They say that was the only armed resistance...

METZGER: In Washington, that's true. Baltimore shows up a little bit better. So there was a sense of an old neighborhood. Did people value the old houses or was it like the 1950s when people wanted to get rid of them?

TAYLOR: They all wanted to trade up. There were a lot of very poor people. There were streets—like this A Street—the houses were very tiny.

My closest friend at one time was Lewis Chamberlain. His mother had a three-story house that she ran as a boarding house. She raised three very nice young people in that house—and did a good job of it. I'm not sure what the rent was on that house but I know there were times when she couldn't pay it. It wasn't my job but we'd go out to cut some grass or do whatever we could to raise a couple of dollars to what she had so she could pay the rent.

What they were trying to do was move up to a better house or a better street. Of course, what happened to my father's neighborhood—it finally all got chopped away all to the east. On Maryland Avenue, from Second Street to First Street was lined with three-story houses that had been turned into rooming houses. Some were still occupied by a single family. That all disappeared when they had to tear down the buildings for the Supreme Court.

METZGER: So he lost a lot of his customer base.

TAYLOR: All the buildings on the west side of First Street NE went into the Park. I have to find out when they first began to condemn the land. All of my grandfather's buildings, his shop—he did a lot of work for the Survey and for a little while the Survey owned his shop. The house had been condemned and was to be torn down. But it's my experience that when this happens people stay in those houses for a time. The Geological Survey said they needed the service, so they wanted him to stay in the house.

END OF INTERVIEW 1

INTERVIEW 2, February 24, 1999

[The beginning of this interview was lost because record button was not fully pressed down.]

METZGER: We've talked about Earl Church playing with his fiddle in the movie house on H Street...

TAYLOR: Yes, Earl would be an early congregant to the crowd on the corner because he had to be at the movie. He would check in there, speak to the young men. Of course he was a stranger in town but that was the way he met young people; he'd talk awhile and then walk on down the street with his fiddle case, going to his evening job. He always said that the evening job paid him more than the mathematician's job at the Coast and Geodetic Survey. He later bought a car, a very early automobile. I was young enough to just enjoy getting in a car and riding and we became pretty good friends. When I used to do my homework at the drugstore he would come look over my shoulder if I was doing arithmetic, but he would never offer any suggestions. But he was always interested in what I was doing.

I almost went to China as a result of my relationship with him. He was offered a position with a university in Peking [Beijing] and he was serious about going. I guess I was about to enter high school. He talked to my father and said, "If you let Frank go with me, I'll take him to Peking, he can go to high school in Peking." My father laughed, you know. He was serious; he talked about this. But he got a lot of advice about going. Some of the demands that he was told to make was that he would be paid in advance, that he would be paid in gold, that he would this and that, and by the time he got all this lined up, well, they didn't want him. He didn't go. But it was one of those fleeting chances that might change your life. Well, he was an interesting man. As I say, he finally ended up on the faculty of Syracuse. He left Washington to help his father in Parish when his father was ill; he had a nice business there. Then he went on back to Syracuse and began to teach.

I was beginning to talk about the steel-plate engraver who worked for the Bureau of Printing and Engraving and lived on First Street NE, with his mother. I know he never married. He had a hobby that, wherever he was, if he heard something nice said about a person, he'd write to that person and tell them. He'd say he had been at this meeting or in this group and "your name came up and I thought you'd like to know the nice sentiments that were said about you." Then he'd repeat what had been said about the person. Invariably he'd get a letter of acknowledgement back so he must have built up an autograph collection that was very great because he would write to members of the cabinet, justices to the court. He'd write to anyone whose name he heard talked about—if it was nice. I thought that was an interesting hobby.

Another man was of Italian descent—always very stylishly dressed in suits made abroad—and he was a tile setter. He was a descendent of generations before of tile setters who settled around in Schott's Alley and places like that. He was such a good tile setter that the State Department, whenever it was building an embassy anywhere, would insist that he come and do the decorative tile or lobby tile. And so he got all around the world. He would come back and join the crowd. We'd call him the Duke; he'd always look very nice. He'd tell us his experiences in this country or that country. It kind of widened our horizons...

METZGER: A geography lesson right there...

TAYLOR: But those were the kind of people who were in the crowd. Of course there were many others.

METZGER: And so… originally I had thought this crowd was 16- to 20-year-olds but it really went longer or it was 16 to 45 or something like that.

TAYLOR: I mentioned Henry P. Blair, who was president of the Board of Education for so long. He would always check in with that group. He'd come to see my father in the store. He would stop and see who was there, pass the time of day, kidding back and forth. He wouldn't stay long but he would always check in and then come into the store, help close up the store sometimes with my father. They'd stand on the corner talking for a long time after the lights went out.

[END TAPE 2/SIDE A]

[TAPE 2/SIDE B]

As they got older and more sophisticated they actually rented rooms in a small hotel. Did I tell you that?

METZGER: Yes, the Renroc Club, which was great.

TAYLOR: Well, those were two people that I thought you might be interested in. On B Street, just near the Belmont House but a little to the west of that, were several people I knew. One was Colonel Colonna. He was a colonel in the Confederate Army and he was editor of a publication of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, that was his position. He had a family which included a wife and three daughters, and I think he had a son. He would come into my father's drugstore once a year and buy brushes for all the women in his family. He and my father would sit down at a table and they would look at my Dad's stock of brushes. My Dad would always repeat—I can hear him repeating the story of bristles—the best bristles came from China, that the Russians were the traders who brought them out of China, they went to England, and then they went to Vancouver where the brushes were made. He would go over the brushes and find one that he liked and if my Dad didn't have four of those alike he would order three more. He wanted four brushes every year.

Then there was Mrs. Bright who lived at Third and Maryland Avenue. She was a very substantial person whose family employed African-Americans as house boys and house men and trained them. They would come to the store there dressed in their white coats. We would see them. They would identify and think about these young men working for them and if there were some whom they thought would do well at the university, they would help them go to the university. They'd pay the tuition, and maybe they'd work half-time and add a little wages for their work. But they did that for quite a number of years.

METZGER: Did they have a large house?

TAYLOR: Fairly large. It may still be standing—the northwest corner of Third and Maryland. I recall it as a fairly large brick house with a rounded corner. Then further along to the west of B Street there was a Judge Foote. Judge Foote was a jurist of—oh, I think it was the United States Claims Court or a jurist of a court of that kind. We didn't see a whole lot of him. Once in a while he'd be in the store but we did see quite a bit of his chauffeur. One time I was working in Williamsport, Pennsylvania on one of my first jobs as a surveyor. When I came back from a field trip and went into the house and got dressed and came out, there was my father standing on the curb. He'd ridden up to Williamsport with Judge Foote's chauffeur who was taking their big automobile back to his house in New York. The judge didn't like the long drive but he sent his chauffeur. The chauffeur knew I was up there and asked my father if he'd like to come along; my father did. It was quite a surprise. That's the way the neighborhood was—everybody knew where everyone else was.... You're supposed to be interviewing me.

METZGER: I know. The last time I was going to ask about people with the old houses and in talking about it you said people wanted to move up to a better street or bigger house. Which streets were considered better and what made it better?

TAYLOR: What I was particularly thinking of was that my mother, two of her brothers and her sister—the four of them—three of them lived in adjoining houses and then the house on C Street there at First Street. They were the children of my grandfather, the instrument maker. They lived there in a group. Then when Union Station was built and the tunnel was dug that went right up First Street. This wiped out my grandfather's shop and residence. It lowered the grade and wiped out lawns. We were living in my mother's house—327 First Street. The neighborhood was never the same after that, after the construction. The view across the street was a huge mud plain, that became a park, years later, but it was very ugly.

METZGER: And you probably got a lot of dirt in the house too.

TAYLOR: Yes, and the trains going through the tunnel would shake the pictures. My mother was always going around straightening pictures. The trains went right under us, practically. So for a number of reasons it became less desirable. So three families moved to the vicinity of Tenth and East Capitol, Tenth and Massachusetts. I may have mentioned those.

METZGER: You mentioned some.

TAYLOR: The house at 1000 East Capitol Street is still there—a big house.

METZGER: It is. I actually have a picture.

TAYLOR: It belonged to my Uncle Stephen... I always remember it as a stone house...

METZGER: Yes, but it has a lot of brick.

TAYLOR: This window back here is a leaded window and my uncle used to sit there reading the paper…

METZGER: Was that the music room?

TAYLOR: No, the dining room. The dining room was huge; there was sort of an alcove in this window. I'd walk slowly by hoping he would see me. I was about nine or ten years old. If he did, he'd beckon me in. I'd come in the back way through the beautiful kitchen, butler's pantry and all that. The dining room was somewhat like the dining room of the Heurich Mansion where the Historical Society is, all paneled in black wood, built-in sideboard, mirror and all that. We would sit there and he'd tell me what he was reading in the paper; once in a while he'd read me the funny paper or give it to me to read. He and I were great buddies. Later on, my family and I held him in high regard because he was the patriarch of his generation; he was the wealthiest and all that, he had a boat. So I became very friendly with him. He obtained my first position as a surveyor. As I said I was a rodman in Pennsylvania. I remember the interview. Had me come down to the Geological Survey, he was the chief engraver, the production man—he saw that the copper plates were accurate and well done before they were printed. He told me when I came down to be interviewed—I guess I was only 15 years old—he said, "If they ask you if you're 16, say yes, even if you're not. Of course you'll be 16 when you're hired." He told me about a man who wanted to do this with his son, one of his coworkers, a German, an engraver. When he was being interviewed the boy was answering questions, the father spoke up and said, "Pretty bright lad for 15 years old." [laughter]

But I have nice memories of that house. As you mention it had a music room that was very pretty.

METZGER: So it was the front parlor, the music room, the dining room, the kitchen. I guess storage in the basement.

TAYLOR: I don't know. I was never in the basement. But I can tell you that some home brew was made there during Prohibition. They all went in for that.

METZGER (showing picture of 909 Massachusetts Ave): Is this the house you moved to?

TAYLOR: Yes, that's it. But the other one was red brick too. There were three there alike. I meant to tell you that I became very friendly with the family in the third house, that's not in this picture. The young man's name was Swem. His father was E.S. Swem. He was a minister and his church was on H Street, about Eighth [Street] NE. He broke a lot of rules. He advertised the church. He'd advertise that "You can come to my church and sit in your shirtsleeves. You can take off your coat; I'll take off my coat." I remember that—remember him. He was a real solid person and I went around with his son. We went to several schools—grade schools—around in northeast: Hilton was one, Edmonds another, Peabody. We always looked forward to high school together. I was headed for Tech high school and he would like to go there too but his father made him go to Eastern.

METZGER: So it broke up the friendship...

TAYLOR: Later I visited him, he became a patent attorney for tobacco—copyrights and patents for the tobacco industry. He was living in Brooklyn, working in New York, and I visited him one time. He took me to his office, rode in on the subway. We parted company. It was quite a blow but we did get to high school together.

That house [#909] had a beautiful basement—an English basement. This one had a door out to the garden in the back. Sunlight came in the back. It was all brand new, a big slab of concrete for the basement floor. We had electric lights for the first time. As children we used to talk to each other, you know, if a burglar got into the basement, we'd turn on the lights and if he was down in the basement it would scare him. I remember that basement very well. I built my first soap box scooter in there. I'll tell you about that later. There was a ritual. On Monday was washday. There was a big coal range that would be fired up. They boiled the clothes in those days in big containers called boilers—big containers made just for that purpose. So the laundress would come early and stoked up the fire and got the water boiling for the laundry. It got so hot and they punched the laundry up and down in the boiling water. It was my mother's chance to use the oven in that range that was only used one day a week. So she would have all the pots of beans—she'd make up about three pots of beans in brown pots on Monday morning and at the end of the day she had three pots of lovely baked beans done for the week.

METZGER: So she just did this on the basement range, not the regular kitchen stove. I assume the kitchen was on the first floor or was it in the English basement?

TAYLOR: No on this house in the front there was a parlor. Past the parlor there was a reception room and the stairs went up three floors. Then the dining room was back of that and then the kitchen.

METZGER: The cellar had an extra stove that was used mostly for laundry and on the upper floors…?

TAYLOR: My father bought this house because my father's sister had to separate from her husband—he had a problem—and she had three daughters about the same age as my brother, sister and I, almost the same age. She had very little to go on after their divorce so they lived on the third floor for quite a while. She went to pharmacy school and became a pharmacist and then was able to make it. They lived in many places after that. But that was the reason for the big house.

METZGER: So on the second floor, it was your parent's bedroom, you and your brother shared a room and your sister's bedroom...

TAYLOR: Yes. Soon after we moved in I had scarlet fever. In those days you were quarantined. This house was next to a vacant lot. The room that I was quarantined in, my poor mother had to stay in this room with me. She couldn't mingle with the family either. Most of the furniture had been moved out. My mother's sister [who] lived in Northwest would come and visit with her by standing in the vacant lot and talking up to the second-floor window.

So we lived on the first and second floor and my father's sister's family lived on the third floor. I can remember that the curtains soaked in water blocked off the stair well so they could get up to the third floor without being contaminated by me. Fortunately the house had a back stairs and they went down to the kitchen. The maid and the cook would cook for me and my mother, would walk up to the top, put it down, go back downstairs and then my mother would go out and get it.

METZGER: They quarantined also for measles and also mumps?

TAYLOR: I think so. I'm not sure about that. Mumps were very serious. But I don't remember. We had a poster put on the door—a green poster, "Quarantine", to warn people who came into the house. Of course there were all these wet sheets blocking the stairwell so everyone was protected except my mother and me. My mother got so impatient. The inspector came from the Health Department and looked all over me for scale. If there was any scale I couldn't be considered cured. My mother said—she was kidding—"I'm going to pull all that scale off so the next time the inspector comes there won't be any scale." She never did, of course, but that was her threat. I remember that vividly.

METZGER: I guess you do. How old were you?

TAYLOR: About six. In 1909 we moved there and I was six. I remember "909 in 1909."

METZGER: So it was right after you moved there that that happened.

TAYLOR: Yes, right after. Of course later, my aunt and her family moved out. You asked me to describe an English basement house and I forgot a few details. The house on First Street had another little "house" built on the back which had one toilet in it, no heat, nothing. You had to go outdoors and go in. That was so the workmen wouldn't come in; the maids and cook, they used that.

METZGER: So if someone was out working they could use that and not come in—or if the kids were out and were dirty, they could use that.

TAYLOR: I thought I'd better mention that.

METZGER: That's interesting—so close to the house. Did it have running water?

TAYLOR: Yes, it had an old-fashioned tank and I don't know what they did in winter. It never seemed to freeze up. It was working year round as far as I know. It didn't have any heat in it. I guess it was protected from the house.

METZGER (showing a picture of 908 Massachusetts Avenue NE): This is across the street from 909. You had said something about another of your uncles.

TAYLOR: Yes, my uncle Ernest [Kubel] was down by the church. The Leland Memorial church, it had the name cut in the stone. [Ingram Memorial Congregational, on the corner of Tenth and Massachusetts Avenue NE, now Capitol Hill Seventh-Day Adventist.] I don't think the house is in this picture... It was a brownstone house [ed: actually brownstone and brick]. It had a brownstone porch with a brass rail—a highly polished brass rail. This doesn't look familiar to me; 908 was—my uncle Ernest was an instrument maker as well. By that time he was working for the Geological Survey and he still had a little shop on Capitol Hill back of the house I was born in. Later those houses were all torn down and there was a big parking lot for the Senate staffers.

METZGER: We talked a little bit about the ball fields. Were there any special activities in winter? Did you go ice skating any place? Or sledding? Where was your favorite sledding hill?

