



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK  
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

---

**Interview with Frank A. Taylor**

**Interview Date:** June 10, 2003  
**Interviewer:** John Franzén  
**Transcriber:** John Franzén

This interview transcript is the property of the Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project.  
Not to be reproduced without permission.

TAPE 1/SIDE 1

**FRANZÉN:** This is Tuesday, June 10th, in the year 2003. I'm John Franzén and I'm sitting here today with Frank Taylor at his home on 32nd Street Northwest. Frank Taylor grew up on Capitol Hill, eventually became director of the Smithsonian, retiring in 1971, I believe, and doing further work there after that...

**TAYLOR:** Do you want me to interrupt you for a correction?

**FRANZÉN:** Of course.

**TAYLOR:** I was never the director of the Smithsonian.

**FRANZÉN:** You were not?

**TAYLOR:** No. When I finally ended up there I was an Assistant Secretary for Museum Operations of the Smithsonian. At that time I think we had 18 museums in the Smithsonian, not only in Washington but in New York as well.

**FRANZÉN:** Okay, good. I stand corrected, and that is a correction actually of a description of you as it appeared in an article by Silvio A. Bedini in the *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences*. There's a write-up about your grandfather and your Uncle Ernest and yourself, among others in your family, in that article from December 1998. I'm glad we got that corrected.

First of all, Mr. Taylor, thank you so much for agreeing to sit and talk about times gone by. You grew up on Capitol Hill. A lot of your memories of that time were recorded about four years ago by Nancy Metzger, and I've read the transcripts of those interviews, which were fascinating. In those interviews you talked about your father, about his pharmacy on Second and Maryland, and I believe he had at least one more after that. You covered a lot of ground in those interviews about growing up there, first on First Street Northeast and then later on Massachusetts Avenue, and you just mentioned your Uncle Ernest Kübel, your mother's brother. I'm sorry, I called him Kübel [KOOBELL] and it's Kübel [KEEBLE]. K, U with an umlaut, B, E, L—pronounced KEEBLE by the family.

I don't want to cover a lot of ground that's already been covered in those other interviews, but I would appreciate it if you could tell a little bit about your family. You apparently—the Kübels and the Taylors—were very close, because you moved from one place to another almost in unison.

**TAYLOR:** The family, the Kübel side, always moved as a group, and the records start when they were on First Street Northeast, and from there we moved to Massachusetts Avenue and Tenth Street—909

Massachusetts Avenue—and that was in 1909. I was six years old when we moved there. And subsequently a lot of the family moved to Mount Pleasant, the Kenyon Street area, and my mother wanted to be close to them so we moved to Upshaw Street Northwest, between Seventeenth and Eighteenth.

**FRANZÉN:** Upshaw...

**TAYLOR:** And that, for youngsters in the family, that was walking distance, and the youngsters would frequently walk from Kenyon Street to Upshaw Street, pay their respects and so on. I guess that was for friendly ball... [?]

Should I start a little bit on the Smithsonian—on why I went to the Smithsonian?

**FRANZÉN:** That would be interesting to know, yes. Go ahead...

**TAYLOR:** Well, it was a complete accident. I went to McKinley High School in Washington, which was a superior high school at the time, and the physics teacher, who in the senior physics class at the high school required every boy—and there were no girls at that time in the class—he required every boy to fill out an unassembled examination for a laboratory apprentice at the Bureau of Standards. And I finished high school in February, which I frequent—a nuisance, really. And I looked for a job and didn't find one. I went back to the high school and talked to one of the shop teachers there who had a handyman practice in Virginia. And I was working for him in Virginia. I was actually digging a trench between two houses so we could wire two houses on the same circuit, and my father was on the phone, when I reached the phone, and he said, "I have a letter here from the Smithsonian Institution. Would you like me to open it and read it to you?" He said "They probably want you to stuff snakes or something like that." So he opened it and it said, just as I said, it was an inquiry as to whether I would be interested in a job of laboratory apprentice in the national museum. And of course I jumped at that, and it just happened that I never left there. That would have been... my memory is not good. I went there in... I'm having difficulty remembering the date...

**FRANZÉN:** Well, we can come back to that. It's okay. We can look it up.

**TAYLOR:** This was not my first position. When I was reaching retirement age—I think we better record this—when I was reaching graduation from high school, my Uncle Stephen offered to get me a job for the coming summer working for the Geological Survey in central Pennsylvania, some state land in central Pennsylvania. And I jumped at that, and he said "I'm going to take you to the man who does the hiring," and he says "If he asks you if you're sixteen years old, say yes, because you'll be sixteen years old by the time you go to work." Then he told me a story about he was doing the same thing for the son of one of his engravers, a German, and he listened to... the father listened to the son answering a question and said

“He’s pretty bright for a sixteen-year-old, isn’t he.” [Laughs] And of course that was too young to go on the surveys, and they had to wash that out and straighten it all out.

But I enjoyed a very good experience in outdoor surveying in Pennsylvania. We were doing topographic...

**FRANZÉN:** What part of Pennsylvania was this?

**TAYLOR:** This was in the neighborhood of Williamsport, general neighborhood of Williamsport. When I first went there we lived in Williamsport and drove out to the job every day.

**FRANZÉN:** So this was land that just had not been plotted before by the government?

**TAYLOR:** This was... it had not been plotted in the degree that we would plot it in topographic surveying.

**FRANZÉN:** Doing accurate elevations and so on...

**TAYLOR:** Yes, and we of course would pick up a benchmark from a previous survey. In one case we picked up one from a team that was just going across the eastern United States doing leveling and leaving benchmarks with their latitude and longitude and the elevation. And we would pick up with one of those benchmarks and we would do a complete circle of surveying and come back to that benchmark and record... this was all recorded graphically on a plane table, which had a sheet of drawing paper on it, well protected from trees and so on, and topographers were working on only a little bit of it, you know, as we proceeded. I liked it very much, and my uncle sent me a book on surveying...

**FRANZÉN:** Your uncle Stephen...

**TAYLOR:** My uncle Stephen. He was kind of anxious to see me become a surveyor.

**FRANZÉN:** He was head of mapping for the USGS, is that right?

**TAYLOR:** He was the head of the production of the maps, of the engraving. The men, the surveyors who made the original map in the field, which was a pencil map—had all the contours and everything in it—would come in then and work in the office for maybe twelve months or so, going over that and preparing it and correcting and all this sort of thing, before it went to the engravers. And that would be under my uncle Stephen. He was the chief engraver, which was in effect the chief production person of the Geological Survey. And he had a team of engravers. These were copperplate engravings. Later on it all became done by photo lithography, and it almost broke his heart, you know, that they would stoop to that. But at any rate, that was the beginning of my brief career as a surveyor.

**FRANZÉN:** Let me ask you, could we go back to First Street Northeast, because I'm curious about something. You started out on First Street Northeast, and so did your uncle Ernest. I think Stephen also lived there on First Street, right?

**TAYLOR:** No, Stephen did not live there.

**FRANZÉN:** He did not.

**TAYLOR:** Stephen was a man of many talents, and he did a little trading of real estate around East Capitol Street and Second and Third. He ended up owning a building there that was leased to the Post Office. He took advantage of all opportunities like that to increase his income.

