



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Raymond F. Donohoe

Interview Date: July 25, 2003
Interviewer: Barbara Eck
Transcriber: Barbara Eck

TAPE 1/SIDE 1

ECK: I am at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Donohoe to interview Mr. Donohoe for the Overbeck Capitol Hill Oral History Project. It's July 25th 2003 and I would like Mr. Donohoe to tell us about growing up on Capitol Hill. Go ahead.

DONOHOE: Raymond Donohoe. I was born January 22, 1921. I lived at 159 Kentucky Avenue S.E. They call it Capitol Hill now. All rowhouses. I was one of eight children. I was number six and we had a little park across the street from us. Right around the corner was Independence Avenue and then on the southwest corner was a DGS Store [District Grocery Store]. And on another corner was a Sanitary. Now Safeway and down around the corner was Bryant Elementary school where we played on the cinders and tried to play a little basketball. I went to a Catholic school called Holy Comforter at 15th and East Capitol Streets. And I was one of eight children. We all went to the same school of course. Holy Comforter Church was on East Capitol Street and 14th Street. The school was one block further. My mother was Katherine Markey Donohoe. She was a Washingtonian.

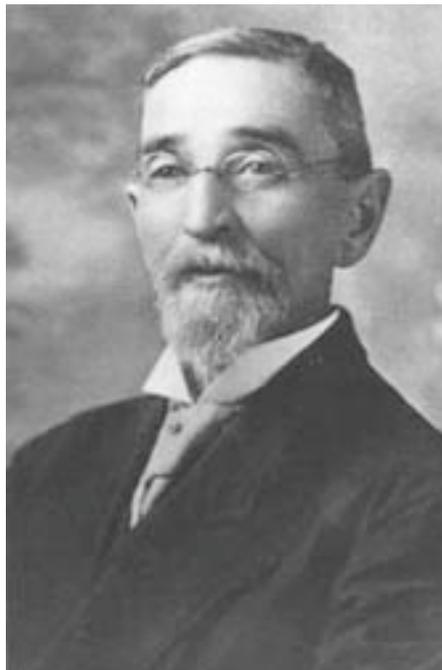


The Markey Family in 1898. Probably near their home near St. Joseph's Church (2nd & C Streets NE). Seated, left to right: Angie, Katherine Theresa (mother), Patrick (father). Standing: Genevieve, James, Mary, Katherine, and Rose. Katherine is Ray Donohoe's mother.

My father was Milburn J. Donohoe. He was a native Washingtonian. He was raised on 2nd and C Streets S.E. Right by the Library of Congress. My father, he was one of four sons and a daughter of John F. Donohoe who was born, we understand, in Ireland, and who came over during the Civil War and came to Washington selling groceries at 11th and North Carolina and East Capitol Streets. His store was vital for the people living near Lincoln Park. And then they got into the real estate business. 1884 they started and they actually started at 308 East Capitol Street. And the place is called Milburn Apartments now and that's my father's name. My father was kind of a pet of my grandmother's. We used to go over to see her and have a little lunch with my grandmother. Boy, you get a sandwich and you eat it all or get out. She was very tough. And you don't talk at the table while you're eating. They lived at 220 2nd Street S.E., right across from the church. We're a block from St. Peter's Church. They had the first pew in the church. But, let see. They were in the real estate business right on 314 Pennsylvania Avenue and then they had an automobile place on Second, across Pennsylvania Avenue from the real estate business. They sold Ford cars for years, but Ford wanted them to move to southern Maryland and also sell farm machinery. So they moved their car business uptown and sold Chevrolets. But they're not in that business anymore. John F. Donohoe and Sons is now up on Wisconsin Avenue and they do everything now. They build buildings and everything else. They're still doing a big job. I'm sorry I'm not into it.

ECK: Your grandfather's name was...?

DONOHOE: John F. Donohoe.



John F. Donohoe

ECK: Did he live on the Hill?

DONOHOE: Oh yes. He lived at 220 2nd Street.

ECK: I'm sorry. That's what you did say. And he had four sons?

DONOHOE: Four sons and a daughter. The daughter was—she had—what was it mother?

MRS. DONOHOE: Infantile paralysis.

DONOHOE: OK. But she got around and after the grandfather and mother died she lived at 308 East Capitol Street. It's called the Milburn Apartments. She lived up there for years. She never worked. She never did anything, but they went to lunch with her every day. My uncles did.



Donohoe brothers and friends in 1910, 300 block of East Capitol Street.

Front seat: driver is Milburn J. Donohoe (Ray's father), and his brother Clarence F. Donohoe. Back seat: George P. Zurhorst and Charles S. Zurhorst, Sr., who owned a funeral home across from the Milburn Apartments, 308 East Capitol (owned by the Donohoes).

ECK: Where did your parents live when you were born?

DONOHOE: My parents? Oh, my father lived at 220 2nd Street and my mother lived, well they rented. They rented all over the place. My father said they never could pay the rent [ed: referring to his mother's family] (laughs). Their father, I don't know what he—I forgot what he did. Probably worked for the government. There were a bunch of girls in that family and one brother. The Donohoe's biggest business was rentals. More than selling places. And they had more rentals probably than anybody. And over in Anacostia, but mostly southeast and northeast on the Hill. In fact my father used to go walking all the time and would go all the way over to H Street N.E. Take a walk and see what's vacant, or something for sale, or looks like a rundown and maybe he can buy it and fix it up and rent it. And he loved to walk and I walked with him a lot of times. We moved from Lincoln Park. My mother says, "It's getting a little rough." And the taxicab people living on the same block! "Not with us!", you know. (laughs) So we moved out to Wesley Heights, Spring Valley, N.W. 1937. A nice, big old place over there. Twenty-five trees before you get to the house.

ECK: Tell me about living on Kentucky Avenue off Lincoln Park. Tell me about that.