TAYLOR: Well, Capitol Hill was fairly safe but the real sledding was on Second Street. You could start on East Capitol Street and go down a grade and then down a little steeper grade and you could go all the way to H Street.

METZGER: Really? Wow.

TAYLOR: A long, long coast. My grandfather, when he had the shop on First Street, he had his men make a—what they sometimes called a pung—a sled that was like a bench with running boards down each side. You straddled the bench with your feet on both sides. You were lined up behind each other. You'd steer—it had a little sled attachment with steering. One of the instrument makers at the Smithsonian Institution when I went there had been an apprentice to my grandfather. He lived at 15th—near 15th and H Street NE—he came in every day and had breakfast and lunch with the family and then he'd go home to his dinner—and that's a little more than a mile walk—and then he would come back in the evening to play with the older youngsters around. This sled was always mentioned. It was called a pung. They had a long coast—but then they had to walk back up. That was fun in those days.

METZGER: You didn't have to worry about cars particularly... no traffic. I guess the horses—People were considerate enough when sleds were coming.

TAYLOR: The horses were slow enough you could steer around them… I remember the Little Sisters of the Poor down on H Street. I think I may have told you they came around to the drugstore.

METZGER: Yes. And what about summer? Did you go swimming anyplace?

TAYLOR: There were three pools down on the mall near the Washington Monument called the Municipal Swimming Pool.

METZGER: I've never heard of that.

TAYLOR: No, very few people have. There were two pools: one for children and one for adults. Then there was third pool for blacks that was behind a fence.

METZGER: All three of them or just the ones for blacks?

TAYLOR: Just the one for blacks. I guess it was considered impolite to watch them bathing.

METZGER: Who knows the inscrutable ways...

TAYLOR: I know. I would walk down there from Capitol Hill. Sometimes I'd just have my bathing suit and a towel; they had a locker. It was run by the city. It was there for a very long time, even after it was stopped being used because I had a friend who worked for the surveyor's office of the District of Columbia. He and a small number of young men and young women in the office formed a little club and raised a little money and got permission to use that enclosed pool. And for quite a while—we paid to have it cemented and the cracks in it fixed—it didn't cost us much. We paid to have it filled with water. We used it in the afternoons and evenings after work. We'd go there and sit around and talk and swim in this pool and look up at the monument. All this going on and nobody knowing we're there.

METZGER: Was this in a direct line with the monument?

TAYLOR: It would have had to be east of 14th Street, on the flat part of the Mall. After the city outgrew that, they put a beach in the Tidal Basin.

METZGER: I've heard of that but I can't picture it. I've not seen pictures.

TAYLOR: Well, there were bathhouses. When I went to high school the football team used to use those bathhouses to change uniforms. They practiced on one of the lots on the grounds somewhere off the Tidal Basin. That didn't prove to be very good. The water was really contaminated. Later on, they didn't maintain that very long. But it was nice, nice locker rooms, nice structure there. Then at times the Tidal Basin froze over and there were ice carnivals down there. Some lights were strung over the Tidal Basin, men would show up to sharpen skates; people would dig out their skates. Most people around here didn't do much ice skating but in my father's time they did. Some winters there would be two or three weeks that there would be safe ice on the Tidal Basin. It was a place to meet your buddies and friends and skate, spend a nice evening. But that isn't Capitol Hill either.

METZGER: But it was the entertainment that people—the things that people who lived on Capitol Hill did.

TAYLOR: So you have heard of the bathing beach?

METZGER: Yes, I have heard, but I keep trying to picture it as...

TAYLOR: Well, they were nice buildings...

METZGER: So Ohio Drive probably wasn't there. I'll have to look at some old maps to see where it was. Every time I look at the Tidal Basin, it looks so awful. There's really no natural drainage.

TAYLOR: Do you know what the Tidal Basin is? Why it's called the Tidal Basin? Well, this isn't Capitol Hill history either but it's Washington history. Southeast Washington—the shore of southeast—and Southwest Washington on the river was very marshy and swampy, very malarial. It was improved by building East Potomac Park that goes down and separates the river from the Washington channel. The Tidal Basin was designed to flush out the Washington Channel. It was so arranged that when the tide was high, they'd open the gates on the river and raise the level of the water in the Tidal Basin. Then they'd close those gates, when the tide changed they'd open the gates in the Washington harbor and flush out the Washington Channel—wash it down the river. Otherwise it would be stagnant. I don't know if they still do that or not but the Washington Channel is still there. But the Capitol Yacht Club used to be on the Washington Channel. That's gone and I think it's on the Anacostia River.

METZGER: You sort of mentioned Prohibition. I know that there were beer gardens around on Capitol Hill. What was that like?

TAYLOR: They were very nice. Actually my father, in my father's writing about First Street, he remembers going to First Street to live as a boy and he says that First Street was an earth street with a cobblestone gutter. Roth's Brewery was on the same block. And my mother used to talk about men from Roth's Brewery rolling barrels up the street. They put resin or tar or something in the barrel and they'd roll them to coat the insides for the beer. She remembers rolling them up the sidewalk to spread the tar.

One of the nice beer gardens—I'm not sure of the address, I think it was on E Street between Fourth and Fifth NE. It was called the Alhambra. I don't know why it was called that. You know the topography in Washington—all up and down, before the streets were graded. This was up on a bank, elevated above the street. It had a nice entrance way with the name painted above and flower vines painted behind the name. Inside there were piles of tables. I assume there was a brewery connected with it but I don't know if that would have been Roth's Brewery over there, but I don't remember. Of course I never went to a beer garden as a kid. We always had beer at home, if we had it, but it was a very popular outdoor garden.

METZGER: So did they have food?

TAYLOR: Yes, you could get a sandwich… very much like Munich in recent years… always a lot of talk and loud chatter. You could hear it from the street. There was one of those on Seventh Street near the wharves but that was smaller. It was just the back of one of those small hotels but I remember that one. I guess these were dotted around the city. There were a number of breweries. Abner Brewery was a big one; of course, Heurich; Roth.

Abner Brewery kept open during Prohibition and they went into quality ginger ale. It was really quality ginger ale. The engineers who built ginger ale bottling plants in Canada were engaged to come down and change this brewery into a nice bottling plant. Ginger Ale was a sophisticated drink in those days. It was made with ginger and it didn't have all the fruit juices they put into it to hide the taste of the bootleg whiskey. That came later. They ruined Ginger Ale. Ginger Ale was in bottles that had a rounded bottom so you couldn't stand it up and the cork never dried up. You had to keep it lying down on its side. Abner Brewery went into this in a very scientific way but by that time people had gotten accustomed to drinking doctored ginger ale with their foul-tasting gin and so on. They couldn't sell a good ginger ale because their taste had changed, so they sold it all in South America. It was very popular.

METZGER: So it was non-alcoholic but it was like an ale but with this ginger taste.

TAYLOR: Oh it was made with real ginger. I don't know what they put in it now with all the fruit flavors but it was very dry, as they say, not sweet. It was a refreshing drink, a very good drink. I don't know what happened to Abner Brewery.

METZGER: Was there a German cultural club?

TAYLOR: Yes, there were but everybody. Whenever you submit anything to the Historical Society they say, "Does it say anything about the German community?" Well, I've come to the conclusion that there wasn't any German community in the sense of geography but there was a community of people who belonged to the German clubs—the Saengerbund, a singing club; athletic club. They were written up most recently by the Rambler in the *Star* and a few others, John Claggett Proctor. He wrote them up a number of times. His magic was he wrote about what he could put a lot of names in. I knew him very well, John Clagget Proctor; he was an interesting man. I don't think he lived on Capitol Hill. He had a print shop in the basement of the Smithsonian. It was a branch of the Government Printing Office. Our scientists had so many labels printed for the collections. Some of them were very tiny labels that went into alcohol specimens or attached to an insect tray. He printed up these and he also printed up the exhibition labels. He also wrote this column. He had a file case in his print shop which had a bunch of envelopes in it. One of them would say "cemeteries" or "library" and when any scrap of news came his way he'd just clip it and throw it in there. Then he'd go down and feel the envelopes and when he got a fat one he'd pull it out and write his Rambler column out of that. I think I remember cemeteries because he wrote about cemeteries several times. He actually speculated in cemetery lots. I never heard of anybody doing that, but he did. He was an interesting man, John Claggett Proctor.

METZGER: You didn't participate in any of those clubs?

TAYLOR: No, they were gone, but my uncles did. My uncle [Stephen] was an excellent musician as well as an engraver. As an organist he was known as far away as New York. For a long time he directed choir at St. Aloysius, which is just off Capitol Hill on North Capitol Street. He had a very good choir there and he introduced trumpets and things like that and staged sound effects. He had a trumpeter blow the horn out the window so the sound would come in through the windows of the church. It would sound like it was coming from the sky.

He was a very, very inventive man. My mother directed choir, directed at St. Joseph's. When the war came along and some of the men went to war she also took over the choir at St. Stephen's.

METZGER: You've talked about Schott's Alley a couple of times. You have a much different view of it than what I've read before. I've read that they were awful.

TAYLOR: That's not true. I wasn't supposed to go in Schott's Alley as a kid but I walked by the entrance and I went into Jordan's grocery store—the Italian grocery store that went through to the alley (it was open on both ends). I think I said something about this in the article. But at any rate, I say they were exuberant rather than mean. There were two men who sort of kept things under control—they were the Italian shoemaker who sat in a half-story-high bay window of a house in there. There were brick houses in this alley, nice ones. As you know, it became opened up and later became Schott's Court. Congressmen and everyone else lived in those houses—done over, of course. I don't think they had running water in them at that time but there was a pump or faucet—a hydrant I guess we called it in those days.

I found it an interesting alley. I used to ride in there later; as I grew up and delivered prescriptions—ride in there at night, my white coat was like an armor of sorts. But the people who lived there—they were all going up. I mentioned the man in the crowd who went to embassies setting tile. There were a number of tile businesses that came out of that alley, out onto the street. On C Street—the Saladi family, I'm not sure of this but I think they became Columbia Tile, a big tile company. They had a lot of tile in their front yard. They came out of the alley—some of them. Later on stuff being called an alley was called a court—Schott's Court. And this shoemaker was pretty much the mayor (he sort of kept control) and the second in command was an Irishman—a very nice man, a very learned man. He was an insurance man. He sold what I recently read was fine print insurance. That's being nasty about it. It was the kind of insurance that you collected every two weeks. And he and this shoemaker were close friends. Between them they knew everyone that went through there—who was bound to get in trouble, get picked up for drunkenness, or something like that.

They never worried too much because Mr. Ford would go up to the precinct house and talk them out of jail or what or go before the juvenile court. I never called it rowdy; I called it exuberant. I never spent a lot of time there. There were some alleys that were pretty tough that you would not dare go in them.

[END TAPE 2/SIDE B]

[TAPE 3]

Until I was about twenty-five years old and left Capitol Hill, I never lived anywhere on Capitol Hill that there weren't African-Americans living on the block. They might be on the alley but some were living on the street. Some had very good incomes. As a matter of fact there might be two or three men in the family: a father and a grown son and maybe a cousin from the country. They'd all be working in the Navy Yard or someplace like that and with three salaries coming in they were well off. They got educations. In the block between Second and Third, Maryland Avenue and C Streets there was a black church. You could hear the singing. I don't have any mental image of that church. There was a vacant lot that ran fairly high and then the alley was back of that and the houses back of that. The family that I just described—they were on Second Street, with a notions store right there.

One of those men worked for my father as a porter. One time he said I should be ashamed of that old coat I was wearing—the lining was torn. He said, “Your father should get you a better old coat.” He was wearing a better old coat. I can remember his being very critical of my wearing a shabby, old coat.

So there was nothing we did that was very uplifting to help that situation—the racial situation. There was nothing we did really that harmed it, as far as I can tell.

Once in a while—we never served blacks at the fountain and they didn’t expect to be, most of them. But once in a while one of them would come in and order a soda or something. I’m ashamed to admit this but we put it up in a paper cup—not one of the regular soda glasses, but in a big paper cup. Make the soda, hand it to them. They’d usually walk outside and drink it, unless they were there to make a point. Sometimes they would stay and make the point. The laws of the District of Columbia actually required you to give them equal service.

METZGER: Oh, really? At that time?

TAYLOR: Nobody would enforce them but they were on the books. My father used to talk about this and he thought that the racial problem would finally be solved by assimilation, by intermarriage and so on. Everybody would be one group, but it never happened.

He taught at Howard a few times. He would go out and lecture at Howard. He was very fond of a pharmacist who was black. He had what then we called an ethical pharmacy—just handled drugs and prescription orders, didn’t have a lot of cosmetics and all the rest of the stuff that even my Dad had. We called it an ethical pharmacy. My father was very fond of him; he used to stop by when he was out that way and talk with him. Of course, my father was on the Board of Pharmacy and everyone who would practice pharmacy had a certificate entitling him to practice always had my father’s signature on it. He was doing that. He was president of the Board for nearly 50 years.

METZGER: Oh, wow. That was a lot of signatures.

TAYLOR: That was interesting to me. My father always trusted me; I don’t know why but anything that sounded halfway reasonable to him, he would let me do. One time, three of us rode bikes to Ocean City, Maryland.

METZGER: Your brother and you?

TAYLOR: No, this was boys my age. In fact we had four but the fourth, his bike wasn't up to it finally, so only three of us did it. My father would say, he knew we were going through certain towns and he'd say, "If you're going through Salisbury, go in and speak to Doc So-and-so and tell him you're Gus Taylor's son and he'll help you." He even told me that about going to France when I was very young: "If you go to"—I don't know what it was, one of the bonding houses or investment banking houses—"if you ever need anything, go to one of them and have them wire me, they could look me up." But he trusted us to ride to Ocean City. And my mother said, "I don't want you going in to a hotel to get a room in Salisbury or St. Michaels in the clothes you were riding in. So you change your clothes before going in." So we had to go into a cornfield and change our clothes and then ride in and get a room in a hotel. We stayed in Salisbury going over; we stayed in St. Michaels coming back.

METZGER: How long did it take to ride over?

TAYLOR: Just two days. We stayed a few days in Ocean City after we got there. We got there on the second day. We started early in the morning and rode to Annapolis then took the ferry over and spent the night in Salisbury and the next day we were in Ocean City. It was very embarrassing to me because later, when my daughter would be with us and we'd be getting gas, for instance, on the Eastern Shore, my daughter would say, "My Dad rode to Ocean City one time on a bicycle." The man pumping gas would look at me like I was the cheapest person he'd ever heard of. [laughter]

METZGER: Maybe it was just admiration.

TAYLOR: No, it didn't look like admiration to me. Why don't we get back to Capitol Hill?

METZGER: That's fine. When you were all out on the street, did you… Like my son and the children would all play together, racially. Was that the case?

TAYLOR: We came home after school which usually let out at three o'clock. We'd get out our bikes, if we hadn't ridden our bikes to school, and start riding. The girls, some of the girls had bikes, and others would ride on the boys handlebars and things like that. Some of the boys would do tricks—ride on the rear wheels, some would sit on the handlebars and pedal backwards. We did all those things. We'd be out there playing and then suppertime. We'd go in and wash up and change our clothes and have supper. And after supper we'd come out all slicked up and we'd sit on the curb and talk until it got dark. People would peel off, you know, they had to be home by dark. It was nice, boys and girls together, growing up together. We'd go to the movies, right in the neighborhood, the open air one I told you about. A lot of romances began right there.

METZGER: You mentioned the soapbox derby. You don't see it much anymore.