**FRANZÉN:** Okay, at any rate, thinking about your family and Ernest's family, you did not move up to Massachusetts until 1909. That's when your house at 909 Massachusetts was built, I believe. It was a new house when your family moved in.

**TAYLOR:** Yes.

**FRANZÉN:** Ernest Kübel's house, where I now live—908 Massachusetts—was built in 1901, according to city records, for the Kübel family, for Ernest.

**TAYLOR:** I didn't know that.

**FRANZÉN:** Yeah. So that's eight years before your family moved to the house across the street. And yet, in some of the previous interviews that you did with Nancy Metzger, it sounded like Ernest was still on First Street at, you know, around 1905 or so, when he at least would have been living on Massachusetts. Did he still have a shop on First Street after moving residence to...

**TAYLOR:** Yes, he did. He had a shop behind what had been three houses that my grandfather bought for three of his children. And they were—327 was the one that we lived in, and at the back—it had a very deep back yard—and at the back of it was a two story building, the upper floor of which was my Uncle Ernest's shop as an instrument maker. He was a trained instrument maker, and he worked there until, in the end, all of this was wiped out by the purchase of land by the government to create the park that was finally developed between the Capitol and the Union Station.

**FRANZÉN:** Right. So this was at the time that Union Station was being built, correct?

**TAYLOR:** Yes, I think Union Station and the [Russell] Senate office building were being built at the same time, and the tunnel was being dug under the city...

**FRANZÉN:** This was the railroad tunnel that went from Union Station right under Capitol Hill.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, to the south.

**FRANZÉN:** Right. So when did all that happen? When did that block of residences and attendant buildings get wiped out? It would have been in that decade, right? In the decade of 1900 to 1910, somewhere in there?

**TAYLOR:** They were actually wiped out when the property—the vacant land that was left when the houses were torn down—was purchased by the government for a parking lot for the employees of the Senate office building.

**FRANZÉN:** A parking lot.

**TAYLOR:** And so that was all wiped out. And it seems like there was a conspiracy [Laughs] to wipe out a lot of what I was familiar with on East Capitol Street, because the government kept expanding to the east. And when my father was last in his pharmacy at Second and Maryland Avenue, which was also Second and B Street, which is now Constitution Avenue, when he left there the back of the Supreme Court building was right across the street, across Second Street. [Note: Probably not correct. The current Supreme Court building wasn't constructed until the 1930s.]

**FRANZÉN:** So he was on the Southeast corner of that intersection?

**TAYLOR:** Yes, he was on the southeast corner, that's right.

**FRANZÉN:** Okay. Interesting...

**TAYLOR:** Of course, this meant wiping out blocks of customers for his store, you know, and it was really remarkable that he survived that, because there were solid blocks of boarding houses between... well, just between Second and First, which was a very long block. There was just one solid block of boarding houses that were filled with customers of my father. And they were all wiped out in time. And then he had—the doctor who owned the building in which he had his store died and his wife took over the management of the building, and she was not very businesslike and my father had frequent problems with her. Within the drug store we had the furnace that heated the whole building, and she was either too hot or too cold most of the time. And, well, he gave it up reluctantly because it was his first store and so on, but he finally made the move. He needed a larger store. He made the move to Second and C Street—from Second and B to Second and C Northeast, where a rather well known grocer was cutting his store in half. He had a huge store. He was cutting it in half, and he invited my father to occupy the half that was on the corner, and that's the way he moved one block south of where he had his original store.

**FRANZÉN:** One block north.

**TAYLOR:** One block north, yes. You are right.

**FRANZÉN:** Okay, let me ask you about your uncle Ernest. First of all, could you describe a little bit more about what he did for a living. I know that he started out working for, really apprenticing under, your grandfather, and then took over that business and eventually wound up at USGS as an employee. Is that correct?

**TAYLOR:** Yes, he did. I brought a little folder on Uncle Ernest for you to see. He operated the shop that my grandfather vacated, and even after the building was condemned for building the park he continued. The government was condemning property well in advance of its need for it. And he continued on there for a year or two, and then he moved into this shop building that I mentioned, which was across the back yards of the houses across the street.

**FRANZÉN:** Now, when he moved to Massachusetts Avenue, you would go and visit him up there, I assume?

**TAYLOR:** Oh yes. I think I was six years old when I moved to the house that was across from Uncle Ernest...

**FRANZÉN:** To 909.

**TAYLOR:** To 909 Massachusetts Avenue. And he was very good to me. He was one of my favorite people. He would see me struggling, trying to convert a tricycle into a bicycle, and he'd come over and watch me for awhile, and he'd say "Come with me," and he'd take me across the street to his basement where he had a lot of tools and so on. He'd say you need the right tool for the right job, you know. And he taught me quite a lot that way...

**FRANZÉN:** About using tools and so forth. He had a shop in his basement?

**TAYLOR:** He had a shop for his home in his basement. It wasn't an instrument shop, it was like anybody's basement shop.

**FRANZÉN:** A do-it-yourselfer shop.

**TAYLOR:** Yes.

**FRANZÉN:** What did that basement look like? Do you remember? Was it like a finished basement, or was it more like a cellar?

**TAYLOR:** It was more like a cellar. There was something I was trying to recall about it. It had an elaborate mechanism which he had designed and built [and] put on the furnace, on which you could set

the time when an alarm clock would go off, and this would trigger a few motions of levers and so on, and it would open the damper on the back so the fire that had been banked all night would then begin to burn and warm the house, so that when you got up the house was completely warm.

**FRANZÉN:** So it was a thermostat, really...

**TAYLOR:** It was operated by a thermostat, but it was a combination of levers and, as I say, an alarm clock and other things. And he explained all that to me, you know, how it worked, and I marveled at it. [Note: It apparently was not a thermostat, since the action was triggered by a clock, not by temperature.]

**FRANZÉN:** Would that house have had electricity when he built it in 1901, or would that have been a later addition? I know there are gas lines in the house, so at least there was gas, and I've always assumed that it was a gas and electric combination from the start.

**TAYLOR:** No, that house didn't have electricity in it when I knew it.

**FRANZÉN:** Really?

**TAYLOR:** I mean when I was a youngster. Of course, one of the marvels of his house was a large fan like an electric fan, but of course there was no electricity. It was run by a small water turbine. And when city water first reached a property like that in Washington it was not metered. I don't know how it was billed. I think on the number of bathrooms or something like that. And he had quite a large fan in his dining room window which was operated by a small water turbine.

**FRANZÉN:** So there was a turbine in the water line? The water supply line to the house?

**TAYLOR:** No, the turbine was right near the fan itself, and the water ran into this... well, it was on the same shaft with the fan blades, the turbine. There were a tremendous number of patents at that time for the use of domestic water for all kinds of uses, and this was typical of that—having a fan running off of the pressure of the city water.

**FRANZÉN:** So this was a fan to bring air into the house, to cool the house, and it was run by the water. But how exactly did the water run to the turbine? Was it just a pipe running through the dining room?

**TAYLOR:** I think it was a pipe that came up outside of the dining room window. Is there still a dining room window? Looks down into area way?

**FRANZÉN:** Yes, a bay, uh-huh.

**TAYLOR:** Yes, well, that's where it was. The water just ran through it in warm weather, when he wanted it to run. He just turned the water valve and the fan would run. It would run indefinitely.