DONOHOE: Oh that. We had a good time. Anytime there was any trouble they called my mother. Cause there's six boys. We had all brick streets, you know. We couldn't do much skating. But finally they paved that and oh, then they put the lights in. Before we had gas lights and they'd come every night and light them up again. They got to turn them up. And we had a little park across the street. I got a good story about that. The lady next to the park used to throw water on us all the time, because that's where she put her flowers—it was maybe about a foot wide, or something you know, right? And we got playing and we got chased by the cops all the time. They knew who we were. If it wasn't us they'd call my mother anyway. Six boys. We were always in trouble. But I can remember that same lady that—she gave us so much trouble. Like Halloween, We'd leave a glass of water on her door and when she opened the door the water comes into her house. She liked that. (Ha!) She called the cops for that too. Not us! We wouldn't do that! My mother said there's a lot of other boys around besides her boys. Not her boys would do anything wrong." (Eck laughs).

But we used to go down to the market and take the people's food back on our wagons,. Things like that.

ECK: Now tell us what market you went to.

DONOHOE: Eastern Market. There was a country market too and we had uncles that come down from southern Maryland to sell vegetables and stuff at the Market. Not too far out. And they would bring them on Saturdays and we would bring the things home for people and get 10 cents. And, uh, Uncle Will and—I can't think of the guy's name. But anyway, that was our Saturday work to do, because everybody worked half a day Saturday in those days.

ECK: Now that was in the 1930's?

DONOHOE: In the 30's right. We moved there in, we moved there before I was born, but we moved there probably in the 30's, early 30's cause we all went to the same school.

ECK: And what school did you go to?

DONOHOE: Called Holy Comforter. 15th and East Capitol Street. It had all the nuns and boy, they were tough. In fact I got an old story. I'm one of eight children so the youngest one couldn't bring the money into school. I was the oldest brother in the school then. In the eighth grade. And one day, my brother Danny comes to my class and says, "I want to see Fats." The nun says, "Who's Fats?" I was a little chubby. They called me Fats. Right, you know. The nuns knew everybody. So I give him his nickel or something like that you know. Nice little, old school. Places in the back you hang your coat in the closet, ya know, right? I said I was number six in the family. I got all the hand me downs. Paul was one ahead of me, and Jimmy. In fact it was Milburn, Francis, Jimmy, Paul, Raymond, Louie and Dan. Nice crowd. As I told you, anytime there's trouble the cops called my mother. But we never got in any real trouble. But then, there was no place to play, I told you, then. So finally they paved all the bricks off the street. The street was all paved. Well we could play skate hockey.



Ray Donohoe's family at their summer home, Banks O'Dee in Southern Maryland, 1929.

From left: Dan, Lou, Ray, Paul, Jim, Fran, Rica, Milburn, Miss Kitty (mother), and M.J. (Milburn, dad)

ECK: In front of your house are you talking about?

DONOHOE: All up and down the street.

ECK: All up and down Kentucky.

DONOHOE: Kentucky Avenue right. And we had nice neighbors there. We had all kinds. The next door neighbor was a guy named Payne. He ran an insurance company down at 3rd and Pennsylvania Avenue. And the neighbor a couple of doors from us, was a fireman. We had them all. And next further up was the Capitol policeman named Dalrymple. And I got a good story about one of his sons. He was a little sissy. He didn't play any ball with us you know, right? But he helped my sister go get some clothes. He could pick out the right collar...so we called him sissy. He didn't play any ball with us. Across the street was Jerry Davis. His father's a cop. He got us into the Griffith Stadium [ed:the D.C. baseball stadium that preceded RFK and was located where Howard University Hospital is on Georgia Avenue north of Florida Avenue.] And Ray Howe. His father's a plumber or something. His mother got into the candy business. Roosevelt Candies on 9th Street Northwest. Right next to the Gaiety Theatre. You know where the Gaiety Theatre is?

ECK: Where was the Gaiety Theatre?

DONOHOE: 9th Street N.W.

ECK: OK. Is that still there?

DONOHOE: No. It's a place with all the show girls.

ECK: Right, I can picture it now.

DONOHOE: Twenty five cents to go there. But also in that block we had Dr. Eckert around the corner. He was our dentist. Chris Murphy was our doctor.. He's on East Capitol Street, 13th and East Capitol And we had a little block where we had one little space to play ball. The size of a house, but they couldn't put one on it, because it wasn't quite wide enough. That was across the street from the Eckerts. Thirteenth and Massachusetts Avenue. And we played and hit the ball. Sometimes the ball got stuck in the fenders of cars and they'd keep on going and we'd yell at them you know, right?

The cops knew who we were and lady that lived in the house there did too. The ball would hit her wall all the time, right? But we had no place to play. We had to go all the way down to Eastern High School. Ten blocks. The one thing about Eastern High School though, you could watch a 5 or 10 cents movie on Saturday nights. That was a big treat. And the other movie house near our house was the Carolina. I remember going there to get some kind of an Eskimo pie or something. A little chocolate thing... And to see the new serials. The better part was, you try to go into the movie when the people were coming out.

It's a little cheaper that way (both laugh). But I remember that and also I remember leaving my hat. I always had to wear a hat and I was always leaving it. I had to go back and get my hat all the time. My mother was pretty tough.

ECK: You lost a lot of hats at the movies?

DONOHOE: No, we went back and got them. My mother took care of everything. She liked to shop. She would take us downtown. I got a story about Woodward and Lothrop's [ed: department store located at 11th Street N.W. between F and G Streets] down there years ago. My mother would, six boys, she'd just send us down. I can't think of that lady's name, but she'd take care of it and charge it and then my mother would pay her. I guess we took the streetcar down. (Mrs. Donohoe in the background trying to help with the clerk's name).

ECK: What's her name, Lil?

MRS. DONOHOE: Something like Doyle.

DONOHOE: No.

ECK: Well, it's nice to know you had someone to take care of you like that.

DONOHOE: Oh, my mother, she liked to shop. They all knew her. But then we'd go down...something on sale...just like my wife (laughs). If it's on sale you can't do better. Oh well, and then, the penny candy. There was a Penny Candy Store at Independence and Kentucky and 13th Street S.E.. Right down the street. And then they had the nickel pin ball things and about a block and a half away there was a delicatessen. A Jewish family owned it. The Jewish people in town, they were open on Sunday. You'd always get something on Sunday there. A block and a half from where I lived there was a colored area, a black area, right. And another half a block was St. Cyprian's Church which is a Catholic, Christian church for blacks.