TAYLOR: They gentrified it, you know. It got to be a sport with a lot of organization. But when it began, we had roller skates that were made in two parts that slipped so you could lengthen them as your shoes got larger. Of course, they would wear out. We'd always save them and use one to make one scooter. We'd just have a 2 x 4. We'd put the front wheels of the roller skate under the front end and the rear wheels of the skate on the back. We even kept the cuff on the skate so the 2 x 4 fitted into that. We made these in the basement—get a 2 x 4 and make one. It'd be about four feet long. Then they became known as soapbox scooters. Of course we mounted a wooden box we got from the grocery store. The right size box was usually one the soap came in. So we had a soapbox for the front part and then the stick across that was carved for the handlebar. You'd put one foot on it and kick with the other foot. You could go pretty fast along the paved streets.

My brother always had to do something a little fancier. He was older and had a battery in his box and he had an electric light on it. He often told the story of the man who was being driven by in a big car with the chauffeur driving it—you know, one of those big old cars at the time—and he saw this soap box scooter with the electric light on it. He told his chauffeur, "Get out and see how that boy has an electric light on his scooter. If he has it on his scooter, we ought to be able to put an electric light on the car." So the chauffeur had to get out and come over; my brother was very proud to show him the battery and light. Automobiles, in those days, mostly had kerosene lamps. There was also something called carbide lamps.

METZGER: I've heard of it but it doesn't mean anything.

TAYLOR: I've forgotten the chemistry of it myself. You poured water into this can that had the carbide in it and generated a gas that came up so you really had a gas light. They made those in big units, actually, to light houses later on in suburban houses that were beyond the electricity. They could put one of these carbide gas generators in the basement.

METZGER: Smelly?

TAYLOR: It wasn't too smelly—the ones we had worked for just one bike light.

METZGER: I guess that's Union Carbide, isn't it?

TAYLOR: My father always had bicycles for delivery. If it had a lamp on it, you could depend on it being stolen. If you had the bike long enough, you could depend on it being stolen also. So we made a light that we carried out of an ordinary candle. Take about a five-pound bag or two bags, one inside the other; punch a hole in the bottom; wrinkle up the bag so you could get a grip on it and put a candle down inside the bag you were holding and the grip you had on the bag. So you rode with one hand steering and one holding the candle burning in the bag. It was open at the top. It was bright enough for people to avoid you, wagons to avoid you. It was illegal—if you were riding a bike without a light you could be arrested. Most of the time, we'd be delivering from the drugstore carrying one of these candle lights. You'd blow it out when you got back and light it up again the next time, and pretty soon it would be burned down and in time it would catch fire. Throw it away and make another one, you know.

METZGER: So how did you carry the objects you were delivering?

TAYLOR: Oh, if it were anything bulky we could do it in a newspaper bag—a canvas bag. Usually we had a little tray on the front of the bicycle. I always had a bike because when my father's bike was stolen, he would have to buy a new one. He'd give me the new one to ride and he would take the one I'd been riding and that would be the drug store bike because it was going to get stolen anyhow. So I always had a new bike. I wasn't very proud of it because it was so heavy; he'd buy a utilitarian bike. Of course the boys who were the real leaders of the crowd on the street—their bikes were speed bikes with very narrow rims on the wheels, called Pierce Arrows or something like that. They were real racers, real light. This one I rode was a good bike, was sturdy. It took me to Ocean City.

METZGER: How did you celebrate Christmas?

TAYLOR: Everything was done by the family. Everyone had his own house and his own Christmas tree. The entertainment was done by the family as a whole. I told somebody recently, if there was a birthday, no matter who it was, a child or adult or an ancient, there was a birthday party. You didn't send out invitations or anything, you just knew there was going to be a birthday party because they talked about it on the telephone. They always made three cakes. They made a fig cake, which is white icing with a fig filling, layer cakes with fig filling, a caramel cake and a chocolate cake. That was always standard. One of those cakes had a dime in it. Some lucky kid would get a dime. If an adult ever found one, they'd always poke it back.

If we had thirteen at the table, my Aunt Lou wouldn't sit at the table with thirteen. Se we'd peel off four kids and we'd sit at the card table. The conversation was always adult conversation. They never hid anything from the kids. They talked the way they talked and we learned a lot.

METZGER: They talked about politics?

TAYLOR: Mostly about family or about the business, about the boat. That reminds me that one of the features of Capitol Hill life was you could hear all the whistles from the boats, from the Navy Yard, from the turntable at Union Station yard. You heard whistles all the time; you knew what they were. Boat whistles—we could tell what boat was leaving—the Norfolk boat or the Baltimore boat. We'd be eating supper and the whistle would blow. Someone would say, there goes the Norfolk boat. And they blew whistles at the Navy Yard for a fire or something else. They had codes for those. Sometimes someone we knew from the Navy Yard would say, "That's very close to where I work." He never ran over to do anything about it. Whistles were a part of what you heard, particularly in the evening in the summertime. It was kind of reassuring to hear these—that things were going on the way they ought to go on.

METZGER: Like church bells at a certain time.

TAYLOR: Yes, the same idea. We knew the whistles—Norfolk boat, Baltimore boat, the excursion boats to Marshall Hall and Mount Vernon, one along the beach. We could identify them. You rode them often.

You could go up on the boat deck and talk to the sterns man. They always had a young man in uniform. He liked to be admired by the girls. They'd go up, weren't supposed to, but they'd go up on the deck and talk to him. He'd tell them what a hard life he had, how dangerous. Then an older man would come along and chase them off the deck and scold the young man. The family two doors from the drug store—the oldest son was a speed boat (we called them maniacs)—speed boat maniac because there weren't many speed boats and speed boats can go very fast.

METZGER: But it was all relative?

TAYLOR: He was going fast enough to circle a steam boat. You'd hear a boat coming up and—that's Maurice Robey. And then he'd go circling around the steamboat and wave at everybody and then go home. Life was lived—a second family almost—you knew people. I never went down town but that I expected to see somebody I knew and usually did.

One of the sights for a kid growing up on Capitol Hill—if you walked down the Hill to go (if you had a cousin from the country, you know, and were showing off as kids will)—we'd walk down the Capitol Hill and go on the street car, east line on Pennsylvania Avenue. We'd get out on the back platform with the conductor, if he let you stand there. I'd say, "Stand here and see those trees." You'd look and see the trees that blotted out the Capitol. I'd say, "You stand here and keep watching and you'll see the Capitol come up out of the ground." And it did—I mean, as you went west on Pennsylvania Avenue, you could see past the trees and the Capitol just coming up out of the ground. My cousin would say, "You're fooling me; I know what it's doing." But kids all had ways of entertaining.

When I was working at the Smithsonian my Detroit cousins came. They were my mother's and father's generation and they had a daughter with them who was my age. I was about 19 then. I said, "Come down and I'll take you to lunch some place, some nice place downtown, but I have to go by the department store and get argyle socks for Bob at home. I can't come home without those. I'll take you by the department store, take a long lunch hour." She said she knew someone who had walked up the

Washington monument. I said we could walk up if you'd like to, I had done it a couple of times too. So mother went shopping and we walked down to the monument. They were doing a little work inside of it and putting in memorial stones of some kind in the inside. We got up to the top and we were the only two people up there—and the guard. He heard me talking about it, appreciating the view and all that. He came over and said hello. He pulled a matchbox out, one of those sliding matchboxes, out of his pocket. He said to my cousin, "Would you like a piece of the monument?" Where they had chiseled to put in a memorial stone on the inside, he had collected stones. She said she would love to have one. He gave her one of the stones. She was very proud of it and when she got home she told her mother she had a piece of the monument. Those were simpler days.

METZGER: Yes, they really were.

TAYLOR: I told you my father always told me about stepping over the monument. Did I tell you that story?

METZGER: Stepping over the monument?

TAYLOR: Yes, he told me it very seriously. "I've stepped over the top of the monument."

METZGER: When it was the little point sitting on the ground?

TAYLOR: No. When they were finishing the monument the point was aluminum. Aluminum was a very expensive metal in those days. They had a yard where they were cutting stone and doing things like that. It had a little bench around it. They expected people to come and see what they were doing. For a long time the top of the monument stood there, every boy would say, "Can I come and step over the monument?" He'd go in, step over the top, and ever after that he could tell people that he'd stepped over the top of the monument.

METZGER: If they had really been thinking, they would have somebody stationed there with a camera and charged for a picture of this.

Where there any special occasions that used to be celebrated that aren't now?

TAYLOR: One I've just written about for the history of my father. My father was eligible to be a SAR—Son of the American Revolution. There was a Mrs. Stout who lived on A Street. I mentioned her son, Minor Stout, who was a poet, the last time. She was something of a wheel in the DAR. She learned from somebody that my father could be an SAR. He ducked that but put us up for grabs and my sister and I become CAR (Children of the American Revolution). So every time the DAR met here for convention we went to Mount Vernon with them. They laid a wreath on the tomb and all the ritual things. As CARs we did nothing but watch until it came time for us to plant a tree. CAR always planted a tree; I can't remember where or kind of tree. That was always one occasion, something special. We loved the steamboat ride down.

METZGER: It's the best way to go to Mt. Vernon, it's true.

TAYLOR: We liked being there. The house was in really sad repair at the time. We could sit on the big porch and look out and see the water. I think it was the railing of the deer park at the time. We walked down to the tomb, very solemn. The rest of the time we would sit around and picnic on the lawn. And Minor Stout, as I said, was a poet, and once in a while he'd write a poem for the occasion. We would walk around and he'd recite his poem to the picnicking group and sometimes we'd get a nice handout of a piece of cake or something. Minor went to New York.

I wondered if you would call the Corcoran and see if they have any paintings by Dorsey Doniphan? He became a portrait painter in Washington and I think he was a good one. But we knew him when he was part of this crowd.

His mother had a boarding house between Second and First Street on Maryland Avenue. He was serious about becoming a painter, even when he was a young man. "What are you doing now? What are you painting now, Dorsey?" He was painting signboards. He would take any job that had to do with paint and brushes. He said he was going to know all there was to know about paint and brushes before he got serious about painting. I mean he had this all planned. He might be painting a steel tower someplace or a signboard. He became a relatively well-known painter in Washington. I wouldn't be surprised, either way, whether they had him or didn't, because portraits don't go fast into museums. People keep them in the family. But they might have.

I know there was a man called Newton who had a variety store on Second Street between A and East Capitol on the east side. His name was Newton so, of course, he was called Figgy. Figgy ran a store there that supported him and his family and that was about it. He sold fruit; he sold various crackers in boxes. He also sold cigarettes. He would open a package and sell two cigarettes for a penny, ten for a nickel. The nickel package came with a coupon that was worth one cigarette. He would open the package and take out the coupon—that he could redeem. That was what I remember about Fig Newton. I can't even visualize him or his family. Right across the street practically was the livery stable that I mentioned in the story about the first automobile and my brother tying to get kerosene for the lantern. He was a nice man. He ran the livery stable. But, of course, when automobiles came along, if you didn't want to leave your automobile on the street, you took it to the livery stable. They were still doing that when I was working in the survey, up in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. We kept our Ford that we used in the livery stable.

METZGER: So there were horses, buggies and cars, all together.

TAYLOR: I remember I couldn't crank a Model T when it was real cold and the proprietor would come over and crank it for me. I'd drive it out to pick up the topographer and we'd go off for a day's survey. But that was the livery stable. I think the man's name was Wendell, but I'd have to check this.

METZGER: What about the Fourth of July?

TAYLOR: Fourth of July we got up early to be the first to wake up everybody else!

METZGER: With firecrackers?

TAYLOR: Oh, yes, with firecrackers and all day long. I guess they were illegal, even then. We bought firecrackers from the Chinaman at the Chinese laundry. He sold firecrackers. They were very cheap. Sometimes we set off a whole pack at one time. We'd get cans. It's a wonder we didn't lose life and limb but I don't remember any particular injuries. If we did, we treated them at the drugstore. It was all in the family.

I remember a little toy we made out of a big old door key that had a hollow stem. A ten-penny nail would fit in that hole. We'd tie a string around the nail and tie a string around the key and put the nail in and hold it by the string. We'd break off the head of sulfa matches into the hollow of the key, put the nail in, step off from the curb and hit it against the curb and it would go off like a cap pistol. BANG. I've never seen that. I thought I'd make one for the historical society some time.

We played stick games after school. Put a stick on the curb and then hit it with another stick and then you were supposed to go in some direction or distance. It would be marked off with chalk on the street. Everybody played that. Girls played with jacks and a ball on the sidewalk. Boys played mumblety-peg with pen knives.

Sometimes the crowd on the corner would get a little noisy. My father would walk to the door and just look out. Somebody would see him and say, "Doc Taylor is looking at us." Then they'd just break up. One group might go to one of those triangle parks and sit down; three or four people would get out a knife and start playing mumblety-peg. That was when I was a little older. I didn't hang around the crowd too much.

METZGER: You were in an odd position, I guess. Territorially it was yours and yet you...

TAYLOR: I can remember my brother when he was in high school; he was a star football player. His picture was all over the school—he and three other players.

METZGER: Did he go to McKinley too?

TAYLOR: McKinley. He was on three consecutive championship teams; couldn't play freshman. So this was four young men in their uniforms in one picture that must have been in five places. I can remember my brother sitting on those benches along one wall. He'd sit there with other high school players—one from Business High School, one from Eastern High School, and so on. They would sit there and talk high school football all evening. Of course they were all enemies when they were playing but they were buddies when they were home. That was another little annex of the crowd. My father really didn't approve very much of the crowd sitting on the bench because that was for his customers from the soda fountain. But he'd put up with them. When I came back from the opening of the city Post Office where I said there had been a gang fight, the first thing I saw was a young man stretched out on those benches with a bandage—a bloody bandage on his head. I guess my father had dressed it for him.

METZGER: So the pharmacy acted like a first aid station instead of a doctor's office?

TAYLOR: Oh, yes, it was, definitely. I remember many, many times holding a boy's arm—he had a bad cut or something and my father would be putting antiseptic powder on it with cotton and a bandage. My father would be standing with him. He'd say, "Take him to the doctor or take him to the hospital. I've done it and it's good for today but you want to take him to the doctor or hospital and have it looked at." He was careful about that. I don't know how many times people came in with cinders in their eye. Of course, they came from the station and locomotives did pump a little cinder pollution into the air. They'd come in with the cinder and we'd take the cinder out of the eye. We had a roll of bathroom tissue or toilet paper. We'd tear off a sheet, fold it up so it was fairly stiff and then have them lick the end of it. And grab the eyelash and pull it up and run that around and it would come right out. We'd show them the cinder. Some of them would take the cinder. And then the squirrel bites. You don't pet squirrels. A lot of people had never been that close to squirrels and would see them in the park and they'd have something to feed them. Then they'd get too close to them and try to pet them. If a squirrel ever bit you on the finger, he could bite right through the fingernail—a hole would go all the way through. They would come in holding a hand. My father would wash it out, soak it in carbolic. , , , ,

METZGER: Carbolic acid?

TAYLOR: No, it was…

METZGER: They had the mercurochrome stuff… iodine…

TAYLOR: The iodine would come later. But I'm trying to think of a poison. The tablets were made in the shape of a coffin. You'd drop it in water and then soak your hand. Very cheap, very curative. But you had to show respect. You had to sign a poison book. Any time we sold poisons the customer had to sign the book. Nothing was ever done with that book... unless there had been an accident or suicide or accidental death. They might come see if they had signed the register. I guess if it was a real poison they had to tell what they were going to do with it. I don't believe I ever saw that book looked at by an officer.