**FRANZÉN** [laughing]: That's marvelous.

**TAYLOR**: There was no charge for the water.

**FRANZÉN**: One thing that I found when we did a renovation of the house, about ten years ago, in that same room, the dining room, there's an air vent on the wall, a brass grate right in the wooden wainscoting. It was a passive air duct, the other end of it being just outside, down below, in that area way that you described. And I couldn't figure out why in the wintertime there was warm air coming into the house from that air duct. It made sense that there would be air coming in, but not warm air, because it was just a passive duct. But when we opened up underneath we found that there was a radiator—it was just part of the radiator system of the house. The builder had suspended a radiator horizontally in that air duct to help draw air in and warm it, so there would be fresh, warm air in the house.

**TAYLOR**: I didn't know that. That's very interesting.

**FRANZÉN**: And maybe that was done commonly, but I certainly wasn't aware of it. Maybe that was an Ernest invention too.

**TAYLOR**: Could have been. He was up to it. [Laughter]

**FRANZÉN**: What was he like? Tell me about him. What kind of a man was he?

**TAYLOR**: Ernest?

**FRANZÉN**: Yeah.

**TAYLOR**: He was a wonderful man, really. He was very independent, although his brother Stephen was the patriarch of the family—Ernest helped him with his boat and everything else that he had. But Ernest was still an independent person who did what he liked. And when that church was built there...

**FRANZÉN**: On the corner...

**TAYLOR**: On the corner. They had a swimming pool in it and a bowling alley.

**FRANZÉN**: A swimming pool?

**TAYLOR**: In the basement. And this was right in Ernest's area of exercise and so on. And I have cartoons, which is... I don't have them out now, but I will look them up for you later... they drew pictures of Ernest bowling and Ernest swimming in the swimming pool, and...

**FRANZÉN**: He was big on exercise...

**TAYLOR:** Yes, his way of exercising. My family were all staunch Catholics and they thought this was sacrilegious that he even went into the church...

**FRANZÉN:** It was a Congregationalist church, I think? Ingram Memorial, I believe.

**TAYLOR:** Ingram Memorial, yes.

**FRANZÉN:** Completed in 1910 or thereabouts.

**TAYLOR:** That would be just the right time, see. It was being built, I think, when we moved...

**FRANZÉN:** That would make sense, yes.

**TAYLOR:** Or else it was a vacant lot. But Ernest was a very handsome man also...

**FRANZÉN:** I've seen he his picture. He was.

**TAYLOR:** And he always dressed well. It was a joke in the family that he always carried a pair of pliers and a few screwdrivers and things like that in his vest pockets, because wherever he went in the family there was always something for him to do, like put the screw in a spectacle frame, some eyeglasses, you know. And he'd fool around in his pocket and he'd come up with a little screw. That was a common thing. So he collected those screws, and he had these tiny little tools and he would do a lot of repairs for people, almost before he sat down. And then after he'd finished he'd sort of breath a sigh of relief and join the party. He was, I think, one of my favorite people of all time.

He was very kind to me. He'd see me struggling with something. There was a vacant lot next to 909, and I used to do a lot of my building of scooters and things like that out in the open, hoping he would see me. [Laughs] And he'd come over and look, and then he'd say "Come on over. I have some real tools, and we'll [inaudible]." So helped me with building things that kids had, you know. We made scooters out of old roller skates—the adjustable ones that would pull apart. You had the steering wheels in the front half and the free-rolling wheels in the back, and all you needed was a two-by-four, a length of that, and put these skate boards [sic] on it, and then get a wooden box from the grocery story and put that on in the front. The best boxes were boxes that soaps came in, the best size, from the grocery store. So they became known as soap box, and they had an annual event, the soap box derby.

**FRANZÉN:** Right on Capitol Hill...

**TAYLOR:** No, this was on Good Hope Hill in Anacostia. Well, you're right, it's up on a hill, but it's not near the Capitol, it's nearer to Maryland. But he was very, very kind to me, Uncle Ernest.

**FRANZÉN:** What about your aunt? What was her name—Ernest's wife?

**TAYLOR:** Lena.

**FRANZÉN:** Lena. What do you remember about her?

**TAYLOR:** I think the most that I remember about her is that she died very painfully with cancer, and not very long after I would have been aware of her, you know, and who she was.

**FRANZÉN:** That young...

**TAYLOR:** She was quite young. As deaths were in those days, she was young to die. I remember being in a house where Ernest lived later, in Mount Pleasant. We went there when she was really dying, and I know they never took me up to see her, but I could hear moaning and it depressed me terribly.

**FRANZÉN:** Did he remarry after her death?

**TAYLOR:** No.

**FRANZÉN:** Now there were two daughters, is that right?

**TAYLOR:** Yes, Marie and Margaret. Margaret was my age...

[END OF SIDE 1, BEGIN SIDE 2 OF TAPE #1]

**FRANZÉN:** Okay, I want to start that question again. We were talking about Marie and Margaret, their children.

**TAYLOR:** Yes, Marie, as I said, was a very, very pretty young woman, and she married a—my memory has failed me completely. It was really in, it was in Washington. The Wise Dairy, W-I-S-E. The name of a family.

**FRANZÉN:** So she married a Wise, is that right?

**TAYLOR:** She married, or remarried a Wise, and soon after that there was a sort of a “nationalization” of businesses, when businesses began to come together and form a big business. And the Wise Dairy was involved in one of those, and their headquarters was in, I think, Cleveland. So we didn’t see much of Marie.

**FRANZÉN:** They moved to Cleveland?

**TAYLOR:** They moved to Cleveland. [Note: Ernest Kübel’s 1936 death notice in the local paper says his daughter Marie Wise was living in Milwaukee.]

**FRANZÉN:** And Margaret, what happened to her?

**TAYLOR:** Margaret was an individual, and she...an independent liver and all that. She became interested in raising dogs, and she raised dogs out near College Park, out that way someplace. She moved out there when she was working for the Treasury. She used to drive in to work—and parking was easier downtown in those days. She had a quite a long career working in the Treasury, and I've forgotten now what part of it she worked in. But in the end, she was driving in, alone, and hit a sheet of ice and crashed into a tree and killed herself. She died from that.

**FRANZÉN:** About when was that, roughly?

**TAYLOR:** I can't remember right now.

**FRANZÉN:** Was she middle-aged? Still young?

**TAYLOR:** She was a young adult. She wasn't middle-aged by any means. [Note: Ernest's 1936 obituary lists Margaret as one of his survivors.]

**FRANZÉN:** Did she marry?

**TAYLOR:** No, she never married.

**FRANZÉN:** Okay, you described the house as not having electricity when you first saw it. It must have acquired electricity before the time that it was sold in 1918—I would think. Yes?

**TAYLOR:** I imagine...

**FRANZÉN:** Do you recall him [Ernest Kübel] making improvements to the house over the time that he was there, besides his fan invention and his furnace control device? Do you recall him making changes in the house?

**TAYLOR:** No, I don't. I don't remember. What kind of changes? Some visible...

**FRANZÉN:** Well, there are records, and there's physical evidence of renovations that were made early in the life of the house.