ECK: And where was that? On what corner?

DONOHOE: A block and a half from me. On Maryland Avenue. A block and a half from Kentucky and B Street [Independence Avenue]. North Carolina and B Street [Constitution Ave]. North Carolina Avenue and 13th Street. That's where it was. St. Cyprian's it was called. Unusual name. But in that area. That's where we had some help. Helped my mother. Mary Tate, that's the name of the lady. Mary Ford her name was. She married a man named Tate. And my mother's bridge club all attended the wedding at St. Cyprian's. And that was something different in those days too.

ECK: There was not much mixing between blacks and whites back then?

DONOHOE: No, no mixing then. The poor blacks had it tough, but that was a black area there and that's where the black church—they had their school down at 7th and Pennsylvania Avenue. They had a school for the black boys and girls too. But, but no, no mixing in those days.

ECK: The school was across from Hine Junior High that's there now I believe, right?

DONOHOE: Right.

ECK: But, I didn't know that the church was so far away. That it was up by Lincoln Park. I thought the church was near the school

DONOHOE: The school back then was at 7th and Pennsylvania Avenue. Not close to St. Cyprian's Church. The Navy Yard was down there. Not far away either. So we could walk down there on Navy Day you know... See all the boats you know. All that.

Anacostia wasn't too far away. Only place we could play football. Well that's a good half hour walk down there. We'd go play ball. I can remember now they had a hundred pound club. Couldn't weigh more than 100 pounds to play. My two brothers were each the hundred pounds. I was much smaller and played center. And they ran over me pretty easy.

ECK: Were there any fields at Eastern High School?

DONOHOE: Yeah, but it's a long way down see. That's about ten blocks. We used to go there for a five or ten cent movie on Saturday night, but no place to play ball. We'd get chased away anyway. It had a big fence around it.

ECK: Did you play in Lincoln Park?

DONOHOE: Oh we played there awhile. But there wasn't much to play on. I mean, too many trees and we got chased out anyway. We got chased out a lot and that's when they had the little, the guy selling the popcorn and the snowballs.

ECK: In Lincoln Park?

DONOHOE: Right on the side. They had to push the carts. Also the vegetable man came down too. He'd ring his bell and you'd come out and get some food from the vegetable man. He had a horse and buggy. But my mother would rather go down and get things at Eastern Market.

MRS. DONOHOE: Tell about Sousa.

ECK: Sousa, did you say?

MRS. DONOHOE: Yes. He went to his funeral.

ECK: Oh, your wife was mentioning that you went to the funeral of John Phillip Sousa.

DONOHOE: Yeah, John Phillip Sousa. Well the captain of the band. Captain Taylor Branson lived a block away from us. He was running the band then.

ECK: Captain Branson? He was in charge of the Marine Band?

DONOHOE: Right. And Sousa died but they took him down there to the—right before you get to Pennsylvania Avenue and Kentucky Avenue. To the Anacostia River [ed: referring to Congressional Cemetery]. And that was a big deal to go down there. All the bands there you know. It's a big place there. The cemetery.

ECK: At the national cemetery?

DONOHOE: No, no, this is right down...

ECK: Congressional?

DONOHOE: That must be it.

ECK: Congressional Cemetery? Right on the river?

DONOHOE: Right on the edge of Pennsylvania Avenue.

ECK: Congressional Cemetery...

DONOHOE: I don't know the name of it. We used to go down there on Halloween. (laughs)

ECK: They still do.

DONOHOE: Right. But that was a long way down.

ECK: What church was Sousa buried from? Did you go to the church?

DONOHOE: I'm not sure. It was, I can't say that. I can remember going from the Marine Barracks down, but I don't remember any church.

ECK: So you went to the cemetery?

DONOHOE: Yeah, we was walking down. It's still there, that cemetery.

ECK: When we first met at Gonzaga, you told me about skating in Lincoln Park.

DONOHOE: Skating. Right, right. Oh, in and out, in and out. O.K. We played...

ECK: You mentioned that sometimes there was ice on the park? (He shakes his head) No? Maybe I misunderstood.

DONOHOE: Wait a minute. No, no, no. Wait a minute.

MRS. DONOHOE: He ice skated to Gonzaga.

DONOHOE: That's what it was. I ice skated to Gonzaga one time. That's what it was. That's about a mile I guess it was. I walked home a lot too, from there. I went to Gonzaga. We got out in—I got out in '39. When I walked in the school they said, "So, Mr. Donohoe skated to school". See, it was very slippery all over. Its real slippery up the hill there, right. I can remember that now cause nobody could get to the school, because of the ice. Most of the teachers lived there. I tell that story. It was \$10 a month to go to Gonzaga. Now it's \$10,000 a year.

ECK: Or more.

DONOHOE: (laughs) My brothers all went there. I sent my children there. We sent three to O'Connell [ed: Bishop O'Connell High School in Virginia], three to Gonzaga, and one to Visitation [ed: Georgetown Visitation High School in Georgetown].

ECK: Did, did, many boys from Capitol Hill go to Gonzaga?

DONOHOE: Oh yeah. The big tough guys cause St. John's—we're talking about the Catholics particularly, naturally...Eastern High School is where probably most of the neighborhood went. St. John's was the other school for Catholic boys. They had cadets, you know. We would kid them about how they had to march and all that stuff, you know. They didn't have to take four years of Latin like we did either.

MRS. DONOHOE: Who went to Gonzaga? Murphy.

DONOHOE: Who? Oh Murphy. Bob Murphy, the undertaker here in Virginia. He went to Gonzaga. Usually the Catholics stayed together pretty much anyway.

ECK: And pretty many Irish too right?

DONOHOE: Right.

ECK: Was the neighborhood you were in near Lincoln Park—were there a lot of Irish families?

DONOHOE: Not more than, no. We weren't off the boat [ed: expression refers to immigrants]. We were mostly Washingtonians. We weren't the first...we were the second generation. My father was.

ECK: Right, , but were there...? (he shakes his head) There weren't? No more than anything else?

DONOHOE: No. No, we weren't in an Irish area. No. But we shook them up otherwise.

Anyway a bunch of kids—they blame it on the Catholics anyway. Let's see. We had Murphy the undertaker, Eckert the dentist, Mr. Becker was a lawyer and Wilson (wife heard in background) Oh, yeah, Branson. He was captain of the, Marine Band. There were the Leonards. They had a bunch of boys around. Their father went to Boston Latin School. They came from Boston. They had a bunch of boys and they were all brains. Another Branson, not Captain Branson. His son, Suede Branson, chased those boys. They teased him and he chased them up and he banged them up a couple days a week. (laughs) They called him "redhead" or something you know, right? They ran off and Suede would chase through my house to cut them off. He would take Mary Tate out [ed: meaning he knocked her down]. Our maid. She let him out and whacked him a good one. (laughs) He wouldn't beat them up when he caught them. He'd whack them or something. We played hockey I told you. Then when they put the pavement in it was real good hockey. Skate hockey.

And then we played football across the street. But there were big trees there and all.

And we would go over to the Northeast Boys Club on H Street Northeast. Well, we had a little trouble over there. If you didn't bring your glove home with you. You don't have a glove the next time. They'd take the glove. They were tougher than we were. H Street then was kind of a business street. It still is. But a little rough. I tell the story my father used to walk at night. Oh, I know someone too over there (long pause).

ECK: You were saying that he would locate properties for rent and so forth. So your father was always in real estate?

DONOHOE: That's the only job he ever had. That was big business then. People couldn't buy then. Price was too much. People didn't make that much money to go buy a house either. Didn't have the finances they do now. People didn't have the jobs they do now,

ECK: Now did you have jobs? You said that you earned some money bringing groceries home from Eastern Market. How about when you were older. Did you work different places on the Hill?

DONOHOE: I worked for Corson and Gruman. They paved the ground and things like that. I worked for them a couple summers. Don't know if they're still in business or not.

ECK: And what did you do for them?

DONOHOE: I can remember in southeast, in Anacostia, they built some apartments. Then they pour some cement and you take the molds and tear them down with chislers and then take them down and stack them up and then pour the cement in another one. Blocks of cement just like when they built the floors like in this apartment here. They pour the concrete then you have to take the boards down. Next time they pour them someplace else. And I think I was getting \$15.00 a week. (laughs)

ECK: Hard work!

DONOHOE: Right! But I'd walk up to Wisconsin Avenue and then I'd go down to the waterfront. That's where the Corson and Gruman's business was [ed: in Georgetown]. Then they'd take a truck and they'd take you over to the job. Probably making twenty bucks a week or something. Worked like a dog. Back then my father's friend who owned Corson and Gruman, name of Costigan, had a pool. And that was a long time ago. Having a pool in your house! Not *in* your house, but outside. They lived off of Military Road. Over there by Rock Creek Park. Mrs. Costigan was in my mother's bridge club. Lot of the Irish that made a few bucks they moved out. That's the name of the game. They move up. From the rowhouse we moved to a place called Wesley Heights, Spring Valley. I might have said that.

ECK: What year did you do that?

DONOHOE: 1937.

ECK: When you were in high school.

DONOHOE: In high school. Oh yeah. Big time!. We showed 'em up. With eight kids when we moved in they knew who we were. Only Catholics in three or four blocks. I said I went to Gonzaga. They never heard of it. It was ten dollars a month for pity sake! (laughs) But, anyway, nice place. The people who bought the house from my father tore it down and built another house. I went by it the other day. No trees there.

ECK: You talked a lot about when you boys were getting into trouble and about Gonzaga. What about when you were very young. Do you remember any particular places you liked to go with your Mom?

DONOHOE: Yeah, we went to southern Maryland. We had a place down in southern Maryland. Charles County. We still have it. I mean the place is still there and Donohoes have it. My family hasn't got it. Three cousins with their families have it now

ECK: Were there places on the Hill for recreation? Were there any public pools?

DONOHOE: Not when I lived over there. We had to go down to the Ambassador. They had a pool. That's the only place I know of.

ECK: And what was the Ambassador?

DONOHOE: At 12th and K Street Northwest. A hotel. That's the only place that we went, but we didn't go much at that. We went to southern Maryland. We went to salt water. We went there every summer so we didn't have to be here in the summer. It was hot as you know. But we had fans in those days. We had a back porch with a bunch of windows that helped a lot.

ECK: Were there activities in the parks?

DONOHOE: No, not in those days. Fourth of July, maybe. But I wasn't there then see. We were fortunate not to be there then. Might a been something, but we went to southern Maryland when it got hot. We weren't shanty Irish see. We were lace curtain. We had a place to go in the summertime. Let me say about the good time we had playing in the snow. We had a stop sign over on the corner. We'd hang on the bumpers on the cars and ride for awhile down the street and let go. Nobody got hurt, but you could have. We talk about the stores closing on the weekends sometimes. The Jewish people that's where they made their money. They were open on Sunday.

ECK: I'm sorry. You were talking about going to the bakery on Sunday night. I cut you off when I was checking on whether the tape was going to run out. Tell me about going to the bakery.

DONOHOE: It was Sunday night. We'd go up to the bakery on New Jersey Avenue. It was Schneiders Bakery. It was fresh bakery and we'd eat half of it before we'd get home. My mother didn't like that too much. But that was our Sunday night. We had our big meal during the day and Sunday night we'd just have leftovers. Then we'd make sandwiches or something, but we didn't get in the dining room. But that was a big treat for us [ed: going to the bakery and eating casually in the kitchen]. In fact, another store, High's Ice Cream, we liked to go there. Year ago "Quart for a Quarter." and "Quart for more for thirty four" and "Quart for right for fifty cents" or something like that. High's kept raising the price for a quart of ice cream. And that's when you get a nickel scoop and you get a big one with the big scooper. High's was doing a real good job [ed:selling ice cream all over town].

ECK: Where was the High's store?

DONOHOE: Right down—14th and A. They had them all over the place. That's on the way to the school. The church was 14th and East Capitol. That's a block from that. The school was another block on 15th Street. I tell the story about the church and the school too, to make money they'd sell candy. A penny a piece of candy. You get a red one you get a quarter one. The nuns, anyway, to save money and to make money. That was the best time of our live with those nuns. They were tough.

ECK: They sold the candy at school?

DONOHOE: Yeah, sure. To make money. And then whoever got the last one, the pink one, they'd get the big egg. They probably could make five dollars on the thing. That was a lot of money. Did I tell you the story about my brother came up....I told you the story didn't I? My brother gave the money to somebody. Danny came up and said, "We want to see Fats". He didn't get his nickel. We walked home for lunch too. We didn't have lunch at school. Only the kids from out of the neighborhood would have their lunch at school. We could walk back and forth for lunch every day. Let's see, what else?

ECK: Did Holy Comforter parish have celebrations or activities?

DONOHOE: We had a big, what do you call? (wife says something) A circus.

ECK: Oh, the circus!

DONOHOE: No, the Carnival. They had that every year. And that made money. Had a Ferris wheel.

ECK: Where would they get the Ferris wheel?

DONOHOE: Right in the yard. Oh, they rent them. A lot of churches did that didn't they mother?" To make a few bucks you know. And they selling something all the time.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

ECK: Side 2 of the first tape with Mr. Donohoe on July 25, 2003. I would like you to tell me more about the carnival that you would have at Holy Comforter and some of the activities they would have there.

DONOHOE: They had about a week of it. They had a carnivals every summertime. They had a—what do you call it? (wife responded softly)—a Ferris wheel and then they had throwing balls at something to knock them down. Bottles or something. Made of wood. And you know three down you get another quarter's worth. And when you get one down you get a little penny candy. A sucker or something like that you know. And then we had the Ferris wheel and they'd sell you any kind of food you wanted. But it worked out pretty good you know. Gave the poor little old nuns some money. I guess they got the money. I don't doubt that. (laughs)

ECK: What kind of food did they have?

DONOHOE: Plain old hotdogs and hamburgers. Nothing like barbecue. Now you have barbecue. Those days there were hotdogs and hamburgers and I remember too, at the school. They played the music. You had to walk out—they played the music when you walked out of the school. I can remember that. To get

the kids out. Like Sousa's music or something like that you know. I can remember that. It got everybody out.

ECK: Did you line up to march in and march out?

DONOHOE: Yeah, each class. Starts with the highest. Eighth grade, seventh grade. No Junior High then. Didn't have kindergarten in those days. Nobody went to kindergarten in my time. Oh, I can remember those nuns were tough. And, I had one nun, if you didn't do something she'd throw something. Just an eraser or something. Sr. Elizabeth Marie. I remember her. A guy named Hanley. He got kept back a year and he was a bad boy. Eventually they threw him out I guess. I remember second grade for myself. They gave me a bucket. I cried all the time. They gave me a bucket. (laughs) I can remember that now.

(laughs). Right now I'm deaf a little bit. They didn't know I was deaf then. Nobody knew I was deaf until I went to high school. Nobody gave you a test in those days when you went to school. Then I had to put those things in my ears along with the batteries around my neck, you know. But I'm one of eight children and I'm the only one living. My bride's brought me...fifty-five years? (wife responds softly) Fifty-four years.

ECK: All your brothers and sister are dead.

DONOHOE: That's right. I'm it. One of eight. I tell the story. When I was born, the doctor couldn't come to fix me. The Knickerbocker Theatre. The roof fell down on it at 18th and Columbia Road because of the heavy snow...

ECK: What year was that?

DONOHOE: 1921 and the doctor couldn't get there and I got pneumonia. They figured that's what happened to me [ed: it left him deafened].

ECK: Where were you born? At home?

DONOHOE: Oh no, Providence Hospital. My wife was born—all my children were born there. They moved the hospital though. It's in northeast now. It was in southeast.

ECK: Where was it located then?

DONOHOE: Third and F. Something like that. The lot is still vacant. They tore it down. There's nothing there.

ECK: It's a park.

DONOHOE: No, it's just a bunch of...

ECK: No, it's a park.

DONOHOE: Did they fix it? I thought it was just a bunch of crap on it.

ECK: No, a park, since about 1973.

DONOHOE: We have a group, Catholic Student Mission Crusade, CSMC. You never heard of it. Three or four months ago we went over there... We get together. We're all Washington people. And we went to St. Peter's Church. The 10:00 Mass—which is right by the Congressional Library and my where my father's business was. 314 Pennsylvania Avenue. And then we went down to...?

MRS. DONOHOE: The Hawk and the Dove.

DONOHOE: The Hawk and the Dove. It's a little place. You ever been there?

ECK: Yes.

DONOHOE: We down to the lower level. We had about what? Fifteen? Thirteen? And we were all Washingtonians.

ECK: And that was a reunion for...?

DONOHOE: Catholic Student Mission Crusade. CSMC. The Corrigan Unit. Corrigan was a Bishop or something at CU.

ECK: And when did you do that?

DONOHOE: About 3 or 4 months ago. (wife says: "in May")

ECK: Oh, you just had it this year!

DONOHOE: We get together. Most of them are Marylanders. We're Virginians. First families of Virginia see.

ECK: Do you always get together on the Hill?

DONOHOE: No in different places. Most of them are Marylanders. We got a couple in DC. And we went to St. Peter's Church. It gets us together once and awhile. We've been meeting since high school. Called the Corrigan unit. Bunch of little Irishman (Eck laughs). But we get together. Like Murphy the undertaker here. He lived over in Washington with me. He went to Gonzaga. You either go to Gonzaga or St. John's if you're Catholic. If you had the money I guess. Cause it's ten dollars a month (laughs) that

was a lot of money then. Anyway, I kid about Murphy. I tell the story about him. His father's a doctor. And they played poker at my house all the time and so one time they stayed so late that when we went down to get breakfast they were still playing poker! (laughs) My mother was going to shoot them. I guess someone was losing.

ECK: You mentioned your dad's business on Pennsylvania Avenue. Do you remember some of the other businesses that were there back when you were young?

DONOHOE: Oh, the company of John F. Donohoe is a parking lot now for the National Capitol Bank. And I've been in that bank all my life. And I tell the story that they called me one time, "Donohoe you haven't got enough money in the bank." (laughs) Banks don't do that.

ECK: No. (laughs)

DONOHOE: People named Didden. Started with Carry Ice Cream money. A Didden married a Carry and they kind of owned pretty much of the bank. And down on Wisconsin Avenue they have a little place. What do you call it?

MRS. DONOHOE: A carry-out.

DONOHOE: Subs place, but anyway, Capitol Hill was strange and a lot of the people were—Washington...

ECK: Was Carry a family on Capitol Hill? Carry Ice cream you said?

DONOHOE: Right, they had a big place at 12th and Constitution Avenue and a Didden married a Carry. That's who owns this bank [ed: referring to Didden as the owner].

ECK: And did the ice cream—was it called Carry Ice Cream?

DONOHOE: Yes. Carry Ice Cream down on 14th and D street S.E. That's where they made the ice cream. That's gone of course.

MRS. DONOHOE: The milk people. Simpson...

DONOHOE: The milk—oh Simpsons too. They had another one. Simpsons lived on East Capitol Street. Murphy was on the corner and the Simpsons were next house I think. House had a big pole, what do you call it? A column. Simpson Milk and then it changed to Wakefield

ECK: So it was Simpson Milk. Did he have a dairy on the Hill?

DONOHOE: Yeah, they had a dairy. I don't know where it was. But they had one.

ECK: Did they have a store on Capitol Hill or did they just live on Capitol Hill?

DONOHOE: They were big like Chestnut Farms. They delivered all the milk and all that. That's when we had the milk delivered. Delivery was free. They had a chauffer (laughs) [ed: refers to the Simpsons]. And I liked him. My father was a good friend of theirs. They'd come down and visit us in southern Maryland. We had a family place. He had the funnies. We could go read the funnies. We didn't get the paper in southern Maryland then. It had to come down from Washington. Not enough people. Banks O'Dea we called the place in southern Maryland. It's still there.

ECK: Tell me again.

DONOHOE: Banks O'Dea.

ECK: That was the name of your place.

DONOHOE: That's right. Charles County. Across from Colonial Beach on the Potomac River.

ECK: Does the family still own it?

DONOHOE: Certainly do. There's three cottages. Clarence, Milburn, and James. Three brothers. A sister had it last. I don't know who has it now.

ECK: You mentioned Simpson Milk and then you said, "Wakefield". What was that?

DONOHOE: They went from Simpson to Wakefield Dairy.

ECK: What other businesses do you remember on Pennsylvania Avenue?

DONOHOE: Oh there's always been business, right. One corner was American Savings and Loan and the other corner was Eastern Savings and Loan. One's on second and one's on third. The National Capitol Bank. And the barber was there. And we went to a shoemaker. I can remember a place on the other side, the odd side. And we got our gas, but he had to take it in a jug and take it into your car. There wasn't any drive in for gasoline. Hayden, that was his name, Hayden. Before we got the big gas station they sold gas that way. And down on 8th street—that's where the Navy Yard was down that way. And Brinkley's Ice Cream.

ECK: Another ice cream company?

DONOHOE: (laughs) Well, we liked sweets see. Places doing good in that area down there now. That area in southeast moved up a lot. You talk about houses worth money. Not kidding around there. I wish I'd rent some of those now. I went by my house. I never got into it again. 159 Kentucky Avenue. Been by

there, but the man never opens the door. The next door lady said, "I never see the guy either." He's a recluse. I'd like to see what it looks like now. We had, I told you eight children there. It was a center hall house you know. I remember playing football in the middle in the hall. Had a parlor with a player piano. That's where we shoot marbles and all. Then we had a living room, dining room and a kitchen.

ECK: You played football in the hall?

DONOHOE: Yeah, well, we played touch ball. My mother didn't like that. She whacked us a little bit you know. Worked out fine. We had a back porch out there. Finally my father put some heat in. Put a radiator in there. Little cold without a radiator. Coal. That's when we were using coal. I can remember that guy Exum. That's the name of the guy that put the coal down the chute. I can see him now. My father he took care of the coal. At our next house we had oil. (laughs) I don't know what's in there now. I'd like to see what's down there. Oh, in the same house we had—159. We used to have plays. Put a string up there. Ads. We'd try to get people to get ads for us. (laughs)

MRS. DONOHOE: Tell her the name of the show.

DONOHOE: West Side, East Side. That's the name of our play. And we were horsing around. One of my brothers—we made him a girl. You know, right?

MRS. DONOHOE: And they had programs.

DONOHOE: We had programs. (laughs) We ran Miss America—we got people to support it for—we'd get, you know, twenty-five cents (laughs) for ads.

ECK: Did you put it on in your parlor or outside?

DONOHOE: In the basement. Oh, yeah. Big basement. We had four posts in the basement. We could ride our bikes around see. We had coal. My father put the coal in all the time. Nice old house. I'd like to see it. Mother had a room, the girls had a room and then she took care of all our cousins. Our uncle, her brothers. And we had three double beds out there for the boys. That's a good area though [ed: Kentucky Avenue/Lincoln Park].

ECK: You mentioned, the Knickerbocker Theatre accident when you were born. Explain to the listeners what the Knickerbocker was and let's have it all on tape.

DONOHOE: (laughs) All I know is it was a theatre.

ECK: And where was it?

DONOHOE: Eighteenth and Columbia Road. You come across from the Shoreham Hotel that way,,,

ECK: In Northwest?

DONOHOE: Right and coming toward 16th Street and that street comes in there. And we had so much snow the roof fell in and killed a bunch of people.

ECK: What date? What was the date you were born?

DONOHOE: January 22, 1921.

ECK: And you were born at...?

DONOHOE: Providence Hospital.

ECK: Which was at 3rd and E Streets on Capitol Hill. And tell me again about the doctor.

DONOHOE: Dr. Mc Quillan.

ECK: But he couldn't get to...?

DONOHOE: To my mother I guess, right? I had pneumonia and they couldn't do anything about it.

ECK: Because he was tending the people at the theatre accident or because he couldn't get across town?

DONOHOE: Oh no. No. My mother was probably home by that time. He probably couldn't get out of the house. He couldn't get through so much snow to see me. The snow was all over town. Not just there. (In Northwest) It just happened to be that time of day. That had nothing to do with him getting there. Just that the snow was so big nobody else could get around. That's the point. I could've had something else. I don't know [ed: what actually caused his hearing loss].

ECK: Do you remember a lot of heavy snow when you were a kid?

DONOHOE: Not particularly, no. Once and awhile we had a big one, but nothing—I can't remember. Can you remember anything? (to his wife). I don't know. We liked it I know that much. (laughs). We used to hang on the bumpers and ride a block or two. Which is dangerous. But,,,

ECK: Did you have snowball fights?

DONOHOE: We had a little trouble there too. The people going down the street. They try to stop. They're not going to be able to stop cause there are cars right behind them anyways. We would hide. (laughs)

MRS. DONOHOE: Weren't they bad boys?

DONOHOE: We didn't break anybody. But we had a good time.

ECK: You mentioned the Navy Yard.

DONOHOE: Right. We had a Navy Day once a year. You could go down there and walk around the Navy Yard. Navy Day they called it. We walked down there. We walked every time. There wasn't any other way to do it but walk.

ECK: And what did they have at the Navy Yard?

DONOHOE: Oh, they had boat sitting out there, and you walked through the boats, and they had big guns they used to have. In fact there's no Navy Yard anyway. It's there, but it's nothing to do with the Navy Yard. Maybe to do with the Coast Guard or somebody. I don't think they have any boat that the—I don't think the navy has anything to do with it anymore.

ECK: Yes, they do. But it's not deep enough except for an occasional boat. I know the Navy's still there. They have office buildings.

DONOHOE: We've gone there with some Niagara University reunion things.

ECK: At the club, at the military club. Were there people in your neighborhood who were stationed at the Navy Yard when you were growing up?

DONOHOE: No. I didn't know anybody there. We had different ones, but none there. I think I told you we had cops and plumbers...

ECK: And the Director of the Navy Band.

DONOHOE: Right. (laughs)

ECK: Now, did you go to hear the Navy band? I mean the Marine Band, not the Navy Band. Captain Branson. He was the Director of the Marine Band. Did you go to concerts that they played?

DONOHOE: (laughs) I can't swear to that.

ECK: They may have just played for the President then.

DONOHOE: Yeah, they always were—I can't say that I did. We'd go out to Glen Echo. Ever hear of Glen Echo? I tell the story of the streetcars. You get these passes. We get one for Saturday night or Saturday afternoon. We ride the thing all the way out to Glen Echo and back. Just something to do.

ECK: Where did it leave from?

DONOHOE: Lincoln Park. Took us all the way out to Glen Echo and comes back. That's where it was then.

ECK: Was that what the car barns were for?

DONOHOE: The car barns at 14th and East Capitol Street. But that's for the Capitol, but the other end of the line was Glen Echo. At certain times. They went to Mount Pleasant. They went to different places. Oh, I remember the lady when we would get those passes, you know.

ECK: How much did they cost?

DONOHOE: Nothing for us. It's a Saturday night. It's no good after twelve o'clock. Oh, we'd get a seat just to take a ride.

ECK: What did it cost otherwise? Do you remember/

DONOHOE: Oh, probably a dollar a week. I don't know. (Nods to his wife asking her if she knows). She didn't ride them. She stayed home. She lived in northwest. I was in southeast. Bigtime!.

ECK: What else do you want people to remember about growing up on Capitol Hill?

DONOHOE: It's fairly convenient. Capitol Hill is. Look how close you are to the Capitol, the Justice, the Smithsonian. You can walk to those places. In fact it's getting better. As you said, the prices are going up. Hard to believe. I'd like to see what my father paid for the house we had. I don't know what he paid for it. But money was not that much either. Nobody made \$100 a week in those days. If anybody made \$100 a week they were the rich people. Now it's a thousand probably. I don't know. I know the best thing we liked. We liked the movies. They'd have a special, a new serial. And we used to go to the movies that way a lot. How I remember that too. I'd lose my hat. I had trouble with my head or something like that. I always had to wear a hat. Thought I had cooties or something, but it wasn't that.

ECK: Where did you go to the movies?

DONOHOE: Carolina. It's still there. I think it's still there. Right up the street from you. It's on 11th and North Carolina Avenue.

ECK: There was a movie theatre?

DONOHOE: Right/

ECK: Not anymore.

DONOHOE: What's on the corner there? I'm talking about going up 11th Street and take a left. And that's North Carolina. Right on that corner was the Carolina Theatre.

ECK: There's a condo apartment building there.

DONOHOE: (laughs) That's right? Well, things have changed a bit. We used to go to Avenue Grand, Carolina, and the Home.

ECK: Where was the Avenue Grand?

DONOHOE: Between 4th and 5th Street on Pennsylvania Avenue. I think I got that right, because right on the corner is the...

ECK: On the side of the bank or on the other side of Pennsylvania Avenue?

DONOHOE: Toward the river.

ECK: The south side. OK.

DONOHOE: This side of the Penn. The Penn Theatre. That's still there I think.

ECK: The Penn. That's between 6th and 7th.

DONOHOE: Across from the Penn used to be the Avenue Grand. It's gone I guess.

ECK: Yes. That was there when I moved to the Hill. So you had the Avenue Grand across the street from the Penn on Pennsylvania Avenue. And you had the Carolina and the Home. The Home was over in Northeast? On H Street?

DONOHOE: No, it wasn't that far. On H was another one. Atlas or something was one on H Street. The Home was on Constitution Avenue. Next block over from our house.

ECK: So, were there any movie theatres on 8th Street that you remember?

DONOHOE: Oh yes. One of them there. I can't think of the name of it.

ECK: Down near the Navy Yard?

DONOHOE: Yeah, there was one down there. Oh boy. On the left hand side going down.

ECK: So you didn't have to go downtown to the movies?

DONOHOE: Oh, we'd go downtown in high school. Gonzaga had a half day on Friday We'd get a quarter and go to the Fox. I'm not sure the Fox is still there. That was a long time ago.

ECK: When you went to the Penn and all those places. Did you have a special time you went? Was it Saturdays or Sundays or...?

DONOHOE: Oh, on Saturday they had the serials and all of that. Usually Saturdays. We didn't go Sundays in those days. The church didn't want you to do that.

ECK: Explain for our listeners what the serial was.

DONOHOE: Serial. Oh, well they had the good guy and the bad guy, see. And a lady. And just as the bad guy is throwing her over the cliff, the good guy would jump on him and throw a rope down and pick her up. (laughs) Something like that. Or they're going too fast and going to hit the wall and he takes a right hand turn just in time. Or just as he's going to fall over the river, all of a sudden he takes a right hand turn.

ECK: Was the story continued from one week to the next?

DONOHOE: Right. Something like that. And when a new one began you'd get a free piece of candy or something like that. What serial did you go to? (He asks his wife).

MRS. DONOHOE: I don't remember the name of it.

DONOHOE: They didn't let you all go anyway, did they? Would you go to the movies that much?

MRS. DONOHOE: No.

DONOHOE: They wouldn't let her go.

ECK: So they gave you candy sometimes?

DONOHOE: Oh, yeah, when they had a new show. A new serial. They'd give you a box of Good and Plenty or something like that.

ECK: Do you remember any of the names of the old movies that you saw? Or any of the stars?

DONOHOE: John Hooks? What was the name? "Tom Mix Goes Wild", or something like that.

ECK: Tom Mix? The cowboy?

DONOHOE: Yeah. Tom Mix and Tony or something like that.

ECK: Did you ever go to silent movies?

DONOHOE: No. I never went to silent movies. We had them. (laughs) at home or something. Never went to silent—the best thing is that they had these little things. Not a movie. Something that the guy going over the cliff. What do you call that?

MRS. DONOHOE: The serial.

DONOHOE: Serial, yeah, the serial. That was something else. People would pile in to see those serials.

ECK: Do you remember how much the movie cost?

DONOHOE: A quarter, I think.

ECK: Probably less than that.

DONOHOE: Could have been ten cents, but I don't know. All I know is I had to go back and get my hat all the time.

ECK: Did the movies inspire you to have your play?

DONOHOE: (laughs) Yeah. Oh, I don't know.

MRS. DONOHOE: Louie wrote it didn't he? Louie wrote the play.

DONOHOE: I don't know. That guy Ray Howe had something to do with it to.

ECK: Was it just your brothers and your family or was it your friends too?

DONOHOE: Friends mostly. My brother Louie and me, that's all. Maybe Danny in the summer. He was a baby. And Ray Howe.

ECK: Did you only put on the one play? East Side, West Side.

DONOHOE: I doubt we had more. We might have had two, but that's about all I think. My mother probably had enough by that time. Down in the basement. There was a coal bin in the basement Wasn't oil. It was coal.

ECK: What did you do for costumes?

DONOHOE: Oh, we got my sisters' clothes or something like that you know. I don't know. I'd like to see that stuff now.

ECK: We were talking about the businesses on Pennsylvania Avenue. What about stores near where you lived?

DONOHOE: Where we lived we didn't...

ECK: Were there some on the Park? You mentioned the ice cream place on the Park.

DONOHOE: There was a drugstore on the corner. A Peoples drugstore on the other corner. I mean one on East Capitol Street on the other side. There's still a drugstore there too I think. What one's there now? Nothing? Empty?

ECK: Might be a store, but not a drugstore.

DONOHOE: The other corner there was a drugstore too. On the other side. On the 13th Street side. And a restaurant. A delicatessen next door. Let's see over there—and on Pennsylvania we had the Five and Ten. I know that.

ECK: Was that Kresge?

DONOHOE: Probably. I guess that's what it was.

ECK: Seventh and Pennsylvania?

DONOHOE: Right.

ECK: Did you shop there?

DONOHOE: Oh yah. Well we moved in '37, but we went over that way even after that...

ECK: You mentioned going down to Eastern Market. Do you have any stories about Eastern Market or any memories to share?

DONOHOE: Yeah, I had an uncle who sold groceries at the Market and I used to take people's things home for ten cents. It was a nice little market. My mother used to go to another market over by Gallaudet [ed: University on Florida Avenue between 6th and 10th Streets N.E.]. It was a meat market, I guess. That was another market we went to. That wasn't for groceries. More of for meat. But let's see, southeast...

ECK: There were meat markets in Eastern Market, right?

DONOHOE: Oh yeah. Inside there was a big one and a restaurant there too. And in fact on both sides they had stands. On 7th Street. In fact I had a brother worked—Milburn had a place selling real estate. He had a place there himself. My older brother.

[Ed: He later explained that his brother had a real estate office on 7th street across from Eastern Market.]

ECK: You mentioned your went to another market up near Gallaudet. But did she pretty much buy fruit and vegetables from Eastern Market?

DONOHOE: Oh yeah, that's the only thing you went there—other places for meat.

ECK: What about the horse carts up at Lincoln Park that you mentioned?

DONOHOE: Oh, that's the guy that came around to sell fruits and vegetables. Watermelon. And we had the ice man too. Had the ice man before we had a refrigerator. The iceman come down and you'd get your fifty pounds and we'd have ice for a good while. And then we got a refrigerator and we put the icebox out back. We could even hide in the old thing. Oh, and we made fudge. Let's see. Oh I remember the hucksters. They'd put the thing down so the cart wouldn't roll away. A brick or a big stone thing or metal thing so the cart wouldn't go away. That and the penny candy. The little lady down the street had a penny candy place. We had a Sanitary [ed: reference to a chain grocery store] there. That's right.

ECK: Did she have a store or did she just sell it out of her house?

DONOHOE: Oh, there was a store.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

END OF INTERVIEW

[The tape ran out, but he explained that the penny candy store was on Independence Avenue where Kentucky and 13th Streets come together. He was asked if there was anything else he wanted to say and he said that he thought he'd told several things more than once.]