METZGER: I guess they'd only look at it if they were investigating something. So we really haven't talked about the drug store at all. I have to come back for that.

END OF INTERVIEW 2

INTERVIEW 3, March 15, 1999

[Discussing photograph of Taylor & Lamb pharmacy at 11th & East Capitol Streets.]

TAYLOR: This was an interesting block, as I recall—some very pretty houses. That was L. Hoyt Lamb and at one time in my father's life he was a partner with Mr. Lamb. They had this store and the store that we've been talking about. They built another one at North Capitol Street and Rhode Island Avenue—about U Street—and engaged a pharmacist named Lincoln Palmer to run that one.

METZGER: Did they also have tables outside?

TAYLOR: I don't remember that. Right back of that was a grocery store.

METZGER: What is in back... is that a scale?

TAYLOR: Yes. There were scales outside of drugstores usually. They would be coin operated. You put a penny in and weighed yourself.

METZGER: And this was a pump?

TAYLOR: These pumps were all over. They were water pumps. I was going to tell you about the pumps and the horse troughs some time… The trees, of course, block out the end of the block. That was where my Uncle Stephen lived. There was a nice house in here that had an entrance like the Hay and Adams houses that used to be downtown—with a curve and recessed entrance. Richardson designed some of them—I don't know that he designed any here. There was a family named Pickford. That was when Mary Pickford was popular so we always remembered that and wondered if she was family.

METZGER: And this one is a great photograph—Do you remember this house? About Fifth and East Capitol. Mary's Blue Room was torn down in the early seventies by the church that was behind it and used for a parking lot…

TAYLOR: I don't remember it.

METZGER: This one looks familiar, doesn't it? "A Motta—First Class Shoe Maker"

TAYLOR: Well, I've certainly seen many houses that looked like these.

[End of showing photographs]

METZGER: So my first question was, what did these stores [pharmacies] look like inside? What did they sell?

TAYLOR: When you came in the door there were counters all around and a soda fountain along one wall. These counters were showcases that had items of stock in them. One wall would usually have a big mirror in it. I don't know why, but that was fairly typical. There were slotted windows beside the mirror and behind that was the prescription department where the prescriptions were compounded. The pharmacist could look through these windows to the front and see if anyone was in the store. A feature of the showcases was that no matter what the floor was in front, behind the showcases the floor was always wood because that was easier on the feet. The people clerking in the store did a lot of standing and walking.

The drug store always had a coordinated set of fixtures that lined the back wall so that these fixtures and the space behind the case were always being walked to. They kept large drugstore bottles on the shelves with various kind of elixirs and tinctures and whatnot to be used in compounding. There was hardly anything displayed that people helped themselves to. Everyone was waited on. The clerk would take it back to the cash register. By the register there was a balance—a scale—that could be used for weighing loose candy, a stack of three rolls of wrapping paper (a wide roll, medium, and a narrow roll). My father only used white and he used red string. He was very particular about how his bottles and other things were wrapped. He always instructed his new help just how it was done. He could do this very quickly and he'd end up with a little loop that he'd put over his little finger and hand it to the customer.

A large element of the drugstore would be the tobacco cases filled with cigars primarily and the humidifying device that kept them moist. Then there would be the tobacco case or rack very much as you would see in a store today with all kinds of cigarettes, cigarette papers and so on. We sold chewing tobacco; that was very popular then. On the counter there would be a tool—a cleaver hinged to come down on a long plug of tobacco to cut off a portion. I think the plugs we had were three portions long. The one we had was very ornamental—a little black boy with his thumb to his nose. I don't know what the significance of that was. Then there was always a little gaslight with a miniature glass globe to it so a person who bought a cigar or cigarette could lean over and light his cigarette.

METZGER: So that was always in flame?

TAYLOR: The flame was always burning. Usually it had a pierced or cut glass globe with color on the outside so that the flame would show through. They were rather pretty. I can remember time and time again as a man was leaning over to light his cigar or cigarette, saying "Frank, you don't smoke do you?" I'd say, "No." And he'd say, "Well, never start." Neither my father nor my brother or I smoked. We enjoyed the aroma of tobacco and I think that was the reason we didn't smoke. When you smoke you don't get that aroma very much. It was a disappointment, really. I tried it a few times but I never enjoyed it as much as I did handling it.

The cigarettes all came in big boxes. They had to be opened and placed in the proper places for display. We always sold a lot of cigarette papers and tobacco. Cigarette tobacco was sold in bags and people would pick up a free package of papers and take it with them and roll their own cigarettes.

METZGER: But there were also ready-rolled cigarettes?

TAYLOR: Oh, yes. There were two or three brands that were very popular—Piedmont, Chesterfield, Camels. Cigarettes cost a half-penny a piece, packages of ten cost a nickel. In addition to that there was a coupon for a cigarette. Some shops—we called them fruit stands—would break a pack of cigarettes and sell one or two. We never did that. We thought we were superior to that.

My father's store had rotating fans that stood on posts seven feet, seven-and-a-half, or eight feet tall. They were propelled from the basement where he had a lot of machinery for making ice cream, for cranking ice for ice cream and making syrups for sodas. He wasn't making ice cream when I was old enough to remember, although I made ice cream in the drug store for my own amusement. He was into it very seriously. At that time there were very few concerns that were making ice cream. Finally there were some firms who made wholesale ice cream. When they came along he stopped making it. But the machinery stood there a long time. It was powered by an Otto gas engine—a very early combustion engine that is now in the Smithsonian, not because we gave it but because the owner of the building when my father moved away cleaned all that out and gave the engine to the Smithsonian... Shall we go on about the inside of the drug store?

METZGER: Sure. Because it is something that people don't know unless they happen to walk into an old one.

TAYLOR: Well, in my father's drugstore the soda fountain was in that alcove that had that window in it that I showed you [picture in *Old Washington, D.C. in Early Photographs, 1846-1932* by Robert Reed, page 18]. It was made of marble and some of the fountains were even silver plated—very, very handsome piece of equipment. My father's fountain at the Second and Maryland Avenue store had a pedestal going up from the center of the marble counter which had a colored lamp shade on the top of it and it had several faucets around. These were labeled "Vichy" and "carbonated water" and "Soda water". All three came from the same machine in the basement. We made our own carbonated water—from the outside under very heavy pressure and in very heavy tanks. This machine was operated on water power and was cooled by the city water that went through it. We would carbonate the water from the gas in the tank. Some stores bought carbonated water and had lower pressure tanks. We thought we were superior to that. There were all kinds of little class distinctions in the business.

I think I've told you about the people who came in and bought brushes and stationery. My father was always reading about where things came from. He was a skilled botanist for example. Plants were a source of many of the medicinals that were used in the pharmacy in compounds and medicines. Of course, we sold the herbs. He was very interested in biology and plants. The stages of medication were reflected in pharmacy or compounding or extraction of plants with some metals, like zinc and iron or other metals or salts. Then we went through the introduction of animal organ medicinals—cod liver oil, for example, was one. Then there were the many liver products and there were a number of tissue products from quite a number of animals. Some of the packing houses like Swift and the others had pharmaceutical divisions where these came along. These sometimes required refrigeration so we had to keep up with that. And then doctors began prescribing cultures. Pharmacists didn't have the equipment to make the cultures—there were a great variety of them. Some of them were modern-day buttermilk cultures. So there were laboratories around town where we would take the prescription. My father never had vitamins in his store. He used sulfa drugs.

The drug store was also a first-aid facility. Being located where we were, I've taken many cinders out of people's eyes. They'd come off the train from Union Station and would be sightseeing around Capitol Hill when they'd be bothered with a cinder. It would be natural for them to come in the drug store. We all knew how to do it. We had a roll of toilet tissue and we'd tear off a piece and fold it and have them lick the end of it. Then we'd grab the eyelid and lift it up and go around the eyeball. Then show them the cinder. Some of them took the cinder away.

There were also bites from squirrels. Many people were unaccustomed to seeing squirrels and thought they were tame. They would feed them and then they would make the mistake of trying to pet them. Many times the squirrel would bite them. If a squirrel bit you, it would make a deep cut—many times it went right through the fingernail. So you'd put something on that for them.

We also removed warts. You don't hear much about warts any more. We used to use nitric acid. Many parents would come in with children who were crying—they had fallen, scratches and all. We'd fix them up and that would be the end of that. But sometimes the child would be bleeding. I remember many times holding the child while my father cleaned the wound, sterilize it with some antiseptic, wrap it up with a cotton wad and some bandage. Sometimes we'd send them to the clinic at Casualty Hospital where we would be sure they would be properly treated. If they showed reluctance about going, sometimes he would send another person with them to see that they got to the hospital.

METZGER: Did he charge a fee for the first aid? I guess I'm wondering why people would come to the pharmacist instead of the doctor who might live down the street.

TAYLOR: There were a lot of people who really didn't have doctors.

METZGER: So the pharmacist was a person they knew.

TAYLOR: Right and you didn't need an appointment or anything like that. You just came and you'd just be taken care of.

METZGER: But was there a first-aid fee... 25 cents for wounds, or was it just part of the business?

TAYLOR: There wasn't a code or anything. He had a drawer of cotton and bandages. He might charge 25 cents or something like that.

METZGER: Or if they looked like they couldn't afford it, it was free.

TAYLOR: There were all sorts of curious little kinks in the drug business. For example my father had a favorite expressman, as they were called. This would be a man who owned a horse and wagon and probably lived in the stable over the horse's quarters and would carry large orders of materials for anybody who would hire him. This one particular man was named Frank (he always said I was named for him). He was just a one-man business. He didn't have a lot of money. He'd go to an auction downtown where they would auction off horses. He couldn't buy a very good one but he would buy the best he had money to buy but obviously something wrong with it. Then he'd bring it up Capitol Hill, leave it out at the curb and come in—have the horse wait or tie it to the tree trunk—and say, "Doctor Taylor, I bought another horse and I wonder if you'd look at it for me." My father would say, "I'll look at it but you have to tell me what's wrong. I'm not a veterinarian but if you tell me what you think the horse needs why I'll see if I have something that will help." And he usually did. After a while, the horse would begin to look pretty good. We'd see it on the street and he would occasionally come and carry something for my father that was being shipped by steamboat down to some people in the country. It was not an unusual sight to see this horse casually leaning against a tree.

My father was also very proud of his circulating library. Circulating libraries came about in his time and he had one. I used to go to Union Station every Sunday morning to pick up a certain number of copies of the *New York Times* and the *New York Tribune* and bring them back for people who had ordered them. He would always have a copy of each for himself. Immediately he would turn to the book section and decide what books would be popular, make a mental note to buy two or three that week or maybe none at all.

It was one of my favorite spots. He had a little seat tucked into an alcove with the books right behind you—sit down, leaf through them and read. He had a couple of boys series like *The Boys of '76*, which was a continuing long, long number of volumes of each war [battle] of the Revolution. These three or four young men –two of them would be heroes and one the villain—participated in all these wars. I can remember sitting there one time reading one of these (I guess I had been sitting there a long time) when my father came over and tapped me on the shoulder and said, “Frank, the sun is shining outside. Why don’t you stop reading and go outside and get some air, see who’s around to walk with you or ride with you.” I’d get absorbed with these things.

Another feature of our particular pharmacy was that we were very close to the Capitol. A number of congressmen would go by and sometimes come in to talk with my father. A few of them would ask him to sell something for one of their constituents in the country, for example, maple syrup. We always had four or five shiny tins of maple syrup on the end of the counter or soda fountain—these tall rectangular tins, galvanized metal, very bright. We had a few other similar items. One that I remember that stayed around a long time was an embroidered spread for a double bed—it was a big bundle when it was folded up. That was in a case close to the fixture that we had the stationery in. It would have the person’s name; you could see the pattern and the price they were asking. These people asked very little for these things. In those days a little bit of money on a farm was all that was needed to buy salt and things you didn’t produce yourself.

Did I tell you about selling a box of mistletoe? A congressman came in one day just before Christmas. He had noticed what my father was doing—selling these things for people. In fact he knew some of these congressmen who were bringing these things in. He said, “I have a box in my office of mistletoe sent to me by a constituent. I could sell it to you for eight dollars. Could you sell it?” My father said, “Well, I’ve sold a lot of things but I don’t think I could sell a box of mistletoe. The store is very tiny and there is not much space.” Then he looked up and said, “Maybe Frank would do it.” I looked up and said, “Where would I get eight dollars?” He said, “Well, I’ll lend you eight dollars. We can buy it and then you can pay me back. It sounds like a bargain—that big box and you can sell it by the piece for a quarter.” The congressman started out of the store but he turned around, came back, and looked at me very sternly and said, “But you have to get it out of my office.” So I got my buddy with a sled and we went over to the House office building, dragging the sled, which didn’t sound very good on the marble floors. The guard stopped us and said, “What are you boys bringing this sled in here for?” “Oh, we have an appointment with so-and-so.” “Okay, his office is over there; but don’t come back here. You can go out that side door.” So we went in and got the box.

[END SIDE 1]

[SIDE 2]

TAYLOR: The selling was quite interesting. There were still many residences along the streets now occupied by the Supreme Court and the Senate Office Building. Many of these people I knew and it was just before Christmas—you saw them at parties; you could smell the cookies baking. When I turned up and people came to the door I'd say, "I'm selling mistletoe." "Let's see what it looks like." They would come out and look at it—big branches of beautiful mistletoe. I would hold up a few for them. "How much do you want for this one?" I'd say, "Twenty-five cents." Of course in the store you'd probably pay a dollar and a half. It didn't take me long to sell the mistletoe—two or three nights. I paid my father off and made about ten dollars—which was very much. I can still remember the welcomes I got in many houses; people were partying and they would still take time out. Maybe I'd sell two or three at that one house.

METZGER: In that article you had written, you talked about your father making syrup. When did the idea of drug stores and soda fountains—do you have any idea how that got connected? A pharmacy and a soda fountain don't seem like a "given."

TAYLOR: It was like a pay telephone. It attracted people. They came and then customers would buy things in the drug store. That wasn't the sole purpose because the soda fountain did make money.

METZGER: So then, usually all drug stores had the soda fountains?

TAYLOR: Practically all of them. There were a few that were known as ethical pharmacies. My father was very jealous of them—and fond of them. These were pharmacists who sold only prescriptions or medicines and compounded prescriptions. They hardly even went in for cosmetics or anything of that sort. They were known as ethical pharmacists. I don't know that there were many. There was one somewhere in the vicinity of Seventh and U Streets that was owned by an African-American that my father knew very well and was very fond of him. He frequently went into his store to chat with him. My father actually lectured a few times at Howard University, so he knew pharmacists who graduated from there. My father was also a member of the Board of Pharmacy for over 50 years and for nearly 50 years he was president of it so his name appeared on all the licenses for pharmacists in the District of Columbia which had to be displayed in the store. There were quite a number of excellent pharmacists who graduated from Howard. I don't know how many stores they had. I have a photograph of Commissioner Guy Mason, who was almost the last commissioner of the Commission form of government, presenting an award or certificate to my father for his service on the Board of Pharmacy for 50 years—my father, Mr. Mason and one of his principal assistants. I don't know whether he lived on Capitol Hill or not but he had a brother who was on the police force and he worked out of the Number 9 Precinct, which was the northeast Capitol Hill. My father, in addition to being president of the Board of Pharmaceuticals of the District of Columbia, was active in other pharmaceutical associations like the National Association of Retail Druggists and the American Pharmaceutical Association. He did a little of legislative representing when a bill was being considered. He was always available to give answers to any questions that might come up during hearings. He didn't make a big thing of this. He was a little involved in the Pure Food and

Drug laws and labeling acts that came along. Then there was always a bit of tension between the government and pharmacists over narcotics. I don't remember when narcotics were unlicensed but I think the Narcotic Act (I can't remember the name of it now) came along about 1904. Prior to that narcotics were sold –were used—in medicine at the discretion of the doctor.