**TAYLOR:** When was that house built?

**FRANZÉN:** It was built in 1901, for Ernest. And they sold it in 1918, which was about the same time your family moved, is that right?

**TAYLOR:** Yes.... Were we in the war in 1918?

**FRANZÉN:** Yes, that was World War I.

**TAYLOR:** Yes, I think that the house we lived in, 909, my father—it was one of three in a row—but my father had asked for certain room arrangements and so on. And his sister, who had been deserted by her drinking husband, had three daughters, and he bought that house to turn over the upper floor to them. They had, I think, a small kitchen up there...

**FRANZÉN:** That's one of the reasons he bought 909...

**TAYLOR:** Yes.

**FRANZÉN:** He needed the space.

**TAYLOR:** He needed it, and I celebrated by immediately contracting scarlet fever. And that was no simple deal in those days.

**FRANZÉN:** No indeed.

**TAYLOR:** We had to empty one room on the second floor so my mother could get to the bathroom and so on, and take everything out of it except what we absolutely needed, and I was there, I don't know, whatever the course of scarlet fever ran. And my poor mother was quarantined with me in that one room. As I said, there was a vacant lot off to the side of the house, and her sister used to come with her young son and stand out on the vacant lot and talk to my mother...

**FRANZÉN:** Through the window?

**TAYLOR:** Through the window on the second floor. And I can remember my mother trying to explain cartoons to me, in the paper, you know...

**FRANZÉN:** To keep you entertained.

**TAYLOR:** To keep me entertained. And she was... it really was a noble thing that she did. And as I say, scarlet fever was feared, it really was. As I remember, we had a big green "quarantined" sign on the front door of 909, so anybody that went past that knew we had scarlet fever in the house. And there was a lot of worrying, I'm sure, about my having scarlet fever, because that sometimes leaves you mentally crippled. I can claim all my mistakes on that. [Laughs] And then finally we were subjected to repeated inspections by a District of Columbia doctor who was assigned to that work. [Inaudible] He would come and he would look all around for any flaking skin, and if there was any flaking skin, why, he wouldn't sign...

**FRANZÉN:** He wouldn't release you.

**TAYLOR:** And my mother would look all over my feet [Laughing] and practically sandpaper them sometimes to get rid of the flaking.

**FRANZÉN:** Speaking of diseases, do you remember the influenza epidemic of 1918?

**TAYLOR:** Yes, I was taken out of school, taken out of high school, to help my father. We were open twenty-four hours a day.

**FRANZÉN:** In the pharmacy.

**TAYLOR:** In the pharmacy. And I had one of my most interesting experiences. He told me, he says “Wear your long-trousered suit tomorrow. I’m going to send you to Baltimore. The wholesale houses here have run out of medicine.” There were manufacturers in Baltimore like Burroughs [sp?] and, I don’t know, some others whose names I’ve forgotten. Washington had “local option.” We had prohibition in Washington. They called it local option, because it was just Washington that had it. And this was to assure that there’d be sober workers for the Navy Yard and all that sort of thing during troubled times. And so there was bootlegging being done. And then the doctors determined that a lot of people died of the influenza due to the weakening of the heart. They died really of heart failures after they were over the flu. So they announced that it was a good idea to take whiskey as a medicine. And we had this prohibition, so there was bootlegging going on.

**FRANZÉN:** Medicinal bootlegging.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, and so my father gave me these two empty suitcases and a long list of medicines and told me where I’d find it, places in Baltimore. And I walked down Second Street to the inter-urban line, which was a very nice inter-urban line. It ran into the Treasury, along H Street, and then you could take it right at the foot of this long hill, and the drug store there sold tickets. And I knew the druggist, of course, my father knew him. So I bought tickets and I walked out when the train came—I waited for the inter-urban train to come along. I started to get on the car, and a conductor, holding onto two handrails, put his foot up in my face, and he says “There’s a train out in the terminal for you.” I didn’t know what he was talking about, but he wasn’t going to let me get on that. And so I finally got on a streetcar and I got out there, and when I walked into the station a big policeman said “There’s a train over there for you.” And I didn’t know what this was all about. I got over there and it was a bootlegger train. They were permitting bootleggers to bring in one suitcase full of whiskey, and this was the train. And there were two sections, you know, one going and one coming. And I got aboard this train and, boy, I was welcomed by the bootleggers. They were playing dice over on the floor. They invited me to play dice with them. They thought I was the most enterprising seventeen-year-old that they’d ever seen, or sixteen-year-old that they’d ever seen. So I went to Baltimore on a bootleg special, and I came back on the steam train, so... I didn’t want to come back on the bootleg special.

But while we were waiting there, the other section of that bootleg train came in. And the bootleggers, you know, if you let them bring in one, they're going to bring in two, or they wouldn't be bootleggers. And so they were jumping off the train, and all of them in my car were hanging out the windows and getting a good view of this because they'd be coming back. And they were passing their suitcase-full over to a confederate on the outside, and the police had their patrol wagons all lined up along the fence. And they'd watch and when one of the bootleggers had gotten the second suitcase-full over the fence, they'd just go up to him and take it away from him. They'd just take away one and let him keep the other—take away one and throw it into the patrol wagon and it would crash and the liquor was running in the gutter and everything else. It was a real experience. I've never forgotten it.

**FRANZÉN:** But they did permit one, and the logic of that was that it would be used for...

**TAYLOR:** Medicine.

**FRANZÉN:** For medicine. Alright. [Laughing] That's great. Let me ask you some questions about this house, about your uncle Ernest's house, which is now my house. This is how it looks today [showing photo of exterior]. I doubt that it has changed very much since the time when you lived across the street.

**TAYLOR:** That doesn't look like I remember it...

**FRANZÉN:** It does not? Was it painted when you were there, or was it bare brick like it is now?

**TAYLOR:** I thought it was stone up to a certain...

**FRANZÉN:** Well, there is. You were probably a good deal shorter during most of that time, and there is stone... it's a little bit obscured by the bushes and so on, but there is stone up to this point here.

**TAYLOR:** I see.

**FRANZÉN:** I would say about five feet.

**TAYLOR:** Brown stone.

**FRANZÉN:** Brownstone steps.

**TAYLOR:** With a brass rail on top.

**FRANZÉN:** The rails are right there. They're still there. They're green now, from years of corrosion and air pollution and whatnot, but yes, those are brass rails. I thought, when I bought the house, that perhaps somebody had added those over the years, but you remember them being there from the start?

**TAYLOR:** Oh yes. Well, from the time I could remember they were there.

**FRANZÉN:** It is brownstone up to about the first four or five—well, maybe more than five feet—and then brick above that, but brownstone steps and brownstone lintels over the windows.

**TAYLOR:** Is this an intervening house between your house and the church?

**FRANZÉN:** Yes, there are actually two houses between that one and the church.

**TAYLOR:** So Uncle Ernest must have been walking across the lawns a lot to go over and take his exercise in the swimming pool.

**FRANZÉN:** Perhaps so, maybe so. There are steps down to the cellar level, or the basement level, under those front steps, which was a typical pattern up there.