METZGER: How many people would be employed at a store like at Second and Maryland?

TAYLOR: At one time, we only had three people in the pharmacy part. When the counter would be open in spring, summer, and fall, there would be two soda dispensers and the porter.

METZGER: And the porter would be delivering prescriptions—and picking things up.

TAYLOR: He would keep things clean and do some painting. In that picture that I have of my father outside of the drug store taken in 1906, one of the men in that picture is the porter. His name was Josh; I've forgotten his last name. He was with my father for a very long time. When he got to the point when he wanted to do something less physical—to retire—then my father was able to have him employed—him and his wife employed—as superintendent of a small apartment house at about Sixth and Maryland Avenue which had a very nice apartment in it for the superintendent. I remember that they used to visit us; they were very happy.

We had any number of immigrant customers, just learning the language. We were sometimes amused at some of the things that would happen. There were no set baby formulas in those days. Many of the mothers used the Eagle brand condensed milk. We carried several brands and sometimes we would be out of Eagle brand. These people, Italians, wouldn't buy any other brand. After a while, it turned out that there was some connection between Eagle and milk—they may have even thought it was Eagle milk. They thought it meant strength.

METZGER: Much better than Carnation—where your child would be as weak as a flower or something.

TAYLOR: There were certain things that they always bought—chamomile tea and small packages of herbs. They brought with them the use of taking chamomile tea as a mild laxative. When we had the store right across from St. Joseph's, which was even closer to the Italian community, I remember they used to buy Jordan almonds to throw at a wedding instead of rice—various customs.

Another part of the pharmacy was the counseling. The pharmacist was, for many people, the educated person available to talk to about problems, sometimes marital problems in addition to health problems. Sometimes he would talk to a person two or three nights in a row trying to calm them down, answer their questions, give them advice. He was also involved sometimes with the police when a boy or juvenile, young man would be picked up for something. The police would be anxious to get his reputation on file. They would talk to my father and many times he would get them off by standing up for them.

The telephone was an interesting part of the drug store. For many years very few people on Capitol Hill had telephones. Drug stores frequently took messages, sometimes delivered the messages. But we always took the messages. Sometimes we expected the person to come in and we would hold it. If there was anything urgent we could send it over to them. That seemed to be the local practice for many kinds of stores, not just drugstores. One service that we provided was having postage stamps. This was done at something of a loss because there were always torn stamps, some got thrown away—but it was expected of drugstores to sell stamps. I think we went to the Post Office to get sheets of stamps, books of stamps. Sometimes people would complain if we didn't have just the stamp they wanted. We always took things like that in stride—never expected to be thanked or anything.

We sold money orders. In the article I wrote I told about the men who came from farms and were taught how to get along in the city, get jobs and so on. When they came in to send money home we knew they had made it, they had a job. Most of them would send part of their wages back home. We would hear about things; they'd talk to us, sometimes some one would be homesick and tell us about the people on his farm. For the people who lived in the apartment houses, the drug store was a relief between supper and going to bed. The boarding houses had parlors where they could socialize with guests but there wasn't much else to do. They would come to the drug store, hang around the corner and talk with their friends there. They would wait for the *Bulletin*—the single-sheet newspaper that was published three times a day. In the evening they were always anxious to see the baseball scores and stock market closings and that sort of thing. They would wait to see that and then go back talking with their friends...

METZGER: Did your mother ever work at the drug store or was her job to run the house?

TAYLOR: Her job was to run the house. My mother was very busy. She was a choir director, an organist and pianist.

METZGER: For which church? St. Joseph's?

TAYLOR: St. Joseph's. During World War I she had two churches. She was also directing choir at St. Stephen's in the West End. Of course that meant that the choir director had gone to war—she performed his job as well as hers. The churches had very little money to spend on choirs. If she wanted to buy music and didn't have any money in her household account (and this would be a special selection for Christmas or a season of the year), she would cook up a recipe that she had for whole wheat bran bread with raisins. The recipe called it a health bread. She'd make two dozen loaves of that over a couple of days. My father would pile it up on the counter, three or four loaves at a time. It tasted good—slightly laxative. She'd get the money and stop making the bread. My father would get so mad because people would come in and ask for the bread and he didn't have any. She wasn't about to make bread all her life. She sometimes played accompaniment to traveling concert people—music clubs would engage concert people from catalogs. Some came with their accompanist but she would be asked to play for others. She was also asked to consult on the purchase of new organs and pianos. She had a very good appreciation of the qualities of different pianos

One time she sent me downtown to get some sheet music. The store's name was Bruce—they sold pianos and music. The music section was manned by a man with the name of Saul Minstre. She said, "When you go down there be sure to give this order to Mr. Minstre. He knows what I want. Don't give it to anybody else." I was quite small; I gave the order to Mr. Minstre. All of a sudden he reached over the counter and took my cap off my head and says, "You have a little of the Kubel look but you'll never be as handsome as your uncle and cousins."

METZGER: What a thing to say!

TAYLOR: Saul Minstre had a band that consisted of a couple of bass drums with his name across them and a lot of uniforms (that was his portion of the band). Whenever there was a parade he'd offer his band, then he'd line up the musicians to fit the uniforms. My uncle used to say, "He doesn't pick them because they can play, he picks them because they fit the uniforms." He was a real character. I don't think he lived on Capitol Hill but he was an important person in the musical life of the town.

I can remember when my father moved his store down to Second and C Streets, right across from St. Joseph's church. Many times while working on Sunday morning, I'd look up and there would be a horse-drawn Heredic pulled up in front of the church (11:45 or 12 noon, something like that, right after the last high mass had been sung in the church). This wagon—it was like a bus pulled by a horse, you entered it from the back—would have a couple of ladies sitting in it. My mother and maybe another member of her choir would come out and get in it and it would go trundling up the street. It was on its way to St. Elizabeth's hospital to sing for the inmates there. And it would also go to the German Orphan Asylum, which was in the same general direction. This was customary—she didn't go every Sunday. I don't know who provided this service that picked up choir members from churches so they would go out and sing. That was quite a long round trip. My mother would get back about 2 or 3 o'clock.

In that store there were quite a number of pastors and his assistants over the years who would come in to see my father and they would talk about people in the parish, people who would need help or had problems or whatnot. Soon after he retired he was asked by Dr. Quigley, who had the store down by George Washington University, to take over that store for a while. Mr. Quigley had arthritis very badly in his hands; he could hardly put up a prescription. My father had just retired and sold his store. Mr. Quigley asked him to take over his store until he was better. So my father did. The president of the University then was Marvin—President Marvin—and he got in the habit of coming in to the store and talking with my father. One night he said, “Dr. Taylor, why do you call me Father Marvin?” He had been talking to these priests for so long in the same way that he fell in to the habit. He got a big kick out of that.

METZGER: Did your father have any special things that just he made?

TAYLOR: In that article [*Records of the Columbia Historical Society* 50 (1980), pages 508-521] I mentioned the shed behind the house. A lot of things were started there. He had a phosphatic emulsion that had cod liver oil in it before cod liver oil was irradiated and made as strong as it now is. It was known that cod livers contained something that was good. People were closed in during winter and hadn’t gotten enough sunlight so they needed something to get them going in the spring. Phosphatic emulsion was made with egg yolks and the principal ingredient was cod liver oil, and the emulsion of the oil and egg was made to begin with and then you added whatever the other ingredients were—phosphate, etc. That was made in a big boiler—maybe a couple dozen bottles at a time. My father had a label printed; my brother who was very clever made a small rack from angle irons so you could put a bottle between the angle irons and fold the paper around it so it looked like a manufactured package, and that would sit on the shelf with all the other phosphatic emulsions. That was one that was very popular—that was seasonal.

Then he made a cough syrup that was very popular. That was called Syrup of Attar and Irish Moss. It was a very, very good cough syrup. Most pharmacists on their labels identified themselves as manufactured pharmacist. People sort of expected them to have products of this sort. He had one called Grains of Health—a laxative tablet. At that time the big pharmaceutical houses would make up a product for a pharmacist if the pharmacist had a formula. They would make the pill for him to his prescription so they were professional looking pills, coated pills.

Then he had a cleaning fluid which he called Restorelustre, made with benzene and carbon tetrachloride. It was very, very good and is still used. It’s called Carbona but gets its name from carbon tetrachloride. Ours was called Restorelustre. He had other products that people liked. He didn’t have a lot of space or time to go national with these things. I know my brother and I would say if everybody likes to have it and it does the job, why don’t you sell it beyond Washington? Then he would tell us how many bottles we would have to make to stock so many stores, and we’d have to do this, and have to do that, and so on and so on. Then we realized it wasn’t that easy.

METZGER: When was your father born?

TAYLOR: I don’t remember offhand; I think the late 1860’s. He owned that store in 1898 and was married then.

METZGER: And he had grown up on Capitol Hill too?

TAYLOR: He was born in Detroit. His father and grandfather were bankers; they were a prominent family in Detroit but in one of the panics like 1876 they were wiped out.

[End of side B]

Tape 2—March 15, 1999

[Some conversation not recorded] Many of the houses had basements that were not dry. They would get musty and so on. These basements frequently had white wash walls and he had a recipe for white wash which was paint. He added quite a number of things to it, to smell fresher and be a little bit antiseptic, to combat the mold. That became very popular. He’d make that up in the spring, I think, and keep a few jars of it on the counter. On the nitty-gritty side, bed bugs were a problem. He had a little kit that he made up—it had an instruction leaflet in it, the insecticide that he made up and a brush that it could be applied with.

METZGER: Were there bed bugs because they re-used materials?

TAYLOR: They were spread by travelers; they weren’t the least bit uncommon. I can remember a story about the steam boat line. I enjoyed the steam boat rides on the Potomac and the Chesapeake. There was a very nice line that ran from Washington to Norfolk. My very first voyage on that was to visit the Jamestown World’s Fair in 1907. Later I was told about the bedbug problem on the boats. People carried them around with them in their suitcases and clothes I guess. The steamboat company had received a complaint from one of its passengers who said he had always enjoyed riding on the boat, sleeping and eating nice meals, but this time he had to tell them there were bugs in the stateroom. The people got back a nice letter from the president of the company, saying “I personally inspect the boats and we fumigate and do everything at every turn around but we can’t prevent people from bringing them in when they come.” People didn’t often get a nice long letter like that. As he was putting the letter back in the envelope—you’ve heard this I’m sure—he pulled out a memorandum that said “Send this person the bedbug letter.” I learned later that if you bring the temperature in the room up to 100 degrees and hold it there for a certain length of time, it will get rid of them.

METZGER: It would have been harder to do a long time ago than now.

TAYLOR: It could have been done in the summer. In the hot weather it wouldn't have been hard to get it up to 100 degrees. We also sold sulfa candles—big chunks of sulfa in a candle. If there had been illness in the room or infection the sulfa could correct, we'd close the room up and light the candle and let it burn day and night.

METZGER: It must have smelled awful!

TAYLOR: Yes, it did. They closed the door but, yes, it did. That was done for disinfecting as well as for vermin. There were all kinds of mold problems. In many of those English basement houses I'm sure the basement floor was put right down on the ground. I don't think there was any shielding or anything; wood would rot. There were other candles that we burned to get rid of the mustiness. We knew most of the secrets of that sort of the neighborhood—what people were having trouble with this or that. My father had a little black book that I still have in which he wrote his formulas for many of these things that he would be asked for. There was always a problem just before the Fourth of July. Little boys would come in with formulas—basically black powder—my father would say "That's dangerous." Then two or three boys would come in, each for one ingredient, my father would laugh and say, "You boys shouldn't be playing with that."

METZGER: Did they have firecrackers and all?

TAYLOR: Yes they did. They were usually purchased at the Chinese laundry. They imported them from China. You could buy small or big packages. We made one little cap pistol—it made a little noise too. If there was anything you didn't have you could always fire your cap pistol and make some noise. We had a toy that we made with a large door key that had a hollow end to it. We had a nail that fitted into that. The two were tied together with a piece of string. You take an ordinary kitchen sulfa match and break off—not the heads –the chemical top and pack the chemical in and press the nail in. Hold it by the string and hit it against the curb and it would go off with a big bang like a cap pistol. I've never seen that anywhere else but we used to do that. Speaking of keys, I still have in my basement a box of keys that my father kept in a drawer. All of his customers knew where it was. They'd come in and say, "I locked myself out again, Doctor Taylor. Can I look through your keys?" He'd say, "You know where it is." They'd get it out and look through this box and pick out a couple of keys. After a while they'd be back with a big grin on their face and say, "I found one and got in" and put the keys back.

METZGER: So it wasn't marked with their names; it was a generic key.

TAYLOR: It was just a big box of keys. Many of the houses didn't have what we call Yale locks—they were just bolts. He also had a box of tools—a couple of screwdrivers of different sizes, hammer, hatchet, folding rule, pliers, things of that sort. Many times men would come in and not even ask my father, just say, "Doctor, I'm going to borrow your hammer for a while." They'd always bring it back.

METZGER: So he had a lending library, a lending tool set, a lending key... It was truly a community center.

TAYLOR: The drugstore was more of a community asset than is usually realized today. For example my daughter went to the University of Pennsylvania and she spent one weekend with a classmate who lived there. The next time we saw her she was still bubbling over with the idea that right on the block where they lived there was a grocery store. She said, "The man in there told you what to buy and what was fresh and he got them off the shelf. Here was a man who was waiting on you and there was a boy with a wagon who could take your groceries home for you." I felt very sad. She grew up around here [Chevy Chase, D.C.] and this is a very sterile neighborhood compared to diversified Capitol Hill. She never got the opportunity to see adult people at work. My favorite story is the man who saw me at lunch time and he was walking by and said, "What are you doing after school?" "Nothing." "Well, come and stuff some envelopes for me." Then when I got there to stuff the envelopes, he said, "I'm going to get a hair cut. If anyone comes in, write down what they want and I'll get in touch with them." There were all kinds of things you could do because people wanted you to do them. They were your friends.

METZGER: That aspect of Capitol Hill has remained—diminished, it's not as common—but there are people who have small businesses in their home, maybe an art gallery and they get the neighborhood kid in to move things around. The same kind of adult-child part of your life.

TAYLOR: A lot of this was repeated over and over because the people who were artisans or mechanics who went to work on your house—if your roof was leaking, the man would come from the tin shop. He had a push cart with ladders on it, blow torch and soldering irons, paint buckets—all the things he needed to repair the roof. He and his brother—the two of them would push this cart to wherever they had to work. They couldn't spend all day pushing the cart so they all worked within a short radius. They were the tin shop of that neighborhood. Another tin shop I can tell you about was on Independence (B Street, Southeast) between Second and Third streets on the north side. My mother went to school in that tin shop one class year because Peabody was so crowded. All those businesses were in every neighborhood because you either had to walk to them or they had to walk to you. They were repeated over and over again within a matter of five to six blocks at most. There was a drug store at Second and Maryland Avenue; another drugstore at Second and Pennsylvania Avenue SE; one at Fourth and C Street NE; a drugstore at Second and E Street NE The drugstores were less than four blocks apart.

METZGER: I read an article that talked of Capitol Hill long ago where there were “horse cakes” --- gingerbread in the shape of a horse. I believe it was in the northeast section. Were there bakeries or candy stores?

TAYLOR: I don’t remember bakeries. Did I tell you about Mrs. Castle that had the store next to Peabody School?

METZGER: You talked about the Castles that had the dairy.

TAYLOR: No. Right next to Peabody School there was a shop run by Mrs. Castle. I don’t remember any more about her name. She had everything a school kid could want—pencils, pads, notebooks, all the other things. She also had a few tables where you could sit and have a piece of pie; I don’t remember ice cream but she had milk, I think. She made turnovers that were hot when you got them. They were hot at recess and hot at lunch time. They were probably a nickel or a dime each. They were fruit turnovers and very good. Whenever she had rhubarb I would tell my father because he loved rhubarb pie. My mother wasn’t very fond of it. She baked a lot but she wasn’t fond of rhubarb pie. So I would tell him and he would give me money to buy two of them and I would go back and buy them. We ate them in the drugstore so we wouldn’t offend my mother. She thought if you ate any baked goods outside the house you were disloyal.

There were many little things about the neighborhood life at that time. I’ve told this story many times about the telephone operator. If my father and mother were going across the street to play 500 or whatever card game was popular then with a family called Robey, before my mother went out she’d say to the operator, “This is Phinie Taylor. We’re going over to the Robeys to play cards. We’re leaving Frank and Elizabeth here. If they need anything Frank will call you and you can call us.” “Oh yes, I’ll take care of it.” I never remember having to do it. That was when we were living in the apartment across the street from the drugstore.

I can remember one time entertaining a group of kids. I don’t know why I was there alone. They came to the apartment. We were forming a baseball team or a club. We were probably 12 or 13 years old. There were about 9 or 10 kids. We went through all the business about who would do what. I thought it would be nice to serve them refreshments. My mother always made wine and we usually had a big container of red wine around. It was a sweet wine. I passed out glasses and passed the container. Some of these kids went home and told their parents that Frank Taylor had given them wine to drink. I spent a long time living that one down. My mother didn’t care. She didn’t object to my serving it but some of the parents did.

One amusing thing that happened—I told you that the Roland Apartment House had been built by a group that my father was involved with. There was a dentist and doctor also involved. The pharmacy was close to the apartment—right across the street. For a while he operated the switchboard; he operated that in the drugstore. He didn't really have room for it but he had it there. Tenants would call him if anything happened. One time a man came over, very excited, carrying a slug out of a rifle cartridge. "This came through my window." It was a 22-long cartridge. My father said, "Let me look. Where did it fall?" He showed him the hole in the window. "Where did you pick it up?" "Over there." So my father sighted through this and hit the three houses that were between Maryland Avenue and B Street. There were just three houses there and he thought it was the center one. So he went over and knocked on the door. We knew the people. Their name was Grey. Russell Grey worked for my father one time and then got a position with the State Department. He hung a target in the window on a curtain string and got back across the room and was shooting target practice out of his window. As long as he used 22-short cartridges, they fell in that little park across the street. This rifle apparently would handle long cartridges as well. Somebody had given him some and he didn't realize how far they would carry. My father scolded him and he was very sorry—don't tell his mother or something like that.

When World War I came along the government needed a lot of help—enlarged activities of Defense and so on—clerical and stenographic help. They advertised for this and many young women began to pour into the city. The government built a dormitory on this lot—which later became a park between Union Station and the Capitol. A lot of these women had come from farms. Although they could do useful work, they didn't know a whole lot about other things. They began to dress like other people they saw. Shiny white blouses were part of the costume of that day. They were getting ink on these. Some of them were our best customers. I can remember them bringing these blouses in stained with ink, government issue ink. My father would say, "If it's silk I can get it out; if it's synthetic the blouse won't be any good after I try." They thought it was silk but they couldn't wear it that way anyhow, so they said, "Go ahead and do it." If it was silk, the ink was gone—no charge for that.

Then they began to discover hairnets. Goodness, the stock you had to keep for hairnets. Of course, there were all complexions, all colors of hair, all sizes of mesh. Each had their favorites. Then they got into dying or painting straw hats. There were products made for that. There were products made for tinting clothing. That line of things like hairnets, hat coloring were for the "government girls."

Then they wanted to know about doctors. My father had in his mind a list of doctors and how he rated them. As a matter of fact, pharmacists at that time would see more patients than a doctor; get more different treatments for different things (sometimes the same thing would be treated differently by different doctors and he had a chance to observe how they worked). He loved the doctors who would take the time to diagnose—take the time to really find out what was wrong. We had a lot of young women who were coming in; they were our customers and we appreciated them. One time I had occasion to take something to one doctor he liked and I went in. The stair case that went up the hall (he practiced out of his home) was just filled with these girls sitting on the steps—some of them I knew. I was amazed at how many people were waiting to see him. But that was his first criterion that the doctor had to take the time to find out as much as he could. Doctors would be marvelous at doing this from observation and the few tests they had.

METZGER: At that time they had to use so much more of their own faculties because they didn't have fancy tests.

TAYLOR: It was amazing how much they really could do without the benefit of research, or anatomy classes... Many of the doctors on Capitol Hill in my time had learned medicine by apprenticeship.

METZGER: Is that how your father learned pharmacy too?

TAYLOR: Yes, when he came to Washington he was about 14 years old. About the time his father moved them to Capitol Hill—I guess he was about 16 when this occurred. The family was wondering what he would do. He had a cousin whose name was Barkley who happened to be there. He was related to a pharmacist in New York City, also named Barkley. He listened and said, "Well I'm going to New York with Gus and would like to be apprenticed to a pharmacist. I'm sure that Barkley would have a place for him. I'll go with him and introduce him. If he doesn't want him, I'll see that he gets home safely. He can look around New York." So my father became an apprentice to this man.

[Some of father's story lost at end of tape.]

[End of Side A]

[Side B]

TAYLOR: I think it was for about two years, and he learned the pharmaceutical trade. Then he came home with a sore throat or something. He had some vacation time, but he wasn't feeling well so his mother was worrying about him and said, "I wish you weren't going back to New York. Can you write to Mr. Barkley and tell him you're not coming back?" He said, "I've served my apprenticeship anyway." So he stayed home and went to work at a very young age, 18 or 19.

METZGER: At a pharmacy in Washington, but not on Capitol Hill?

TAYLOR: Not at that time. One of them was as far west as Fifteenth Street. That involved making prescriptions for the White House, but that was after a few years. When he first came he went to a pharmacy nearer Capitol Hill and got some experience. He told a story about the first time he met the pharmacist. My father walked in and the pharmacist said, "I'm really glad to see you." He handed my father the keys and said, “I’m just taking off and will be gone four or five days.” My father didn’t know where anything was or anything else; I guess he gave him some advice to call somebody to help him out.

His first customer was a man who came in and wanted him to pull his tooth. My father said he didn’t want to do that. The man said, “It isn’t hard. I’ll show you where Doc keeps the tools.” So they found the dental tools and looked them over and the man said, “That’s the one he uses. It is loose; it won’t be hard to pull.” So my father pulled the tooth for him. After that the man was carrying on and said, “The Doc usually gave me a drink of whiskey.” My father said, “How much did you pay?” The man said, “How much is it?” My father said, “How much have you been paying?” He said, “A quarter.” “Okay.” He gave him the quarter then turned around and said, “The Doctor usually gave me a drink of whiskey for a quarter to keep it from hurting too.” He told my father where the whiskey barrel was. My father went back to the barrel (it had a little dipper in it) and my father gave him a little drink. That’s the kind of drug store that was. That was his first experience. Then he worked for a number of druggists, some of them I knew in my lifetime. One was, as I said, on Fifteenth Street, one was right across from the Treasury, that was the pharmacist for the White House. One was around the corner. These were nice pharmacies, so when he finally went into business for himself he had some experience.

METZGER: So he opened that store at Second and Maryland in 1898?

TAYLOR: Yes, 1898, I think. I’ll look it up—right after my parents were married.

METZGER: You mentioned in that article about the influenza epidemic which I imagine was just horrendous and one of those things that would live in your memory.

TAYLOR: My memory is strange about this. I never saw the horror stories that were told. And similarly, I never saw the race riots. I just seemed to miss these. I was involved in the influenza. My father took me out of high school to help him. We worked—the store was open nearly 24 hours. I’ve seen him sleep in the store, on the floor. Our apartment was just up the street and I worked early and late, all hours. It got so the doctors were ill. In the meantime they had written so many prescriptions their wives knew what the doctors would do. They even had a code they explained to my father. As I said, we were open all the time. I told about taking food to the girls’ dormitory. I did that. The doctors told us what these people needed as much as medicine is food. Of course people who were getting their food were getting ill too. That happened in the boarding houses too. I never saw the cases where bodies accumulated or saw them being taken away. I never saw that in person but I knew that times were very, very bad and conditions were bad in some of the places I delivered medicines.

And then I told about the supply of drugs breaking down and my father sending me to Baltimore. [*Records of the Columbia Historical Society* article]. But I did that only once—with two suitcases and a long list of manufacturers. One of the interesting things that I got then and that we were always running out of was a preventative for the flu that was a little gauze-enclosed square of camphor gum and a square of acetaphetamine. Those two squares were sewn into a gauze pouch and it was worn around the neck. This was supposed to ward off influenza. Doctors were prescribing it and we were asked for it. (We didn't think it would be very effective; I don't know if it ever has been proven effective.) Later on I read somewhere the tears of the eyes contain some antibiotics and I wonder if just the irritation of breathing this and sometimes inducing tears in eyes might have some something to do with it. That's pretty far fetched.

METZGER: But when you didn't have penicillin. What were they prescribing?

TAYLOR: Mostly cough and cold medicines, fever remedies. I learned my lesson the second year—I had a very light case. I don't remember anything startling that was given to me. One precaution that many people did follow was—apparently the virus or whatever it was affected the heart to some degree. A lot of people died in the recovery stages. They went back to work too soon, took exercises to get back into shape. We did know that by the time that I got it. I can remember my father telling me to be very careful about walking around.

METZGER: I'm not sure it hit as hard here as it did in Europe, devastated by the war.

TAYLOR: It wasn't hard for us to send a little food, soups and bread. Just a few years before World War I the Southern Railway had built its first office building in Washington on D Street between First and Second. The government took that building over and put some government agency in there. There was no place around for people to get an inexpensive lunch. They used to come up and get a soda or glass of milk or something like that and ask my father why didn't he have sandwiches. So we were making sandwiches.

METZGER: Was there a difference between a boarding house and a rooming house? Did the boarding house serve a meal and the rooming house you just got a room?

TAYLOR: Yes, that was it.

METZGER: Was there any difference socially? Was one considered more respectable or just what you preferred?

TAYLOR: I think it was a matter of preference. A lot of people don't eat breakfast or had some other quirks so they preferred to do their own. When they got downtown to work, they would get lunch and sometimes supper before they came home. I never distinguished between boarding houses and rooming houses. I knew they were particularly along that block between First and Second Streets on the south side of Maryland Avenue—just solid tall houses with many rooms. Of course we knew the families that kept the boarding houses; they had children too. We expected a lot of people to live in boarding houses.

METZGER: There is one right across the street from where I live now, which I had never realized. I thought it was an apartment house, but apparently it was built as a boarding house and on the ground floor there is the owner's apartment plus a very large dining room. The upper floors just have bedrooms and hall baths.

TAYLOR: There was one right across the street from Peter Powers on A Street. I remember going over there, seeing him a number of times. The men living in that boarding house would be sitting on the stoop, talking and kidding around. They had social rooms—parlors—people could go and read the paper, talk with other boarders. But if they wanted to see people at night the crowd on the drugstore corner was the place to go.

METZGER: Just as a reference point, your father's partner was E. Hoyt Lamb?

TAYLOR: Yes—and that partnership lasted a number of years. While they were partners, they were three of a total of nine stores that wanted to form a little chain. They called themselves the Nivestos (nine vested stores). Dr. Quigley's store was one; Pearsons (which is a big liquor name or liquor dealership on Wisconsin Avenue, he was one) and Dr. Fuhrman who was on East Capitol Street at Eighth Street had a drugstore there (the northwest corner). We were quite friendly with the Fuhrmans—the family—because he was also on the board of pharmacy, secretary of the board of pharmacy. He also signed the certificates. So they formed this partnership, so to speak. It wasn't really a partnership but principally a purchasing method that they could pool their purchases and get better prices from the wholesaler than they could by dealing with a wholesale druggist. That was the primary purpose. Then they could afford a little advertising. They got out a little flyer that was thrown around the doors. I remember delivering those one time for the North Capitol Street store. They would have their specials and they would meet frequently to decide what their next move would be—what problems they were having with their supply, what problems they might be having with regulatory bodies. They just exchanged experiences. They were more or less independent but they were under this one name. They were forced by law to disband. It was said that the operation was an unfair business practice, and of course it wasn't many years after that that we had chain stores. At that moment it was frowned on by the Federal Trade Commission, or whatever it was called then. So they had to disband. I don't remember much more about the Nivestos stores than that. It never made any impression on me personally, that we were any different than before. With McPherguson and Mr. Lamb we were already one-third of the investors, so our life wasn't any different.

I should say too, with regard to the drug store, my father's sister was living in Washington and raising a family of three daughters. (She and her husband, a very nice man, had an amicable divorce.) She went to Columbia (part of George Washington) and studied pharmacy and became a pharmacist.

METZGER: Was that unusual?

TAYLOR: It was unusual. I don't know of any others. She became very popular among pharmacists by doing relief work. When the pharmacist decided to take a few days off he had to arrange for a regular relief man. My aunt, whose name was Edna Taylor, or Edna Elliot at that time, was well known throughout the city. My mother was a member of a club known as the Cultist's Club, where women met once a month and presented research papers on literature or whatever the topic happened to be. One time, I remember, my mother wrote on the Panama Canal and its construction, which was brand new at that time. My aunt, the pharmacist, was also a member of that club. They both were pretty women and were very popular, lively. They were very friendly together—sometimes it doesn't happen that a wife is friendly with her sister-in-law. They were always good friends and raised their families together.

If you're interested in what happened to people who grew up on Capitol Hill and branched out. Those three girls went to Washington Secretarial School and became stenographers and secretaries. The oldest one was working for an attorney here in Washington, one of whose clients was the Royal Bank of Canada. One day an attorney for the bank came in to see this attorney and said, "By the way, do you know any young women who would like to work in Havana? The bank is having difficulty finding good people." When he was gone, the attorney said, "Do you know anyone we could send to Havana?" "Why not send me?" They joked about it for a while. After a while he said, you know, it might be good for you to go to Havana. So she went to Havana and one after the other the other two girls went also. Two of them worked for the Royal Bank of Canada and married men in the bank. The youngest married the manager of the bank for the Caribbean area; the one that was my age married a man who worked for the bank and was a Canadian; and the third one eventually went to work for Shell Oil at a better job and went to San Juan, Puerto Rico.

METZGER: Did they all stay in the Caribbean?

TAYLOR: They stayed for a long time and they sent their children here. We had a couple of them here in this house going to university. Their mother didn't go to Havana right away and she was here taking care of the children who came up here to go to school. They had all kinds of education. One of them went to Marjorie Webster School of Drama and went on the stage. This is the way Capitol Hill spreads around the world. They all had happy, successful lives. The youngest one, whose husband was reaching retirement age, built a retirement home in Havana but had not moved into it. They were living in Havana when

Castro came in. My cousin told me about looking through slits in the venetian blinds—they went right by their house as they came down out of the mountains, walked in carrying their shoes tied together hung around their neck, shuffling in the dusty road, just quiet, a stream of men going by. No noise or anything. They just walked in and took over. They started out as an improvement over the dictator there—Batista was his name, I think. Only later did Castro introduce communism. The house they built that they never lived in—they were informed by the government that if they ever wanted to come back and live in Havana the house would be returned to them. In the meantime the house would be used by the government. The Royal Bank of Canada sold its assets to the Cuban government, which made the manager a very important person in the Royal Bank of Canada because none of the other banks were able to sell. Castro just took them over. Because Canada had recognized Castro he was willing to pay for their assets. He retired soon after.