**TAYLOR:** There are windows in here, in wells...

**FRANZÉN:** Yes, there was a half-round window here [at grade level], you can see the top of that. There's a decorative iron grate, which I think was original. When I did the renovations about ten years ago I actually dug deeper here and made a deep window well and expanded this window downward to bring more light into this level. This is now an apartment down here on this level, a very comfortable one-bedroom apartment. But it didn't look like that down there when I bought the house. One thing I was curious...

**TAYLOR:** There's somebody living in this now?

**FRANZÉN:** Yeah, it's actually rented out at this point. I lived there myself, actually, for three years while doing the renovation work upstairs, and then moved upstairs and rented it out. Leon Panetta, the White House chief of staff under Clinton, lived in that apartment during his time in the White House, as a matter of fact. He's a friend of mine, and a former client.

**TAYLOR:** A lot of famous people lived in that neighborhood.

**FRANZÉN:** I guess so.

**TAYLOR:** I don't remember, I thought there was not much between this and the church.

**FRANZÉN:** There are two houses, and according to the records this one [the neighboring house at 910 Massachusetts] was built first and this one [908 Massachusetts] was built second. [Note: 912 Massachusetts, immediately next to the church, may not have been built until after the Taylors moved away from 909.]

This is a picture of the front entry. We're looking back out. This is the front door here, and this interior front door is swung open. So I think that pattern in the entry foyer is probably original, the tile on the floor, and of course this wainscoting tile, which goes up about four feet, looks like original tile.

**TAYLOR:** The interesting thing about this is that—and it all looked bigger to me then...

**FRANZÉN:** Of course.

**TAYLOR:** But the interesting thing was that that my mother and her sister, who sometimes lived with us, we would pick up our little pads and pillows and go across and sit on the stoop...

**FRANZÉN:** On Ernest's front steps.

**TAYLOR:** ...While the sun went down and it cooled down—there was no air conditioning or anything—and it was always a little cooler there than it seemed to be in the rest of the vicinity. But that became, during the summer and good weather, we always ended up... and as kids I and Margaret would play tag—or some kind of tag, we had another name to it—and there were, it seemed to me, there were more shrubberies closer to the house... while the elders sat there and gossiped and talked. And then when it was about time for us to go to bed and they'd passed all the gossip that they were going to talk, they would hand me a pitcher and send me to the drugstore to get it filled with raspberry phosphate and bring it back and we'd all sit and treat ourselves to raspberry phosphate, which was very cooling. And then we'd break up and go home and go to bed.

But then, as I say, it all looked much bigger to me at the time...

**FRANZÉN:** Well, it is quite a large house. That picture might be somewhat deceptive. It's bigger than it looks in the picture. It's got fairly large proportions—eleven foot ceilings on the first floor.

**TAYLOR:** But that [brick?] baffles me completely. I remember the stone steps with the brass rail. That was really what identified the house...

**FRANZÉN:** Well, when you were small, the stone would have been above eye level. It would have gone above your eye level when you were standing in the front yard.

**TAYLOR:** The stone would have gone up that high...

**FRANZÉN:** Yeah, so that probably would have been what met your eye.

**TAYLOR:** Yes.

**FRANZÉN:** Do you remember how you entered the basement, how you entered the cellar?

**TAYLOR:** No, I don't.

**FRANZÉN:** Did you go down... there are steps down in the front.

**TAYLOR:** He could go down under the front steps and enter from there. I think that's the way. This is not exactly what they called an English townhouse or something like that.

**FRANZÉN:** An English basement?

**TAYLOR:** English basement.

**FRANZÉN:** That's certainly how it would be referred to now, because the apartment down there has ceilings that are just about eight feet—seven and a half, close to eight feet.

**TAYLOR:** And you said... what am I trying to think of now?

**FRANZÉN:** I've just opened up a set of building plans here that were drawn up when I did the renovation of the house a little over ten years ago, and this is the first floor as it appeared when I bought the house. Some things have been changed over the years. As you came in the front door here—this is the foyer that we were looking at here—there was very clearly originally a front parlor right here and a hall leading to this staircase with a curved railing on it. I have a not very good picture of that. This is what that staircase looks like today. As I said, that's not a very good shot, because we shot without a flash, and it's very dark now. I suspect that the wood might have been lighter back at that time, I don't know.

**TAYLOR:** I don't remember. That doesn't strike any chord in my mind. I think when Uncle Ernest would pick me up with my scooter and take me into where he kept his tools, his little workshop, he would have gone right down in the front.

**FRANZÉN:** Uh-huh. One reason I asked is because this is the staircase here, which goes up to a landing and then up to the second floor, but there is a coat closet underneath the steps right here now, and looking at the floor in here [in the coat closet] it seems pretty clear that there were steps down to the basement here as well as in the front, and also back here from the kitchen.

**TAYLOR:** I don't remember that, but it was very, very common in floor plans of the time to have what they called a reception hall. You'd go in and go past the parlor and then things opened up a little bit and there were stairs going up from this opening...

**FRANZÉN:** From the reception hall.

**TAYLOR:** From the reception hall.

**FRANZÉN:** Yes, so that would be right here. This actually, this wall here, separating the front parlor from the hall and the stair hall, was opened up by an owner sometime after your uncle and before I bought the house. But there's still a kind of bulkhead—that's what this dotted line is about—with the crown molding still there defining where that wall was. And there was, I assume, a pocket door here and a pocket door here. But you called this the reception hall, in the middle by the stairs.

**TAYLOR:** Yes, that's what it was known as. I think rather than hall we called it the reception room.

**FRANZÉN:** Reception room. This pocket door [pointing] is still here between the dining room and the reception room. And this is the configuration that you described with the bay on the side of the dining room, and I guess the fan would have been in one of these windows, that water-driven fan that you described.

**TAYLOR:** Well, looking from the outside, the windows in the dining room had a very long drop down to...

**FRANZÉN:** It did, it does, yes.

**TAYLOR:** Down to the basement level, whatever that level is. It was almost like a... it probably had a sewer in it.

**FRANZÉN:** There is a drain down there, yes.

**TAYLOR:** And as I say, the water would run through this little turbine and turn that fan, and I guess it went all day in warm weather. And today we'd have a water bill that long [gesturing], but in those days, I think, you paid for water on some other basis, like the number of bathrooms or something.

**FRANZÉN:** Right. Speaking of bathrooms, between the dining room and the kitchen, today there is a bathroom here—it's now a powder room. When I bought the house this had actually been outfitted as a full bath. There was a tub in it. But I'm pretty sure that that was not original to the house. Do you recall what was here? Was this a bath in here, or a half-bath? Or was this perhaps a pantry?

**TAYLOR:** Is that between the kitchen and the dining room...

**FRANZÉN:** And the dining room.

**TAYLOR:** They all had something called the butler's pantry. It had running water in it, with a sink, and I guess it was a place where, if you could afford servants, you would do rinsing of glasses and so on, polishing them, when you serve them...

**FRANZÉN:** So would there have been cabinets and shelves in there, that kind of thing?

**TAYLOR:** Yes. It wasn't very big.

**FRANZÉN:** No.

**TAYLOR:** But that was...in the Tenth and East Capitol Street [house, owned by Stephen Kübel] they had such a pantry, and it was much bigger than you have in that house.

**FRANZÉN:** Uh-huh. This was at Stephen's house.

**TAYLOR:** Uh-huh.

**FRANZÉN:** Right. Was this back here the kitchen at that time, or was the kitchen perhaps down below? Many of these houses had kitchens down in basement level.

**TAYLOR:** The kitchen was below.

**FRANZÉN:** It was.

**TAYLOR:** I'm trying to separate the different houses. No, I don't remember any of the basement, except in the immediate vicinity of the heater, the furnace. I guess you realize that in those days people heated with coal. And the cheapest coal was the pea coal. It was very small. And if you could...

**FRANZÉN:** Pea coal?

**TAYLOR:** They called it pea coal, I think. The size.

**FRANZÉN:** Oh, I see. Very small.

**TAYLOR:** And there was always a damper in the back, on the lower level of the boiler, and this is where you begin to get ingenious. If you could have that damper closed at night and open it, as I mentioned, with alarm timing and so on, the fire would come up in the furnace and warm up the house and the water and so on. So you probably see some evidence of that, I don't know.

**FRANZÉN:** Well, there was an old furnace when I bought the house. It had been changed to gas well before my arrival. But it's still the original radiator heat in there. Most of the pipes are still the original pipes, feeding the original radiators. But you say the kitchen was pretty definitely down below in the basement level, as you recall.

**TAYLOR:** Yes. Now, in one of the houses we lived in there was a serving room. Is there a dumb waiter in there?

**FRANZÉN:** I can see no evidence of a dumb waiter. There are stairs going down to the basement level off the kitchen, so it would have been relatively convenient to go up and down those stairs with things to a kind of... what is now the kitchen I assume then could have been a kind of serving room?

**TAYLOR:** Yes. Like, soups would be brought up in a tureen, and there was a little room off the dining room, or a little alcove, where the maid could pour the soup into the plates and serve them around the table.

**FRANZÉN:** Right, and bring them around the table. Would the family perhaps have eaten in here [in the current kitchen] as well for just casual things like breakfast, or would they have only eaten in the dining room?

**TAYLOR:** I really don't remember them eating anywhere except in the dining room.

**FRANZÉN:** Okay. Well, that solves a mystery right there. Interesting. Yeah, there is a flue... there is the remains of a chimney on the back of the house that went all the way down into the basement level, and there was an access hole on that chimney for a flue at basement level. So that very well may have been the kitchen stove down there, accounting for that chimney and so forth.

**TAYLOR:** I have to separate the First Street house when I'm answering these questions. Because the First Street house was an interesting house. My father had a slightly retarded brother, and he built a room on the end of the second parlor—we called it the back parlor—for him to sleep in and live in. But that was in the other house.

**FRANZÉN:** Did the Kübels have servants, or a servant?

**TAYLOR:** They probably did. We had servants. Fortunately we had them when I was quarantined. Because that house had back steps, and the cook could make dinner for me and my mother and just come up... she could reach up and push it off on the floor at the top of the stairs and my mother could go out and pick it up without being in contact with her. It was part of the quarantine. We're still talking about 909.

**FRANZÉN:** Right. Getting back to 908 again, one of the things that I've always wondered about is work that was done on the third floor of the house, on what must have been an attic originally. In 1918, Ernest obtained a building permit to do renovations in the house, at the attic level. And the permit terms are a little sketchy, but basically it's clear that he wanted to make an apartment out of the attic. Now, that would fit with the historical pattern, because in 1918 there were people all over the city converting attics and other spare space in their house into rental space, to accommodate the so-called "government girls" who came to town to help run the war. The permit included installing a bath on the third floor, on the attic

level, cutting three new windows in the party wall, and running the heating system up there. Now, what's interesting is that most of that work did not get done. The permitted work did not get done, or at least most of it did not get done. The windows were never put into the wall, the bath was never put in on the third floor, and the heating system was never extended up there.

**TAYLOR:** And what was the date?

**FRANZÉN:** Well, he got the permit at the beginning of the year, right near the beginning of the year, but later on that same year, they sold the house. So I've always been very curious to know what happened in 1918 that would have accounted for the fact that they did not carry out the building plan as approved and actually wound up selling the house and moving. Do you have any clues as to...

[END OF TAPE #1, START OF TAPE #2]

**FRANZÉN:** Okay, 1918. What do you think might have happened?

**TAYLOR:** I don't know, really. I think we went... about 1918, might have been 1917, we moved back to the apartment house at Second and Maryland Avenue, called the Roland. Are you familiar with that?

**FRANZÉN:** I remember reading about that in the interviews that you did with Nancy.

**TAYLOR:** And my father was sure that my mother would be tremendously stressed by having her son fighting in the war. They had this terrible idea of publishing the wounded and the dead on the front page of the paper, and that paper sometimes came out before you got the telegram or whatever it was that the government did. If you can imagine a mother sitting and reading down this, hoping she won't see her son's name—it was cruel, I mean it was a terrible thing.

**FRANZÉN:** Now, your brother was in the war?

**TAYLOR:** Yes, my brother was in the war. He was in it in spades. He had multiple scholarships, athletic scholarships, to go to good universities, to play football. He was a great football player in high school. And he realized that we would be in the war before he finished college. So he went to work in a munitions plant in southeast Washington called Firth Sterling. And he worked there until we were in the war, and then he immediately enlisted and they sent him up north—sleeping in tents and in terrible weather in the north. And this was flu time too, you know. My brother had a touch of flu, but he recovered from that. He was in France before Pershing was. He served the whole war as the ranking noncom of a mobile machine shop, which was right up behind the front lines in the French sector, but this was a sector in which the French had been issued American weapons. They had rifles and so on, and they would practically hand them back hand to hand, and my brother's outfit would refurbish them, or issue them a new one and go to

work on the old one and have it ready to reissue and so on. And he was in that the whole war, really. He was in it longer than most Americans were in the war.

**FRANZÉN:** He survived.

**TAYLOR:** He survived, and when the armistice was signed he said, boy, I [need to] figure out how I can get home pretty fast from here, you know. They put his whole outfit, his trucks and machines and everything, onto a box car, and he thought he was on his way to a port somewhere. They took him to Le Mans, France, and unloaded him, set him all up. Of course, Pershing knew he couldn't get a million men home in a very short time, and there was going to be a lot of tension if he didn't do something about it. So he created a mammoth rifle competition, a marksmanship competition, where you started at the squad level—any unit, you know, anywhere—and you finally send these men, the ones who were the best in that particular area, send them to Le Mans where the shoot-off would be. And they knew there'd be a lot work necessary on the rifles and so on as time went on. So he switched my brother's [train] car to Le Mans and he was set up again. He didn't get home at all, as he thought he was on the way home, and he was there for the rest of that competition. I don't know how [long] that went on, but it finally got everybody home, in time. But my brother had a row of service stripes up his sleeve about that long. And it didn't do him any harm. He didn't learn to speak any French, but he adapted to a culture that was different from ours and everything else. But he served a long period in that war.

**FRANZÉN:** Getting back to the question of what happened in 1918, do you have any speculation as to what might have precipitated the move, for the Kübels, from 908 Mass. to Mount Pleasant? Did something happen in the family? Was there a death? Was there anything else that you can think of?