METZGER: What were the hours of the drug store?

TAYLOR: We opened at 7 in the morning, sometimes 6:30, and we ran until 11 at night. We weren't always busy all that time but we were always open. The drug store at night was brightly lighted. We had those drugstore window bottles. Have you ever seen those, the red and green ones with the lights behind them. My father always "wasted" money on lights because he thought it was good business to do it. There was one corner lighted up and people coming and going. It was really a safety or security factor for the neighborhood. As you came out of the old Stanton Theatre you walked by Al's Drugstore and then there was Taylor's Drugstore.

[End of side B]

END OF INTERVIEW 3

INTERVIEW 4, April 7, 1999

[Apparently some discussion about the flu epidemic of 1918 and an interview heard on NPR about the epidemic that included a segment on Frank's memories was not recorded. Tape starts with interviewer Nancy Metzger saying, "But you wouldn't necessarily want to go in the houses."]

TAYLOR: But there are a lot of pretty wild stories told about people dying and just being left there. They couldn't even call the police, but I never ran into that. I did work with my father very hard. We had the store open nearly 24 hours a day. I was there in the evening so he could go home to rest. I opened the store most mornings so he could sleep.

METZGER: You said in the article [*Records of the Columbia Historical Society* 50 (1980): pages 508–521] that he took you out of school. How long a period of time was that?

TAYLOR: I was trying to remember that today. I don't believe it lasted very long—at the most two months. And I think probably it was closer to six weeks. I had it the next year but it was a milder strain and people knew a little more about it. But I remember my father was very careful about letting me go out after I got up because a lot of people died as a result of the weakening of the heart muscles by the influenza. If they did any kind of energetic walking or work too soon, many people died of a heart attack that was caused by a weakening of the muscles of the heart. I'm just repeating what you heard [on an 1999 NPR radio interview about the 1918 flu epidemic in Washington].

METZGER: I think they are doing a lot of research now on why that flu strain was so virulent and hit people so hard.

TAYLOR: My brother had it in the army. He had enlisted rather early and was up in New York State in training. He lost a bit of weight. We were rather worried. He was with the French army most of the war—he was an ordinance sergeant, which was pretty high ranking noncommissioned. He was just out of high school. He had an athletic scholarship to go to the University of Pittsburgh but he was a pretty well-read youngster. He knew that if he did his education would be interrupted by the war. War was coming and everybody knew it.

So he decided to go to work. He worked as a machinist. We both went to McKinley High School. He was a very competent machinist when he got out of high school and went to work for the Firth Sterling, a British plant that was over in the neighborhood near Bolling Air Force Base—Giesboro Point, they called it. I guess you've heard of Firth Sterling.

METZGER: That explains why there's a Firth Sterling street. I always put it into Scotland and thought there was an enclave of Scots.

TAYLOR: The Smithsonian had a lot of facilities out in the direction of Silver Hill and Suitland and every time, it seemed to me, when we'd cross that street someone would ask about it. He worked there.

METZGER: So they did mostly airplane engines or…?

TAYLOR: They were making projectiles for artillery shells, generally making the cast steel projectiles. They were sent somewhere else to be assembled into shells. They required some fine machine work within convention because they would have to put a ring on it that would have to fit somewhere else, so it would have to be precise. He worked hard at it. When the war was coming on and my brother was talking about going into the army, my mother began to worry even then. I guess before the war we moved from Massachusetts Avenue [N.E.] to a row of apartment houses in which my Dad had an interest. My mother worried through the whole war. My father made her go to work. She was working hard anyhow. She was choir director of two churches. The man at St. Stephen's in the West End had gone to war so she was doing his job along with St. Joseph's. She finally went to work with the fuel administration. I have the certificate that she was given at the end of the war for her war service.

METZGER: Did she think that helped her get through the war—or at least did your father think it did?

TAYLOR: I'm sure it did because she had her mind on other things and other people around her. She was never home. Everything she did, she did hard. But it was a very cruel system. They had published the casualty list on the first page of the newspaper every day. Many people learned of a casualty in the family before they had been notified by the military. You would run your finger down the column hoping that it wouldn't show up. It was very cruel the way they did it.

METZGER: Yes, you always read of a Western Union telegram or something being delivered. But reading about it in the paper was even more awful.

TAYLOR: He was over a long, long time. He was over before the Expeditionary Force. He came back late because they needed him. He was in charge of a mobile repair shop—two or three trucks with a lot of lathes and other machines. They were right up in the forward position where the small arms the French were using that were American in origin—American owned. The small arms would be passed back to them and they would repair them and put them back into service. They were always close to the front but were not in the trenches. After the war there were so many troops over there that Pershing knew there would be a lot of dissatisfaction of the men that would be the last to come home. So he organized a small arms shooting contest to keep them busy—rifles, pistols and so on. Everybody in the military was urged to participate—contests within the company, battalion and so on up to the finals. So my brother's machine shop was ordered to Le Mans to repair all the arms. That didn't please him very much.

METZGER: Was there a big parade or anything when they came home?

TAYLOR: There was a parade, but I don't think he was in it.

METZGER: It was over before he got there!

TAYLOR: Well, he wasn't with a unit—First Army or the Second Division—he was just with that small group of men with an American officer over him. But he was not with any unit that would be organized into a parade. I don't know where he was when it occurred—I guess at Catholic University.

METZGER: Was there any feeling that the District didn't have a vote—and that our boys, men were being sent?

TAYLOR: I don't think so. I don't remember any of that. We were all Americans.

METZGER: Was there much talk that the District didn't get the vote?

TAYLOR: I don't think we thought much about it. We thought we were getting what the Constitution set up for the District. As far as we were concerned the government was reasonably representative. Nobody voted. It was a long time before we even voted for the president. For most of my lifetime we had the commission form of government—three commissioners appointed by the president, one of whom would be a high-ranking officer in the Corps of Engineers who would be in control of the highways, police and fire departments. I have a photograph of my father receiving an award from Guy Mason, who was the last surviving commissioner. They were down to one commissioner at that time. They had done away with the three commissioners and were planning to have a mayor. Of the final ones he was selected to oversee the transition.

METZGER: They named the recreation area in Northwest for him. I always thought Guy Mason was one of the Revolutionary people—I guess because of Mason Neck and all of that.

TAYLOR: He was a pretty good man. I remember he was very much interested in the building we were finishing on Constitution Avenue that opened as the Museum of History and Technology. He heard that we were moving a locomotive across town and put it in the building. He came down and spent the whole night with us. He got a big kick out of it.

METZGER: I have some questions from our other interviews but I see you have some notes so why don't we go through those first.

TAYLOR: About schools—one of the great disciplinary tools in the elementary school system, particularly with boys who were out of order, was to threaten them with being transferred to the Gales School. I don't remember where it was. I don't remember having seen it, as a matter of fact. I think it was down in the neighborhood of the Printing Office—Massachusetts Avenue, New Jersey—down that way. If a boy was out of line he was threatened with being transferred to the Gales School and Gales had all men teachers. I think it worked to a degree.

METZGER: There weren't too many discipline problems?

TAYLOR: There were some. I remember being kept after school. I don't remember why, but there were three or four of us. This was in the old Hilton [School]—it was new then. It was warm weather and the windows were all open. The teacher was presiding over the five or six that were being kept after school for one reason or another. There was one older boy in the back of the room. When the teacher wasn't looking, or he thought she wasn't looking, he stepped out of the window—he could step out onto a shed roof and climb down. He just stepped out the window and was gone. "Well," she said, "he'll have to spend two more nights after school and if he keeps it up he'll end up at Gales." So the word got back to him; he was being threatened with Gales. That had a tendency to straighten them out.

The District of Columbia schools had a reciprocity agreement with the state of Maryland that persisted quite a long time. The reciprocity agreement was that the young people, even in grade school but particularly high school, could use the District of Columbia schools—they could come in from Maryland and use the District of Columbia schools. In return the state of Maryland would enroll any qualified graduate of a District of Columbia high school at the University, which in those days was the Maryland Agricultural College. They would pay the same tuition as the state residents paid, which in those days was practically nothing. That worked pretty well and lasted quite a while. Right here, my daughter and Corriane Russell who lived up the street and Joan Friedman who lived on the other side of Western Avenue in Maryland went through eight grades together. It was right at the very end that Joan Friedman was told she was in the last class that would be coming from Maryland. That would have been 1953. I thought it was pretty good.

One of the notes I was going to make as far as Capitol Hill was concerned was that there were a few youngsters in my elementary school classes who came from Maryland by railroad. Their father or someone worked on the railroad and lived near places like Terra Cotta and all the stations between here and Baltimore. It was very convenient for them to get on the train (they had a pass) and they would get off at Union Station and walk over to Peabody or Carbery or one of the nearby schools. One youngster was in my class—his family name was Busey—his father was a locomotive engineer. I got to know him pretty well. My parents asked him to spend the weekend with us; his parents let him do it, and then his parents asked me to come out on the weekend. I remember they lived right on the railroad. His father was an engineer and he was so important that the trains would stop or slow down so he could hop aboard and ride into Union Station to get his locomotive. That impressed me that the trains would slow down to pick up this boy's father. That was interesting to me, but that would happen only on that part of Capitol Hill closest to Union Station.

METZGER: Where was Hilton?

TAYLOR: Hilton was on Sixth Street. Peabody was on Fifth. They built the school right around the corner, called Hilton. It was a brand-new school and I guess I went there the first year.

METZGER: So it was on Sixth and Massachusetts?

TAYLOR: Sixth—between B and C. That would be just off Stanton Park. It was a school that was designed largely for classroom space. It didn't have any of the amenities like an assembly hall or anything like it. It was just a big square building. They tore it down, I think, and then there was Carbery and Edmonds farther east. I went to Peabody and then Edmonds before I went to high school.

METZGER: They made Carbery into condominiums—very nice ones.

TAYLOR: There was a great rivalry between Peabody and Carbery. It's amazing how much pride we could invest in that—and the neighborhoods too. We were proud of our neighborhoods.

METZGER: Did you have a favorite teacher and what was the day like? Did you have one teacher for the entire day in elementary school?

TAYLOR: Yes, one teacher taught a grade. I told you about the fifth grade teacher who slapped me. She was one of my favorite teachers. I must have tried her pretty much. All of the teachers I had were good. I can remember some of their names like Thorne; Mrs. Aukward, who was a teacher my mother had at Peabody, was the principal when I went there; Yoder (I don't think her immediate family but a part of the family lived right next to my father's drugstore). We knew the Yoders. I think that was the beauty of the schools in those days; the teachers lived where they taught.

METZGER: Not only that they had a relationship with the parent but they could also see the children outside of a classroom setting.

TAYLOR: We weren't afraid of them or anything like that. They were friends, neighbors, and in our case, customers in the store.

METZGER: My mother used to talk about school in a rural community and how it was a problem to have money for paper and things like that. Was that a problem here in the city?

TAYLOR: I don't think so. I read about these problems now but I'm sure we didn't have them. Our books always looked clean and there were always plenty of them. I have no way of judging how good they were but I assume they were adequate. There was never any real want of anything. The janitor responded to every request the teachers made of him. He took pride in keeping the place looking good. He knew everyone by name. Sometimes he would point a finger at a boy who would stop whatever he was doing.

METZGER: And they always came down the hall with the push broom with the shavings in front of it?

TAYLOR: I remember even when I was there thinking that with the wood floor so saturated with whatever oils they used for cleaning, it must be a terrible fire hazard. Probably still is.

I mentioned the Hilton School and the Edmonds School, the railroad children, the reciprocity. That was important. When my sister graduated from high school she had a scholarship to Syracuse. She was relatively young—a year or so younger than most graduates. My mother and father didn't want her to go so far away. She decided to go to Maryland Agricultural College. This is interesting. I mentioned it before but when she went there she lived at home (the apartment at Second and Maryland Avenue). The bus ran right up Maryland Avenue to College Park to Baltimore. It was easier for her to go to College Park than for her to go to Georgetown. They were nice buses—very modern—gasoline electric. I don't know enough about them to be very accurate but the gasoline engine ran at a more or less constant pace and turned the generator which in turn supplied electricity for the motor's crank shafts of the driving wheels. The theory behind all that was that the noisy gasoline motor didn't roar up, accelerating and all that sort of thing; it just ran at a steady quiet pace, generating current. The motors in turn took the acceleration. They were very quiet—very nice municipal buses. I don't know who ran it—whether by the railroad or an independent bus.

METZGER: There was a trolley line that went out.

TAYLOR: It didn't last very long.

METZGER: The trolley line?

TAYLOR: No, the bus. [Some general conversation about buses and trolleys.]

The next year she lived at the college in a very unusual situation. One of the professors there was known as the farmer—the university farmer—who actually operated the experimental farm, the teaching farm.

He had four daughters and a son. The name was Blanford. My sister was very fond of the next-to-youngest daughter. She practically became a member of that family, although she did belong to the AOPhi sorority, which was one of those that built those first buildings in the revival of the campus. Before she graduated it became the University of Maryland.

METZGER: She was probably going through at about the same time my father was. He was born in 1907.

TAYLOR: She was born in 1906. I thought of a few things that were street sights that you would see. There was a lamplighter who came around and lit the gas lights. There were two brothers—Italian origin. The older brother always dressed in a dark suit and the younger brother was always informally dressed and he carried the ladder. They would come up to a lamppost. The second brother would put the ladder up against the post and the boss would walk up the ladder and light the gas lantern.

METZGER: Did they have a torch that they used?

TAYLOR: I don't remember. They probably used matches—the big ones we called kitchen matches. They were employees of the gas company and they worked all day doing other things. I'm pretty sure they used manufactured gas—a lot of vapor and liquid that came through that had to be drained out. There were little sumps in the mains where this would collect. They would come around and empty those with a little stick that they put down. It was foul smelling—just terrible.

METZGER: I imagine. I ran into someone at the bank and somehow it came up about this oral history project. He said, "I wished you had talked to one of my old neighbors before he died. He used to tell me these stories about how when they would go around after the lamplighter and blow out the lamps. Then they finally got caught and were put in jail for two hours and lectured sternly and they never did that again."

TAYLOR: Oh, kids would do anything. That was a sight you saw every evening. You knew it would be dark pretty soon.

METZGER: They must have quite a few lighters to get the whole city lit within a two-hour time period.

TAYLOR: Yes, they started fairly early. I don't know who put them out. I guess I was never up that early to see but I was up pretty early and I never saw anybody put them out. This reminded me that there were other brother combinations where there was a smart one, then one less bright. I know that at the tin shop in the neighborhood there were two brothers. My father brought ice cream from a wholesaler and there were two men on that truck—one was a strong back and the other took the order, made out the invoices, told the other one what to do. After he had settled all that, he would work too putting the ice down around the containers. That was before mechanical refrigeration; I guess they had salt and ice. Those three—it was a good idea. Sometimes the man with a strong back probably didn't get along with anybody else so his brother would be there to tell him what to do. Better than having a person on relief.

METZGER: You talked about the house at 909 Massachusetts Avenue. It had a reception room on the first floor. Was that room used for anything? Were there chairs in there?