**TAYLOR:** [after long pause]: Stephen didn't retire that early, did he?

**FRANZÉN:** I don't think so.

**TAYLOR:** No, I don't think so, but... 1918. No, I can't...

**FRANZÉN:** Can't think of anything. How did your family view the move from Massachusetts up to Mount Pleasant? Was that "upward mobility"—moving to a nicer neighborhood—or was it wanting to be near the rest of the family that had moved...

**TAYLOR:** Well, we always moved together. There were always three or sometimes four, and we went to Upshaw Street in 1918. I thought it was a little later that we went to Upshaw Street, but... The rest of the family went to Kenyon Street in Mount Pleasant.

**FRANZÉN:** Kenyon, okay. The Kübels went to Kenyon?

**TAYLOR:** Yes, and Ernest had a house that... if it was Kenyon Street... Kenyon Street had a dead end. It ran into the edge of the park and had a dead end. And Ernest had a nice outdoor porch, and the houses were semi-detached, and the house next to him was the home of a very famous actress who had an entirely different name but her family name was Brown, I can remember that. And it was a very comfortable house. It looked out over Rock Creek.

**FRANZÉN:** Do you recall the house number on Kenyon?

**TAYLOR:** No.

**FRANZÉN:** Okay.

**TAYLOR:** When it got there, I think it changed. Its name, it wasn't Kenyon. It had just some name for this bit of street that overlooked the park.

**FRANZÉN:** Alright, but it was a kind of extension of Kenyon?

**TAYLOR:** It ran perpendicular to Kenyon. Kenyon ended, and it came right off it.

**FRANZÉN:** Okay, so they were on the perpendicular street. Okay, good. Well, I can track that down from city records, I'm sure.

**TAYLOR:** What was the question that got us into that?

**FRANZÉN:** Well, the question was what might have happened in 1918 that would have precipitated a move by the Kübels from 908 Mass. over into Northwest, and it sounds like we don't know. It might have been just a desire to move to a place by the park with a nice view and what have you, I don't know. The children would still have been around, the two girls. They would not have moved away yet, by that time, if one of them was your age. In 1918, you would have been 15 years old? By the way, what is your birthday? Have you turned 100?

**TAYLOR:** Yes, I was 100 in March.

**FRANZÉN:** In March. Congratulations.

**TAYLOR:** I'm trying to picture what was happening. Do you recall when Stephen retired?

**FRANZÉN:** I don't have that date. I'm sure I could find it, but I don't have it.

**TAYLOR:** But you're sure it wasn't that early.

**FRANZÉN:** I doubt it, but I don't know.

**TAYLOR:** I doubt it too.

**FRANZÉN:** Well, that will remain a mystery for now. Let's get back to a couple of details on the house, on Ernest's house. This is not a very good picture, but this is the dining room in there, and one thing I've been curious about for a long time is the floor in the dining room. All of the rest of the house has Southern pine floors—it's quarter-sawn Southern pine, it was common flooring material of that era. But the dining room is an exception. That has an oak parquet floor with this border—you see here this bit of border as it goes around the fireplace hearth—that is a darker wood, a mahogany and walnut combination pattern, and it doesn't quite seem to fit the rest of the house in terms of the style, and of course the materials are different. And when we opened up downstairs, opened up the basement ceiling when we did our renovations, some of the joists under this floor were charred a little bit.

**TAYLOR:** Charred?

**FRANZÉN:** Charred, yeah. Evidence of fire. And the thought occurred to me there may have been a fire in here that damaged the original floor and they replaced it. But do you remember this floor? Do you remember this pattern, this border, by any chance in that house? You don't?

**TAYLOR:** No.

**FRANZÉN:** It could have been added after they left, of course. And it's possible that it's original, but I doubt it, based on the style of 1901 versus the style of a little bit later here.

**TAYLOR:** No, I don't remember it.

**FRANZÉN:** You don't remember that. Okay, and one last picture. This is a picture of some steps going up to the third floor. We're standing here at second floor level, at the top of the stairs. This is a finial that's on the newel post at the stairs, and we're looking over to our right here. This is a doorway that we're looking into, and it has these narrow steps that go up to the attic level. There are two flights, there's...

**TAYLOR:** No, I don't have any memory of being on them at all.

**FRANZÉN:** You don't remember being there. Because they were clearly added. They're clearly not original to the house, because the steps go right into this window, which would not have been designed that way. And I was just curious that that perhaps was done in 1918 when the renovations to the third floor were permitted.

**TAYLOR:** I don't know.

**FRANZÉN:** You don't recall that. Okay. I figured it was worth asking.

**TAYLOR:** As I said, at whatever time we went into the war, my father was so certain that he didn't need the added pain of running a fairly large house. So, we had some interest in building the Roland apartments—I think my father was one of the original owners who built the Roland apartments. That was in the late 19th century. Then at the turn of the century they built an annex on Maryland Avenue. And they were five-room apartments, two to a floor, I think, in that annex. And there were... a lot of my mother's interests, in music and so on, were in that end of Capitol Hill anyhow. So we went back to...

**FRANZÉN:** To the Roland apartments.

**TAYLOR:** To the Roland apartments.

**FRANZÉN:** Before you went off to Northwest.

**TAYLOR:** Uh-huh.

**FRANZÉN:** How long were you, then, at the Roland apartments, roughly?

**TAYLOR:** I think we went to Northwest in 1928. Why that date is in my mind I don't know.

**FRANZÉN:** But around that time, at any rate?

**TAYLOR:** Around that time.

**FRANZÉN:** Okay. So you didn't need the amount of space that you had at 909. That was part of the reason for the move.

**TAYLOR:** Yes, didn't need it and it was too much. My father thought that my mother would be better off at the other [end] toward the Capitol, because so many of her interests, in music, for example—she was choir director at St. Joseph's Church, which was at Second Street and C Street, and she was, during the war, when the male choir directors began to be drafted or enlisted, she took on two churches. She had St. Stephen's, which was out on Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest, about 21st or 22nd, and she had a choir at that church and a choir at St. Joseph's, and masses were arranged so that high mass at one wouldn't interfere with high mass at the other. And she doubled [?] that all through the war. And then, in addition to that, my father persuaded her to go to work—and all this to take her mind off my brother. And she worked for the Coal Board, I think it was...

**FRANZÉN:** Coal Board?

**TAYLOR:** Which was designed to apportion coal to where it was needed and so on during the war. And she worked there for, I think, more than a year. But she was very active in music, and she had a lot of young friends, young women not much older than she was, who did the choir work at St. Joseph's Church. Many times I was sent downtown with my bike to buy music for a certain mass, you know, and Sol Minster's [sp?]<sup>3</sup>—it was a name you wouldn't know about—but Sol Minster sold sheet music in Droop's piano store.

**FRANZÉN:** Which piano store?

**TAYLOR:** Droop's. D-R-O-O-P, I think it was.

**FRANZÉN:** Okay. This was in Northwest.

**TAYLOR:** This was downtown, in Northwest. I'd either walk or ride my bike on whatever errands I was given to do. And I can remember going in to buy this—it was some liturgical music—and Sol Minster, who had that concession in the piano store, he reached over—I was quite small—he reached over and he took my cap off and looked at me and he said “You have the Kübel hair, but you're not as good looking as your cousins.” [Laughs] And he put the cap back on my head. I'll never forget that, and I wasn't very old then, when he did that.