TAYLOR: It had a sofa in there. It was not much wider than the hallway, wide enough to have the stairs going up and the closet beside the stairs and under the stairs was a place for rubbers. I said that wrong—that was the old house. Actually the steps went up out of the reception room.

METZGER: It was one of those "S" stairs—started this way, then turned, then turned again. But did it have furniture in the room?

TAYLOR: I remember the sofa. That was where my father treated our dog when he broke his leg. The dog slept on the sofa when he was being treated.

METZGER: Was the room used for relaxing or did people actually "make calls"? You read about that from earlier times.

TAYLOR: I don't think we had much of that formality. It was a good place to take off your coat. The dining room was back of that. It was like a spare lobby that was halfway back so you passed the parlor on the way back. Then there was a door from the reception room to the parlor.

METZGER: Was the parlor used—like in winter evenings—did the family sit in there, your mother doing sewing? She was probably busy doing other things.

TAYLOR: No, the family was in the dining room—around the big table. That was universal. I remember my wife remembered her childhood—studying at the dining room table. The radio was going while she did her lessons. And we sat around the table while we did our lessons. That was common practice. The dining room in the First Street house was downstairs. There was a couch there. My father would come home for lunch and after lunch he would take a nap on the couch. Of course he worked long hours.

METZGER: I guess your family was a little different in that respect, but for a long time people did come home for lunch.

TAYLOR: Did you ever read "Life With Father?" It was an old New Yorker series. Well, the father came home for lunch and he had a couch he slept on. It was a long room so there was room for a couch.

METZGER: So the dining rooms were actually well used, the heart of the house?

TAYLOR: I can remember going by it after we had moved and it had been rented. I don't remember if it had been divided into two or not. I knew one family—this man was a pharmacist, a relief pharmacist for my father. He was German; his name was Laubaker. I was walking along the sidewalk. You could look down and see the Latrobe [stove] in the back. Mr. Laubaker would be sitting at the window, with a dachshund on his lap, and the two of them would be looking at a German newspaper. I knew all this because once in a while we'd wave me in and I'd go say "hello." He convinced me that the dog could read German.

METZGER: The other question was similar—was the "hall bedroom" just a pass-through area?

TAYLOR: That was usually on the top floor where the stairs didn't go any further so that the area of the hall that would have been taken by the stairs going up was made another little room and used as a bedroom. It was often in the front of the house—just the width of the hall in width and a little bit longer than it was wide. There wasn't a lot of room in it; it was all right for a single man but there was talk about men doubling up and living in it for financial reasons. There were songs about it and vaudeville skits.

I think I forgot to tell you about the coal vault under the lawn in that First Street house. Much of the area under the lawn was a vault—like a manhole in the lawn would be opened. Coal would be delivered by a wagon that had a long chute—a telescoping chute that could be extended from the wagon out to the manhole that led into the coal vault. The wagon was built onto a chassis that could be raised by cranking. The whole wagon body would go up at an angle and the coal would begin to slide down the chute into the vault. That would be on the same level as the kitchen and dining room. The area way—when you went down six, seven or eight steps into the level of the dining room—had a door in back of you that went into the vault. That door was not used by company—they went up to the first floor.

[END OF SIDE 1]

[SIDE 2]

TAYLOR: I think the ash man would actually come into the house from the alley. He would come into the house end of the yard and pick up ashes there. The ashes were always stored in metal cans.

METZGER: I had never known about those coal vaults until recently when a house on Fifth Street was being renovated for apartments. The owner got the brainstorm to use these things as storage. These weren't waterproof so he cemented over the front yard. He did a beautiful job of restoring the house, brickwork, the Italianate cornice—and then it's sitting on this cement platform. But the real reason is that he's using the vault as a basement. I had never known that they existed—I don't think there are many left on the Hill like that.

TAYLOR: I was trying to remember how the coal was delivered at the Massachusetts Avenue house. I think the coal bin was right up against the east side of the house. There was a basement window so coal could be delivered by chute. In fact there was a vacant lot when we lived there so the truck could actually bounce up over the sidewalk and get pretty close to the house.

METZGER: When were most furnaces converted, do you think?

TAYLOR: My father and I bought our last house on Upshur Street, between Seventeenth and Eighteenth streets, Northwest. We had coal there—hot water heat with a coal-fired boiler. That worked moderately well. My uncle who lived across the street at 908 had his coal furnace rigged up with all kinds of weights, levers, and alarm clocks that would open the damper and light the fire up before anybody got up so the house would be warm. I took a lead from him and put a fan that was controlled electrically by the temperature of the water—they call it a hydrostat. If the water that came out of the boiler got cool, it would start the fan and raise the temperature in the fire box. That would relieve you of going down occasionally and doing the same thing manually. Of course you still had to shovel the coal in.

METZGER: Was that a task that was assigned to boys in the family?

TAYLOR: Yes, when they got big enough, they always had to take the ashes out, put them in a can and take them out into the back yard for the ash collector. It was different from the trash collector. I guess the ashes were used for filling masonry products.

METZGER: Do you remember when the radio first came into your home?

TAYLOR: I remember before that because my brother was a wireless fan before there was a radio, before the telephone and the wireless were combined to make radio. He was always sending me downtown to buy foil to make condensers and buy batteries for his radio. He had a little primitive wireless station. Across this vacant lot he had, with the help of the boy next door on the corner, strung an antenna—quite a long antenna for those days—across that vacant lot. When the Naval wireless station gave the noon time signal, it almost knocked me off the chair it was so loud. He was onto other things before radio came along. I guess I was the radio person in the family.

A radio is a very simple thing to make. You had an oatmeal container, a round box, and you'd wrap a wire coil around that so that you could scrape the insulation off and have a slider that would go across different parts of this, tuning in to different lengths of the coil. The catch was the little piece of equipment that held a crystal that was used to rectify the incoming signals down to the audible frequencies in the hearing range. The most expensive part of all this was a pair of earphones so that you could listen. My brother had used earphones, so there were earphones around when I came along. It was a very simple instrument to make—you didn't need batteries or anything like that, just crystals (called cat's whiskers) and a little coil to select station frequencies. My father in his drugstore had one of the first phonographs. He had it where people could play it when they came in because it was a curiosity. He thought he wanted to do the same thing for radio, but unfortunately at that time he didn't have any money to do a really good job. We did get a radio that you could barely hear without the headset. The Naval Air Station had a radio studio and they broadcast every once in a while. You never knew what was going to be on the air because it wasn't until about 1922 that I think KDKA in Pittsburgh became the first broadcast station in radio. Some churches had them. I collected for the Smithsonian a whole radio station on top of a kitchen table about as big as that dining room table [4 feet x 6 feet] with all the apparatus so that a church could broadcast the lectures from the pulpit. That one was from Church of the Covenant on Connecticut Avenue on M Street or N Street.

METZGER: It really sounds like it was longer until you could sit around and just be entertained.

TAYLOR: This Naval Air Station had a little studio and they would invite violinists or pianists to come and play, invite someone to sing. They just did that for training in the use of a radio.

METZGER: That was down on the other side of the Anacostia? It wasn't Bolling Field but right across from the Navy Yard? I think there is still a remnant there where the helicopters go out from.

TAYLOR: As I say, there were a few little business stations and church stations. One of the call numbers today is WMAL. MAL are the initials of M. A. Lease, who was an optician in Washington. He got interested in the radio—before there was radio, he actually got interested in wireless. In addition to having his optical shop he began to sell parts that people could put together to make a more sophisticated radio than the one I was talking about being done on an oatmeal box. Growing out of that he started broadcasting himself; he got a license. The call numbers are still used—WMAL. I don't remember now where the shop was downtown but I remember the big trays of parts that kids could go in and take this and that and tell him what they were going to do to make a radio. The cashier would add it all up.

METZGER: And the telephone. Your father had an early one—about when did he have a telephone in his store?

TAYLOR: I don't really know. It had to be very early. I think the annex to the Roland Apartment House was built in about 1904 or 1906, I believe. The main part had been built at the end of the century. But I think they, at that time, were installing equipment for the telephone and he had the switchboard in his drugstore, which was right across the street. As early as I can remember, the store had a switchboard in it.

METZGER: Of course, you wouldn't have necessarily had anyone to call, as most people didn't have telephones?

TAYLOR: The apartments did have the phones, and soon after we did have the Lincoln exchange on Capitol Hill. But one of the things that interested me was at the time the communication was by word of mouth mostly. Baseball was a very popular professional sport when I was growing up. Men knew a lot about what was happening in the major leagues and they wanted to see the scores. These scores were published in the last edition of the *Washington Bulletin*, which was one sheet that was brought around and hung up in stores. During the day there would be a noon edition, afternoon edition and an evening edition. Well, that wasn't quite enough for some people. There was a boy in my neighborhood—about my age, I guess. He was known as Scoreboard Willie—his name was William Hagelman. On his front lawn he had a scoreboard (these box scoreboards, I don't know if you've ever seen one.) There was a fruit store over on Pennsylvania Avenue SE about Third or Fourth Street that had a scoreboard above the show window. The proprietor or whoever worked for him would get the score over the telephone at the end of each inning and climb up there and put the score in for that inning. People who were going by would get in the habit of waiting to see how the game was going. So Scoreboard Willie made a scoreboard to sit in his front yard and he would ride his bike over and get the numbers off of that and come back and put the numbers on. You would be surprised how many men got in the habit of walking by to see what was going on. That was on A Street between First and Second, nearer to Second.

METZGER: You mentioned one time about making the soapbox scooter in your basement. That was another thing the guys did too?

TAYLOR: I remember, of course, when you were a small boy nobody would buy you a bicycle, they bought you a tricycle—with a big wheel in the front and two small wheels in the back. When you got to the point where you really wanted a two-wheeler you converted your tricycle to a two-wheeler by taking one wheel off the back and pushing the forks together, and saving only the one wheel by bending the two struts in the back. Well, I did that and wisely got aboard and started to ride. I hadn't ridden very far when I remember going down into a depression in the street, like the ones that lead into sewers. I hit that when I wasn't really expecting to go down. It threw me off and I cracked my head on the curbstone. I'll never forget that.

That reminds me of some scenes that might be of interest. Where I did this was on B Street at Ninth Street NE, which would be the corner of the square that our house was on. There was a barroom in there. It was not unusual to find a barroom in a residential area. They were spotted through the Capitol Hill area pretty generously. We never patronized it as far as I know; I don't even know the name of the person who owned it. It wasn't that we didn't approve of it; it was a very quiet place, never caused any problem at all.

I guess by that time my uncles were making their own beer during Prohibition and after. They made wine as well. There really wasn't much reason for us to deal there. For a kid it provided quite a bit of activity and amusement.

This is not a very pretty story. Once a year at least, maybe more often than that, the owner of the bar would hire an exterminator to come and get rid of his rats. They did this with ferrets and rat hounds. They would send the ferrets through the holes, which would drive the rats onto the sidewalk. The little rat terriers would chase them and snap their necks. It was quite a bit of excitement for a kid to stand there and watch this happening. That was very entertaining.

And the hurdy-gurdy came along. They usually played outside of barrooms because there was usually someone generous enough to send them out a nickel or dime.

METZGER: Did they have monkeys?

TAYLOR: No. There were organ grinders with the monkeys too but these were about the size of a large upright piano—I think they were called hurdy-gurdies. They were on two wheels—two big wheels on the back and two small wheels on the front. They had shafts on them so the man who turned the crank could pull it from place to place. He always managed to come by this particular barroom just before lunch. He would play and play and play and then he would go in with a little can called "growler." The bartender would fill up the growler—he always gave him a lot of foam, they had ways of doing that. He would come out of the barroom and I would be standing there waiting for him to come out. He would stand on the curb, take a deep breath and go "whoo" and blow the foam off the growler, then drink the beer.

METZGER: Did that barroom have food too?

TAYLOR: I don't think that one did. It was a place where you could go in and have a drink, standing at a bar or at a couple of tables. They all had what was called a ladies entrance, which was not an entrance but usually a sliding window that could be opened. Anybody could go there, children or a cook with a pitcher, and get a pitcher of beer for dinner. That was a typical small bar. It was not uncommon to see well-dressed people go up with a pitcher. It was very quiet. As far as I know, it never caused any problem. On East Capitol Street, about Fourth or Fifth there was a barroom on the south side—I've forgotten the exact location. When people were getting ready to turn in, the older boys who hung around in the crowd on the drugstore corner would say, "Let's go up and get a blossom." They would go get a beer and a blossom, which was a limburger sandwich—limburger on a roll. I never liked limburger. They thought it was great and called it a blossom.

METZGER: How were deaths handled? Were the wakes at funeral homes or in houses?

TAYLOR: There were funeral homes. For instance, a family by the name of Lee had one at Fourth and C Street, diagonally across from Peabody School. There was one on East Capitol Street called Ryan—in the general area of Third or Fourth on the south side of the street.

METZGER: Did they still have all the mourning cloths?

TAYLOR: Crepes? Yes, they still hung crepes on the door. They were different shades to indicate the age of the person. A child would be white; there was lavender. I'm really not sure. Most funerals, even then, were from homes. They had the viewing in the home. My grandfather, the instrument maker, his funeral was from his home on First Street. That was in 1898. The service would be in the church.

[Discussion about timing of grandfather's funeral and government's purchase of the building for Capitol Park, etc. Difficulty in finding deed in D.C. Government.]

Wakes were modified by the background culture of the people—German or Irish or Italian. I was interested in recent times, some people held the wake in the church right before the funeral. The family was there and people went up and talked to the family before the service.

That reminds me, have you found anybody who knows if the history that Father McAdams compiled on St. Joseph's...?

METZGER: I haven't. I talked to a woman active at St. Joseph's and she promised she would get me the name of somebody who might know.

What national event do you remember most vividly?

TAYLOR: When I was very small I witnessed the crowds coming in to attend the inauguration of the president. I would have to calculate which one it was—it would have been 1906 or somewhere in there. [Note: Taylor would have been two years old for Theodore Roosevelt's inaugural in 1905, or six for Taft's in 1909.] From our front window we could look right out to Union Station down the street, because what is now the park was just one big vast clay surface where they had spread the soil from the tunnel. Nothing was done for a number of years. In this particular inauguration there was a fairly deep snow. I can remember the streets were plowed around Union Station—the snow was piled up maybe waist high. The various political clubs were coming in their uniforms intending to march in the parade. Some of them were wearing white trousers, sports coats, straw hats, canes—very dude-like. Others were dressed like Indians. There may have been Tammany Hall, I'm not sure about that. Some came in with their bands that would strike up a tune. They'd march off to their hotels.

[Discussion about consumer use tax on the books since 1949]

METZGER: My husband said to ask you how people courted. When did teenagers start dating? I guess a lot of people got married at 18 or so.

TAYLOR: One lovely woman, the oldest daughter of the Robey family lived about two doors from us. Mr. Robey was the station master at the Union Station, a very responsible job. My father and mother knew the parents very well. They had four daughters; the oldest was Marie. She used to meet a man coming home from work every evening when the weather was good. She would get dressed up in the late afternoon and walk down to the street car line to meet him. He was, I think, the head of the Washington AP wire service. They went together for the longest time but I don't remember if they ever got married. A lot of courting was done in the movie houses. There were certain activities where you could meet people—I think I told you about being in the Children of the American Revolution—and carry on a correspondence. Everybody had sisters who attracted your sister's friends. My brother and I married sisters. He was six years older than I. The courtship went on quite awhile because there were so many interruptions—she was in Boston and I was here. When my brother married her sister, she would frequently come down to visit the family at Christmas or Easter.

[END OF TAPE]

END OF INTERVIEW 4