**FRANZÉN:** Did Ernest's family also attend St. Joseph's?

**TAYLOR:** Whose?

**FRANZÉN:** Ernest's family, the Kübels.

**TAYLOR:** I think they did.

**FRANZÉN:** Except that he exercised over at the church on the corner. [Laughter] That's remarkable that they had a swimming pool in the basement of the church. I've never heard of such a thing.

**TAYLOR:** But nobody else had much in those days. And it was a scandal, really, to have my uncle using it and enjoying himself. [Laughter] I wish I could find some cartoons, and I will sometime. You can look at them sometime in the future. Of course, everybody in his business drew, you know. The engravers, they drew and everything, and there was a whole set of cartoons that were drawn by other members of the working group that featured my Uncle Ernest. He seemed to attract interesting things. For example, people rode bikes from Washington to Philadelphia, for example, and they qualified to become part of the Century Club, it was called, which was something like the Three A's. And it really was promoting good roads, for bikes, you know, and so on. He had his high-wheel bike. And he was riding—he had his lunch tied to the handlebars—and he was almost at the point where he was going to stop and have his lunch

when a dog came out of nowhere and leaped up and pulled his lunch right off the handlebars. [Laughs]  
And he was out of lunch. But he was this kind of person that all these things would happen to, you know.

**FRANZÉN:** He was an avid bicyclist.

**TAYLOR:** Yes, he was. And not many people accumulated a hundred miles on a bike.

**FRANZÉN:** No, certainly not that kind of a bike. Do you recall the arrival of the automobile?

**TAYLOR:** The arrival of it? Oh, yes, I recall. That was very interesting. The interesting fact about the arrival of the automobile is the laws didn't fit the automobile.

**FRANZÉN:** Right...

**TAYLOR:** Many laws didn't fit the automobile. We had cousins who lived in Capitol Heights, Maryland—and there is a Capitol Heights, D.C., which was contiguous. That was a moderately fashionable suburb and we had some family living there, but we never had Maryland tags on our car. My father knew where the line was, and we drove up to the line and parked the car there and then walked into Maryland. It was a very short walk. When we came back one time, the sheriff was standing on the... this was on the Maryland side. The sheriff, he looked just like the sheriff in a wild west movie. You knew he was a sheriff from the way he stood there. And he was standing there with a very stern look on his face, and he said "You know, you have that car parked in Maryland. You don't have any Maryland tag." And he made a motion as though he was going to write a ticket and all that. And then he began to laugh, and he drew the line in the dust and we were over it about that far [gesturing]. And it all turned out that his kids played with our relatives' kids, and he had seen us without revealing himself a number of times, and he was just teasing my father, you know...

**FRANZÉN:** So there was no reciprocity, apparently. In order to drive your car in Maryland you had to have a Maryland tag...

**TAYLOR:** That's right.

**FRANZÉN:** Wow. Was your Uncle Ernest... with his interest in things mechanical, he must have been interested in the automobile when it arrived. Do you remember him working on a car, driving a car?

**TAYLOR:** I remember, he had an Oakland—I'm pretty sure it was an Oakland. He and Lena and Margaret were touring up in northern New York state, and they had a terrible accident and Margaret was very seriously hurt. They were all in hospital for awhile, and then they were released with the idea that they could get home. And Margaret was crippled for—oh, I don't know—months, it seemed to me. And they were then living on... well, they were in Mount Pleasant...

**FRANZÉN:** In the Kenyon area...

**TAYLOR:** Living where some of the other members of the family lived. And I can remember making a radio set. You saved your Quaker Oats box and wrapped the wire around that for tuning. You had a piece of graphite that was rectifying it and you had to find a spot on that that really... Of course, it was natural stone. You just had to look around on the surface with this little feeler until you made a proper connection, and then you could tune it by running up and down on the bared wires on this oatmeal box. And I made one of those for Margaret, because she was confined to bed. I didn't do it right away because I couldn't afford a head set—ear phones. And I finally could pick up a pair in a second-hand store and I put it all together. I took it over to Margaret, and she was lying in bed, just completely bored, you know. When she put the ear phones on, it was worth doing twice as much, you know, just to see her reaction to having something to listen to.

**FRANZÉN:** This was before the family would have owned a radio set?

**TAYLOR:** Uh-huh. [Long pause] That's one of the nicer things I did in life.

**FRANZÉN:** How did you learn to make a radio? Who taught you that?

**TAYLOR:** Oh, I guess the other kids were making them. I don't think I was all that young, when this was. At any rate, it was more amazing to me that you could put a few wires together and pick it right out of the air. At the time, that was much more impressive than being able to watch television now. And there were freakish things that happened. I parked one time near one of these tubular, high iron fences, and when I got into the car I could hear music. And there was some loose connection in this wiring that was acting as a rectifier. I was actually hearing radio coming out of this fence.

**FRANZÉN:** Really?

**TAYLOR:** That impressed me more than television ever did. Well, we're getting far afield. I guess I'm not answering...

**FRANZÉN:** No, this is all very interesting stuff. The tangents are at least as interesting as the main route that I've been trying to pursue. So I'm happy to go on the tangents. Anything else that you remember about your Uncle Ernest that sticks in your mind, that you remember fondly about him?

**TAYLOR:** Well, I think I mentioned some of the things in that article. When he had his shop on Capitol Hill and some of the family still lived close to him, he could expect around November that I would bring him bags full of empty tin cans, and he'd have to cut the rim off the top of these so that my mother and her sisters and others could make their fruit cake in there...

**FRANZÉN:** Oh, their Christmas fruit cake.

**TAYLOR:** ...In there, and slip it out. Or plum pudding mostly. Slip it out. They didn't have that rim to interfere with it, it would slip out smoothly. They could put up a lot of plum pudding before Christmas, and I'd have to take the tin cans to Uncle Ernest [Laughing]...

**FRANZÉN:** He had the tools and the expertise to do that...

**TAYLOR:** And he always put on a long face when I did this, but of course he enjoyed doing it too. He was doing it for his sisters, his two sisters. And Uncle Ernest... my mother said that her grandfather taught her to make a screw on a lathe—you know, cut a screw on a lathe—and she probably did, because she told me how she did it...

**FRANZÉN:** This is your mother?

**TAYLOR:** My mother.

**FRANZÉN:** Really.

**TAYLOR:** I think she was kind of a pet of a number of the older people, and she always joked with, threatened, Uncle Ernest, that she and her sister were going to come over and wash that window that was always dirty in his shop. Well, this was a window that he kept dirty, because that's where the spiders came and spun their spider webs, and then he had to collect the filaments and twist them together for the crosshairs in the optical instruments, the telescopes and so on. And they'd come and actually show up with their [rags?]. They were just teasing him, you know—they'd come to wash that window. "Over my dead body would you wash that window." [Laughter] But they were kind of a fun family. If they could tease one another, they would do it. Sometimes they didn't always get away with it. [Laughs] Well, I'm going far afield, but...

**FRANZÉN:** No, that's okay, that's okay. Well, this was wonderful to be able to talk to you about this. I really appreciate your time. I don't want to wear you out. I think I'll stop the tape there.

**TAYLOR:** Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW