



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Pauline Getek

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Interviewer: Marie Mingo

Transcriber: Kristen Willard

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

MINGO: ...1355 A St. NE, with Pauline Getek, and it's September 24, 2004. Good afternoon Pauline and tell me, how long have you lived here on the Hill?

GETEK: 49 years.

MINGO: 49 years. And where did you come from?

(loud noise)

MINGO: Arlington, ok. And you chose to come here, why?

GETEK: Because it would be easier for my husband to work.

MINGO: Where did your husband work?

GETEK: Capital Transit.

MINGO: Capital Transit.

GETEK: (Inaudible) He worked down with the streetcars.

MINGO: Ah, ok.

GETEK: And then on to the bus.

MINGO: First it was streetcars and then it was bus. Was, was he a driver?

GETEK: That's right.

MINGO: Oh, ok. What—I suppose he had lots of routes. Any particular route?

GETEK: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Mt. Pleasant.

MINGO: Ok.

GETEK: He liked to add on—what do you call that park. Oooh, boy.

(Loud screech)

MINGO: The name of the railroad was... maybe, Glen Echo?

GETEK: Glen Echo Park. Yeah.

MINGO: Ok. (Loud screech) Ok, I'm sorry we've had to interrupt because of a little technical difficulty. You said your husband preferred or enjoyed the Glen Echo route, why was that?

GETEK: Because on Sundays he used to take the kids on the ride and they loved it.

MINGO: Oh. Your own children.

GETEK: Yeah.

MINGO: How many children did you have?

GETEK: Three.

MINGO: Three, ok. And one here? Born in hospitals here or born at home?

GETEK: Yeah. Alexandria hospital.

MINGO: Back where we're...across the river, huh? Yeah. Ok. And now, when they were small were you also working?

GETEK: No.

MINGO: No... you were at home.

GETEK: A homebody. Yeah.

MINGO: Right. And so your husband, how far is it to the where the car barns were?

GETEK: 14th and uh...

MINGO: Yeah.

GETEK: East Capitol.

MINGO: Right. It was just a few blocks away.

GETEK: Yeah.

MINGO: Oh, So I imagine he got called upon when there were emergencies?

GETEK: Oh yeah.

MINGO: What kind of thing would happen that they'd have to get him out extra?

GETEK: Oh yeah, he loved that. Extra money.

MINGO: Oh, ok (laughing) 'cause there was extra pay. (laughing)

GETEK: That's right.

MINGO: Were there any particular times when he was called out that you can remember?

GETEK: Well, mostly it was the morning. Early hours. A lot of the guys couldn't make it out in the morning for some reason or another... I don't know.

MINGO: Was snow a problem?

GETEK: Yeah, snow was a problem. Yeah, yeah. Some sick, I guess, too.

MINGO: Right. But there weren't any, any national weather emergencies...

GETEK: No.

MINGO: That you remember...

GETEK: No, only when they had John Kennedy at the Capitol and they couldn't move for all the bad weather they had so he was stuck for a while on the track for the streetcar, yeah. Do you remember that?

MINGO: I wasn't here at that time... you mean at the time of the funeral?

GETEK: Yeah. (Inaudible)

MINGO: Right, when people were viewing the...

GETEK: Day and morning hours. My husband was stuck on his tracks and couldn't move.

MINGO: Oh my goodness. He had gotten out on his trolley and then because of the crowds he couldn't go out.

GETEK: Well, and the weather was also bad.

MINGO: Yeah... so how long was he stuck?

GETEK: It was early in the morning when he got home.

MINGO: Oh my goodness—all through the night? Ohhh. So...because there was such a grand number of people he came...

GETEK: That was something else. And the worst part, we took my oldest boy and my daughter and we took turns holding the younger boy because he was small yet...

MINGO: Oh.

GETEK: And we got tired.

MINGO: Oh, so you were along also?

GETEK: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

MINGO: Oh I see. Did you observe the, uh, funeral procession or anything?

GETEK: We just went in the Rotunda, you know, they kept going.

MINGO: Right, uh huh.

GETEK: So many people. Oh man.

MINGO: Yeah. So your husband was just on his regular trolley ride and you went along. And then you got stuck so you ran into the Rotunda, Rotunda yourselves.

GETEK: No, we walked from here.

MINGO: Oh you walked down there.

GETEK: It's not too bad of a walk.

MINGO: Of course.

GETEK: But we were back and he was not there.

MINGO: Ok, so... so you didn't meet up then.

GETEK: No... no no no.

MINGO: Ok, so you walked back and got home before he did.

GETEK: Yeah. Sure did.

MINGO: Ah, so you had, that time you had the two children.

GETEK: Three.

MINGO: You had three. But you only took...

GETEK: The third one was young but he couldn't walk that well.

MINGO: Oh.

GETEK: So we took George and carried him up.

MINGO: Wow. Wow. Oh. So who was along with you that was carrying him, the baby?

GETEK: Bill, his son.

MINGO: Oh I see.

GETEK: George.

MINGO: George. Ok.

GETEK: George. Yeah. That's George up there. That's Chris, that's my daughter.

MINGO: Those are pictures among the very interesting pictures that Pauline has of her family in the room that she's pointing at now. Um...

GETEK: He was an AP in Germany.

MINGO: Oh he was.

GETEK: He served in Germany.

MINGO: Germany. During WWII?

GETEK: Oh, well, when he was called. There was no Vietnam War.

MINGO: There was no Vietnam at his age. Yeah. Now, uh um, so when the children were little you you were a mother and housewife at home?

GETEK: Yeah, that's right.

MINGO: And were you involved in the things in the neighborhood? What was it like?

GETEK: Well it was pretty hard because when you've got, when he works at nighttime it made it a little harder for me to keep kids still, you know how kids are...

MINGO: Right.

GETEK: So there was a little problem there but I made different meals because when he got up he would need breakfast.

MINGO: Your husband?

GETEK: Yeah, so I'd take care of the kids later on in school...

MINGO: So he worked a lot at night, oh. What hours did he have to go in? All night long?

GETEK: Well no, they did. Because his first job was grinding the rails. He had to grind the rails where there were some, for the streetcars.

MINGO: Oh, I see, grinding the rails to clean them off.

GETEK: Yes. For the knickknacks and everything.

MINGO: Oh, did they have to do that daily?

GETEK: At midnight. Oh yeah. There were different, uh rails...

MINGO: Yeah. Right.

GETEK: So yeah, that was his first job with the trans...(inaudible).

MINGO: [Inaudible]...to do at night, of course. Yeah. Right. Yeah, yeah. Ok, and then he moved to being a driver or did he do both?

GETEK: After he got to be a driver he didn't have to do that anymore.

MINGO: Oh, so then he worked more daytime hours I would imagine.

GETEK: Right (inaudible)

MINGO: Yeah. I'm sure. I'm sure. Uh—I'm like, do drivers have favorite trolleys or are they all the same to them?

GETEK: They had different rides—routes—you know, to go... he was on Mt. Pleasant route too, but...

MINGO: But I mean the actual machine, the trolley, did you get attached to one like you might like your old car or...

GETEK: Well, not really.

MINGO: Not particularly.

GETEK: No.

MINGO: Just whatever came... now did he buy a trolley at one time?

GETEK: Yeah. We were on a farm.

MINGO: So you stayed on that farm in Virginia. You have a... where is that farm?

GETEK: Fifteen miles from Fredericksburg, Virginia.

MINGO: Near Fredericksburg. And you had a trolley there?

GETEK: Yeah. Two busses too.

MINGO: Oh my goodness! You have a private museum. (Laughing.)

GETEK: Oh, yeah, yeah. That's for sure.

MINGO: So some of your family still lives on that farm?

GETEK: No.

MINGO: No.

GETEK: (Inaudible) I lost two brothers—this fellow—and my other brother is behind me—two siblings (Inaudible) me and my sister. There was ten of us.

MINGO: There were ten children on a farm near Fredericksburg.

GETEK: Right... well, my mother was married twice.

MINGO: Oh. So and, when did you leave that farm? At what age?

GETEK: Oh, well, when I got married. Yeah.

MINGO: Oh, ok, so you married and then moved to Arlington?

GETEK: Yeah.

MINGO: So you went to school in Fredericksburg yourself?

GETEK: Well the town is called Woodford.

MINGO: Oh, ok. Woodford.

GETEK: Woodford, VA. It's still called Woodford.

MINGO: Oh.

GETEK: Post office.

MINGO: So, and was your husband from that area too?

GETEK: Yeah, he's from some miles difference.

MINGO: Oh.

GETEK: This place called Welsh.

MINGO: Ok. And so you were married there and then moved up here.

GETEK: No, I was married up here. I came to work up here.

MINGO: Oh, ok.

GETEK: I came to work at the Torpedo Factory.

MINGO: Oh, ok, so tell me about getting this job at the Torpedo Factory.

GETEK: Well, when I lost my father I came to stay with my mother because she took it very hard. My father was never sick and he passed when he was a young man—49 years old—looked like he got a heart attack or something. And she took it really hard. So I came and stayed with her then after that. I came looking for a job and got a job at the Torpedo Factory. When the war broke out they had taken all the men and they needed women so bad so we would work and, you know... but we used to go home, my sister and I she worked at Ft. Belvoir, and we used to go every weekend and check on my mother, see what she needed for the household. Because my brother was up in New Jersey. He was working in Picatinny—where they made ammunitions—my brother next to me...

MINGO: Ah, he was doing it in an ammunitions factory. Oh.

GETEK: So...

MINGO: And that, now what kind of requirement was there for that job at the Torpedo Factory?

GETEK: Well, really that (laughing) know how to use a screwdriver is all I can say... put the parts together...

MINGO: (Laughing) So...

GETEK: We'd each get a set amount of work to do. We each brought maybe like three or five people to the group. And then next we'd have a list in order to put the things together.

MINGO: It was a regular factory kind of thing where you had a certain task... and that was part of the Torpedo.

GETEK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It was fun really.

MINGO: Uh, fun in what way?

GETEK: We got along so... everybody, you know, just got together... we loved the job so well I mean we got good comments about our jobs and everything else, so it made it good for you.

MINGO: At what age were you when you took that job?

GETEK: Let's see... I got married when I was 29... an old maid (both laughing). I guess I was about 27, I'll say.

MINGO: Ok, so that was also before you were married.

GETEK: Oh yeah, it was definitely.

MINGO: But you knew your husband, because...

GETEK: Oh yeah, because his mother always wanted me to be her daughter-in-law. In those times they used to pick women for their sons. (laughing)

MINGO: Really?

GETEK: That's true!

MINGO: Yeah. Some countries still do I think.

GETEK: Yes. Yeah, but it lasted so I think it was ok, it was ok with him too.

(Inaudible)

MINGO: Congratulations.

GETEK: June the 22nd it was 58.

MINGO: 58 years...

GETEK: Yeah.

MINGO: Wonderful. So the Torpedo Factory... so while you were doing this work you could talk, I guess. So that was part of the fun.

GETEK: Yeah, right.

MINGO: Did you have, um, did you have to wear any special clothing?

GETEK: Oh yes. As I told you we had the shoes with some kind of piece of leather (inaudible) in case anything fell and the pants while you were working... pants, you know, you couldn't go in there with, you know...

MINGO: You couldn't wear your street clothes

GETEK: No no no.

MINGO: And then you had to take those things off...

GETEK: Oh yeah.

MINGO: And leave them there for cleaning, you didn't take them home, those clothes.

GETEK: This I don't recall right now, but I think we took them home. There was grease, there was grease, you know?

MINGO: Yeah, oh I see. Of course, of course. Um, so what part of the torpedo did you work on?

GETEK: The um, I think it was the head.

MINGO: Did you ever see the finished work, the finished...

GETEK: Oh yeah. They had them, yeah.

MINGO: So you could tell what your part was.

GETEK: Yeah, yeah.

MINGO: And how many did they turn out at a time?

GETEK: Well, I guess when they needed them real bad. The Japanese and all the people that we had problems with.

MINGO: So you don't know exactly how many a day, but there were a lot.

GETEK: No, no. It took quite a few people to put one of those things together.

MINGO: About how many? How many people worked there?

GETEK: So many groups.

MINGO: Could you guess how many worked there?

GETEK: No no. (Inaudible)

MINGO: Did you work shifts?

GETEK: No no (Inaudible)

MINGO: Yeah. And there was just that one shift that you worked, they didn't do round the clock?

GETEK: Yeah yeah.

MINGO: So uh gosh, now we have a great deal of security with anything connected with the government. Did you have a lot of security there?

GETEK: No way.

MINGO: No? Not at all.

GETEK: We had a lot of guards there walking around, but nothing like that.

MINGO: Just a guard doing the duty. Was there any background check then on you that you know?

GETEK: Well, not to my knowledge. I'm still laughing at this one. When I applied for my job at Woody's I would have to be fingerprinted.

MINGO: Oh! You had to be fingerprinted for Woody's but you didn't have to be fingerprinted for the Torpedo Factory. One would hardly take a torpedo home! (Laughing)

GETEK: I guess maybe that was the reason.

MINGO: Yeah. And how long did you work there?

GETEK: Where?

MINGO: At the Torpedo Factory?

GETEK: Three years.

MINGO: Three years. And then they closed it up after that?

GETEK: They were gradually laying off people (inaudible).

MINGO: So that was a major effort for that three years and then that was it.

GETEK: Yeah.

MINGO: Alright. Did you ever then have any contact with your work with what went on with the torpedoes, or?

GETEK: No.

MINGO: Not particularly. Now at that time was your husband, was he still working for the trolley?

GETEK: No he was not. He was working on construction work, he built a road in Arlington.

MINGO: Oh, ok.

GETEK: He worked on the road construction before he went into the transit, yeah.

MINGO: And tell me your maiden name please.

GETEK: Latka [spells it].

MINGO: Ok, Latka. Do you have a middle name?

GETEK: Christine.

MINGO: Spell that please.

GETEK: C-H-R-I-S-T-I-N-E.

MINGO: Thank you. Now, you told me at one point your husband also worked for, was in the Army.

GETEK: Pardon me?

MINGO: Your husband was in the Army...?

GETEK: Oh yeah, yeah.

MINGO: Yes, you showed me his discharge papers, right. And what did he do in the Army?

GETEK: He was a mechanic for the B-17s.

MINGO: And that was somewhere near here?

GETEK: No, he worked in, was stationed in Hendrick's Field in Orlando, Florida.

MINGO: Oh really? Uh, how long was he down there?

GETEK: Oh, I couldn't tell you exactly. Maybe about, I think maybe three years.

MINGO: Was that after you were married?

GETEK: Before.

MINGO: This was also before you were married.

GETEK: Before.

MINGO: Ok. And then once you got into the job with the trolleys, yeah. Well, my goodness, in that length of time on Capitol Hill it was his job that drew you to come and work, and live here.

GETEK: Well, yes. The children then they went to the high schools that are here, and then of course they went to college, went out of the state.

MINGO: He went to college...

GETEK: Out of state.

MINGO: In um.

GETEK: Well, one of them went to oh, the state of Washington, the state of Houston, Texas, where he got his degrees. He has a B.S., he's got a Master's, and he's got a Ph.D. My youngest son. My oldest son went to George Mason; he's got a degree in, uh, Marketing. Christine went to (inaudible) and she got a degree in Special Ed.

MINGO: Do they live here now?

GETEK: George lives in Burke, Virginia, Christine lives in Annandale, and my youngest one lives in the Eastern Shore in Virginia.

MINGO: Ok, so we have Christine and George and...

GETEK: Tim.

MINGO: Tim. Ok.

GETEK: Yeah.

(Inaudible).

GETEK: Oh, and he called me last night there's 20 of the club members they're going to Myrtle Beach next week.

MINGO: Oh.

GETEK: So you know what I told him? I said he better watch out for Jeannie [ed: Hurricane Jeanne].

MINGO: Yes.

GETEK: Because it looks like she's going to hit that part of the state again.

MINGO: That's right. Now, you were here, uh, when the children were in school here, uh, during, say, like the time of the riots. That's when you told them the neighborhood changed a lot at that time. Yeah, '68 and after, right.

GETEK: Right.

MINGO: What percentage of your neighbors moved away do you think?

(Inaudible)

MINGO: How did you stay?

GETEK: My husband was working here.

MINGO: His job. Of course his job.

GETEK: And the kids went to high school, Carroll High School, and Christine went down on East Capitol Street, so it was so close for the kids to go, so...

MINGO: And you said, you weren't really fearful, the children went on walking to school...

GETEK: Yeah.

MINGO: You had a different attitude from those people who up and left.

GETEK: Yeah.

MINGO: And certainly.

GETEK: I sure did. I used to remind them (inaudible) may they rest in peace they're all gone now... I hear I lost my mother and lost my father (inaudible) seven in August and my husband lost all his buddies. I think he's got one buddy in Wisconsin that he was in the service with. Ninety-four is a good age.

MINGO: He's 94, yes, yes, yes it is.

GETEK: His sickness is getting a hold of him. (Phone ringing.) And I have a problem with him taking his medications, that's the bad... so the doctor called me—I was so surprised that he called me. He said, you know what you do? Put his pills in his soup or his dessert.

MINGO: Oh ok.

(Inaudible).

MINGO: We don't need to turn that over yet. During the time you lived here on the Hill, did you go out much? Did you have favorite places to—restaurants?

GETEK: Well, something now and then. More or less the kids we used to make the barbeque and we used to go there. But I tell you, my husband didn't like crowds, more or less.

MINGO: So you didn't do that—did the neighbors get together at that time?

GETEK: Well, look at the, more or less, they're young people now I guess they don't want to be a part of old people.

MINGO: Well, that's now, but when your children were young...

GETEK: Well, yes, well we had like picnics we used to have church picnics, we used to have a bazaar or something like that.

MINGO: Ah, ok. Never at the church.

GETEK: At the school...

MINGO: Holy Comforter, over on East Capitol.

GETEK: Yeah.

MINGO: So now, but, you say, how has the neighborhood changed since your children grew up?

GETEK: Well it's strange because as I say now they're young people coming in, more or less elderly people they're all packed up and all gone, the house I look here they're all gone they're all dead. I mean they were with me when I was here. There is a whole new generation coming in.

MINGO: New younger generation. Now these houses all have porches. Do people spend much time out on their porches in a neighborly way?

GETEK: To tell the truth. These young people, both the mother and the father now work, they take their kids to the nursery, their small ones, I guess that's where they take them—the rest, they take them to school. So all these houses up here are empty. Maggie is retired...

MINGO: Next door.

GETEK: And the rest of the people are all out working.

MINGO: They're working, they're empty during the day because people are all out working, their children...

GETEK: Bring home, then come home and cook dinner, I guess. Then get ready for bed.

MINGO: So it's very, very different now. So then on the weekends, are there things that go on on the weekend?

GETEK: Well some of them stay around, once in a blue moon they'll be around. But most of the time they go visiting or shopping. They take the kids and go.

MINGO: When you said there was a little triangle park across the street from you, do you have a neighborhood function there every once in a while?

GETEK: Well, we have had a yard sale, a flea sale.

MINGO: Oh, a flea market.

GETEK: Once a year.

MINGO: Just once a year you do that.

GETEK: But that's a neighborhood get together . . .

MINGO: You bring your stuff you want to get rid of, make money on it. They do something for the school, one of the schools there, up there, donate money to...

GETEK: (Music playing) It's my anniversary, 50th anniversary.

MINGO: Oh! That clock, how lovely.

GETEK: And the poor soul that give it to me, she's dead. Fifty-four year old.

MINGO: Oh dear.

GETEK: Colon cancer, yeah. Now I told you about that funeral?

MINGO: Uh huh.

GETEK: There was the son. He had cancer.

MINGO: Oh my goodness.

GETEK: Thirty-seven. Isn't it something?

MINGO: So after, yes, it's hard, I know. Losing people young and old.

GETEK: It's hard on the parent when you have to bury young children. That's something.

MINGO: Yes it is.

GETEK: My son, George, he has two sons and he had to bury them too.

MINGO: Oh my goodness.

GETEK: This little fellow, he had meningitis at six months.

MINGO: Oh.

GETEK: There was nothing they could do for him.

MINGO: Ooohhh.

GETEK: Because he was too young. This little young fellow, he had a heart defect. He lived only two years. Talk about something sad, and even today... George, yeah.

MINGO: Did he have other children?

GETEK: His daughter, yeah. Katherine, yeah. She's the one who graduated from Princeton.

MINGO: She is certainly, she is certainly a blessing, isn't she?

GETEK: She misses her brother so bad. She was like a little old mother to him, she used to take care of her mother she's so sweet the way she carried on with him.

MINGO: I'm very sorry to hear about that. The, um, now when the children were here of course they had playmates and friends in the neighborhood...

GETEK: Sure.

MINGO: And, uh,

GETEK: They passed beach balls in the park.

MINGO: And you were involved in Holy Comforter, the parish.

(Inaudible)

MINGO: Are you still? Has it changed also?

GETEK: (Inaudible). All black now.

MINGO: And so are you...

GETEK: Well I'm still a member but more or less I go to St. Dominic's now.

MINGO: Alright.

GETEK: I still support it...

MINGO: Yes.

GETEK: But I go to St. Dominic's.

MINGO: So you don't have any parish activities in particular now.

GETEK: No, it's so hard because (inaudible) I can't leave him for too long.

MINGO: So you can't leave your husband for very long. Well, do you, um, were you involved with, uh, neighborhood activities or school activities?

GETEK: Well, of course the PTA, I used to go for the kids when they had it.

MINGO: Oh. Now I know that you have, you have something of a garden now, you're growing some vegetables. Uh, have you always done that? Have you...

GETEK: We used to have a beautiful garden in the country, in Virginia.

MINGO: Oh out on the farm.

GETEK: I used to can, can, can.

MINGO: What did you grow out there?

GETEK: Well, we had the fruit trees. Another thing, we had apples—aw, we had beautiful trees that had apples. And then of course we had a couple pears but they didn't survive that well. We had potatoes, onions, tomatoes, cucumbers, you name it, we had it. String beans, green beans, pumpkins, squash. Oh yeah, we used to really have a garden.

MINGO: Now that, that was when you were a youngster though.

GETEK: Well no, when we had the kids. I used to take the kids down with me.

MINGO: Oh somebody was still on the farm then.

GETEK: No, nobody was on the farm. We had a mobile down there.

MINGO: Oh, ok. And you'd go down and...

GETEK: They're still down there.

MINGO: How did you manage that, to get the crops going when you were living up here?

GETEK: Well we spent a couple days there, like go late Friday night come back Sunday night. Yeah, yeah.

MINGO: And you kept all that garden going—wow.

GETEK: Yeah, yeah.

MINGO: Was it just sufficient for your family or did you, what did you do with that?

GETEK: Well as I say, we do a lot of canning, I really do.

MINGO: For yourself?

GETEK: Yeah. Then later on I've got to put it, freeze it, start freezing stuff when it would go a little better process.

MINGO: Easier. So now here you just grow a few things.

GETEK: Yeah. I have several tomato plants, two green pepper plants, one cucumber plant. Yeah.

MINGO: And the other day you told me you were planting turnip seed.

GETEK: Yeah, we get some turnips green for Thanksgiving dinner.

MINGO: Oh, that would be a, a winter crop, right?

GETEK: Yeah.

MINGO: Have you always had a little (inaudible) garden up here too?

GETEK: Yeah, just a few little plants.

MINGO: Do you think most of your neighbors have done that?

GETEK: No, no, no, nobody, no.

MINGO: No? Even during the War, when victory gardens... they didn't have victory gardens?

GETEK: No, no.

MINGO: Huh. That's interesting.

GETEK: Yeah, but where my daughter lived, they really went up big for victory gardens. They're some nice gardens.

MINGO: Where was that?

GETEK: That was in Annandale, Virginia.

MINGO: Oh, Annandale. But people here on the Hill didn't get into the victory gardens.

GETEK: Somewhere in the area they had a little place there where a couple people had little gardens. Anybody else... I guess it's just visiting and taking care of the family and working, you know?

MINGO: Uh huh. So do you grow other, did you grow ornamental plants also?

GETEK: Well, flowers...

MINGO: Uh, huh. So you enjoy gardening?

GETEK: I do, I really do.

MINGO: Now this space across the street. Has there ever been a community garden over there?

GETEK: Well, that was just there maybe three or four people. It was like a lot. Just like my neighbor across the way, she's got a little, it was a little lot. She's renting it, I'm sure she is. She's an older woman so too (inaudible) she has a nice little garden.

MINGO: Oh, ok.

GETEK: She hasn't been here for long, I guess she's been here about 20 years.

MINGO: That's not a really long time.

GETEK: She's pretty good at that, too.

MINGO: Oh. Now you remember having lived here that long, what, what stands out in your mind as being a really special time here, or special times, probably?

GETEK: Well, I just stay, stay, stay, stay at home, I guess. I don't know. Take care of the kids. Like I say, my husband is the type of person, he, when he want to stay home, "you go, I stay home."

MINGO: Like, for instance, at the end of the war, were there celebrations that you, you got involved in, at all? Tell me, after you left the Torpedo Factory, you must have been out looking for another job.

GETEK: Yeah, well, I went to Safeway.

MINGO: You went and worked at Safeway. The one over here on...

GETEK: In Virginia.

MINGO: In Virginia. Oh, ok, and what did you do there?

GETEK: Checker. Bag checker. And after that I applied in Woody's.

MINGO: In Woody's downtown? Yeah. What was it like working there?

GETEK: Oh that was a family store, like I told you before, they don't have department stores like Woody's had. They were really nice people to work for.

MINGO: They were nice to work for. Because it was a family.

GETEK: It was a family store. If you couldn't get something the clerk would go ahead and see if they could call the other stores to get it for you. Now, they don't bother looking at you.

MINGO: Now, were there lots of clerks then, in the store?

GETEK: Yeah, yeah.

MINGO: Did you have a particular area that you worked in?

GETEK: No. No.

MINGO: You could work anywhere in the store.

GETEK: That's right. I worked in the greatest place you'd want to be in at Christmas time—toys.

MINGO: Oh, yes. (Laughing)

GETEK: Man, it was a madhouse! Believe me, yeah.

MINGO: Oh, my goodness. And what kind of toys were popular then?

GETEK: Oh Fisher Price, Playschool. But now they have this new fandangled technology.

MINGO: (Laughing). So that was about when you were working there was about in the 60s?

GETEK: More or less in the 70s.

MINGO: 70s. Yeah, yeah. So, uh, so how long did you work at Woody's?

MINGO: Fourteen years. Before I retired from there.

MINGO: You retired from there. And then they closed when?

GETEK: When... bankruptcy. 70, 80. 79, 80? I've been retired since 80, 80, that's 24 years I've been retired, so.

MINGO: Ok, so they were still open in 80, you retired very closely after that. Were there special benefits to you for working there?

GETEK: Well, we did have the health insurance, and we had the discount, you know?

MINGO: On items there.

GETEK: After you retired, they dropped our insurance within (inaudible) the insurance...

MINGO: Oh, so...

GETEK: It was bad for a lot of people.

MINGO: You couldn't keep it up yourself, huh?

GETEK: That's right.

MINGO: Well, now, you're still living on the Hill. What did you like best about it?

GETEK: Well, it's a nice neighborhood.

MINGO: Yeah.

GETEK: People get along, people get along well. We don't have so much crime yet, you know, as some parts of the DC, it's bad.

MINGO: Have you done any traveling from, from, from uh...

GETEK: Well I haven't done much here, but in the early years, well my sister and I would visit my son he used to be stationed in the state of Washington. I'd visit him in the state of Washington and we'd visit him in Columbus, Oh, uh, also, New York.

MINGO: Oh. How did you travel so to Washington?

GETEK: Train.

MINGO: By train, ok. Um.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

MINGO: Ok, uh, this is side two of the interview with Pauline Getek. And that's spelled G-E-T-I-K, right?

GETEK: E-K.

MINGO: G-E-T-E-K, thank you. Thank you. Uh, you grew up on a farm that had—now has a trolley car and two busses on it (laughing). Are those made over into any kind of sleeping place? They're just for viewing.

GETEK: Yes we had. We had a house there too but of course my sister-in-law had it torn down because she didn't want to spend money in renovating.

MINGO: Oh, ok.

GETEK: It was, it was sold. George Washington slept there one time.

MINGO: Really? In that house?

GETEK: In the house I was born in, the house I was born in.

MINGO: The house you were born in? My goodness. So, how old was the house?

GETEK: It was real old.

MINGO: Yeah. And, uh, did you ever look into substantiating that? Of course, now the house is gone, isn't it?

GETEK: It's gone. It's torn down, yes. It's torn down, yeah.

MINGO: Would that have been when he was on some sort of a campaign, in the Revolution, you suppose, or?

GETEK: Mmmmm. I don't think so.

MINGO: I guess in Fredericksburg he could have been there for lots of reasons.

GETEK: Fredericksburg has a lot of history to it.

MINGO: Yeah. You're right. Lots of history.

GETEK: Yeah, you're right. Yeah.

MINGO: Yeah. That's interesting. But you never made anything special about the house's being a George Washington spot? Now, how many children were in the family?

GETEK: Oh, in the family there's 10.

MINGO: Ten, okay. And you lived off of the farm? You grew your own food and...

GETEK: Cows and pigs and chickens!

MINGO: Really...

GETEK: Yes. Oh yeah.

MINGO: All just for your own use or did you...sell milk or anything like that?

(Inaudible)

MINGO: Ah, so it was completely, completely, uh, self-sufficient.

GETEK: Like I told you I didn't like the milk.

MINGO: You didn't like the milk? Why? (Laughing.) The fresh milk out of the cows? (Inaudible.) Did you separate the cream out from the milk?

GETEK: Oh yeah, we used to make the whole... butter... oh yeah, oh yeah. Churned it.

MINGO: You had butter churners, that's right.

GETEK: Yeah, yeah.

MINGO: And you didn't like the milk even when it was cold?

GETEK: Well, well it was a little better. Yeah, it was a little better. But fresh milk, no way, no way.

MINGO: Oh, why?

GETEK: Because the cows eat this raw, this onion and it looks like it penetrating into the milk.

MINGO: Really? The milk actually tasted like that.

GETEK: Yeah.

MINGO: Ah. Well, onion milk is a strange thing to eat, all right. (Laughing). But, uh, did you milk cows yourself?

GETEK: Yes.

MINGO: Ok.

GETEK: I kicked the bucket of milk one time—the reason was why—one of these big horseflies came and I guess it set on the cow and the cow—with its leg—threw the bucket of milk up.

(Inaudible).

MINGO: So out of the ten of you did you all go to school?

GETEK: Oh yes.

MINGO: And how did you get to school?

GETEK: Well, we walked the first couple years, the first couple years we walked. And then finally they get buses.

MINGO: Oh, ok. How far did you have to walk?

GETEK: Well I'd say about two miles.

MINGO: About two miles.

GETEK: To me it seemed like more, sometimes it was so cold and raining.

MINGO: So you went in the cold and the rain and everything.

GETEK: One-room school.

MINGO: One-room school. With how many students?

GETEK: Well, I, would say approximately 60.

MINGO: Sixty? In a one-room school. How many teachers?

GETEK: One.

MINGO: Just one teacher for 60 children. So the children, did the children teach each other sometimes?

GETEK: Well yeah, they helped each other. Yeah.

MINGO: The older ones would teach the littler ones?

GETEK: Right, yeah.

MINGO: Oh my goodness. Are you in touch with some of those people? The ones that are still living.

GETEK: I think they're all gone.

MINGO: You think most of them are gone too, huh?

GETEK: To my knowledge. Yeah, yeah.

MINGO: And so did you go to high school here also?

GETEK: They built a new high school. When the buses came in.

MINGO: Oh, then you, then you went to high school.

GETEK: Yeah.

MINGO: Did you study beyond high school?

GETEK: No.

MINGO: So then you started working.

GETEK: Yeah.

MINGO: Oh. Was that your first job at the Torpedo Factory or did you do something before that?

GETEK: Well, no. My brothers were in New York at a restaurant, management at a restaurant. They took me up there and I was a waitress.

MINGO: Oh, ok.

GETEK: Yeah, I worked up there 11 years.

MINGO: Oh, I see. And uh, where in New York?

GETEK: New York City.

MINGO: Do you know what area?

GETEK: Well, Lexington.

MINGO: Oh, ok.

GETEK: 23rd Street, yeah. It was a big restaurant named "Exchange for Fame," yeah. And then I (clears throat) then I worked in a private restaurant...

MINGO: A what kind of restaurant?

GETEK: You know, it's not a local, just myself...

MINGO: Oh, a private restaurant.

GETEK: Yeah. And uh, I still got my friend then, she was a cashier still living in New Jersey. We keep in contact with her, I keep in contact with her. Yeah.

MINGO: Oh. So the two of you had your own restaurant?

GETEK: Well, no. What the restaurant we worked for, it was not like Exchange for Fame where they had, about, seven or 10 restaurants.

MINGO: Oh.

GETEK: They started with one.

MINGO: Just one, ok. So the Exchange for Fame had several different places, several different locations.

GETEK: The Exchange for Fame, yeah—down Broadway and different places, yeah.

MINGO: Oh, ok. Was that kind of a cafeteria?

GETEK: The Exchange for Fame was more or less, uh, waitress.

MINGO: Oh, ok. Why was it called Exchange for Fame?

GETEK: There, that's a good, good question. And it might be crazy too—you used to get your meal, and after you'd eat your meal, you'd go up to the cashier and tell her what you had.

MINGO: Oh really, after you'd eaten? Isn't that interesting?

GETEK: They got away with—some of them got away with quite a little food, I think. It was crazy isn't it?

MINGO: Why was it like that?

GETEK: I can't answer that. My last brother just died, just a year ago.

MINGO: For Heaven's sake, what an interesting way to do it.

GETEK: He was a manager for the store for a long, long time. Yeah, he retired (Inaudible)

MINGO: Very trusting.

GETEK: They had good food. They had the European cooks and boy—and could they cook.

MINGO: It wasn't a, a cafeteria. It was a high, it was a high, well-run and well-known restaurant.

GETEK: Well, some, some, some places they had it like that they'd get their food, sit down, and after you'd eaten go tell the cashier what you had.

(Laughing).

GETEK: To tell the truth, you could buy, too.

MINGO: Yep, so the other place you worked was, also had an owner that you... (inaudible)

GETEK: Excuse me. I was a waitress then.

MINGO: Uh huh.

GETEK: So I worked in the restaurant business for 11 years, yeah.

MINGO: Ok, ok. So what brought you down to the, to the Torpedo Factory?

GETEK: Well, like I say my mother was home alone.

MINGO: Oh, I see. That was the time with your mother.

GETEK: Yeah, yeah.

MINGO: And on the phone you, you say you still go on the weekends...

GETEK: Well, we used to go, we used to go, yeah. He [her husband] doesn't drive no more, and he's ailing.

MINGO: He's older now.

GETEK: He's got doctors there, so. But he's getting so he doesn't even want to go to the doctor's no more, so there's a big question there, you know.

MINGO: A big question, you say?

GETEK: Well, he doesn't want to go to the doctor's.

MINGO: Oh, it's hard for you. It's hard for you.

GETEK: It is, it is. It's really hard, some pressure on me too. And from that pressure I've got high blood pressure...

MINGO: Yeah, yeah.

GETEK: (Inaudible) calm me down. I just told the doctor—I said there's no way, I say I've got a full day of work with him.

MINGO: Yeah, yeah. Well that time on the farm that you were able to, your whole family was just able to stay there and take care of themselves from the farm.

GETEK: Yeah, well see more or less like my, my younger sister and I and the brother—but the other brother was working and the other brother, my half brothers were working (inaudible) so that gives us, you know, that we had to take care of Mom. I feel sorry for her because she didn't have the car either. She had to depend on people to bring her things, you know? But people were more sociable then—they'd ask her if she'd going to need any help, they would come and help, but today, even if you have money they ain't going to help.

MINGO: Oh.

GETEK: Those days are gone forever.

MINGO: You think in earlier years they were more helpful with each other.

GETEK: Oh yes, definitely. Yeah, yeah.

(Inaudible.)

MINGO: The people who worked, who lived here, you say the police and, uh?

GETEK: Polish.

MINGO: Polish, oh I'm sorry. So there was more of an ethnic group together at that point.

GETEK: Yeah, right. Right.

MINGO: So that made a big difference too...

GETEK: That's true.

MINGO: Some kind of celebration and now...

GETEK: Exactly, yeah. Yeah.

MINGO: (Inaudible) But, uh, it does seem to be renewing, and uh. So, but uh, this has been a good place for you to live...

GETEK: Well like I say it served it for the purpose of my husband... you go down 95 you see some of these poor souls going down the road, when do they come home for dinner?

MINGO: Yeah.

GETEK: Traffic's so bad.

MINGO: Yeah, so he could just walk. Isn't that wonderful?

GETEK: Exactly, yeah. You're right about that.

MINGO: That also made him handy for emergencies.

GETEK: Where they knew where to go.

MINGO: Yes, yes. That was handy to them.

GETEK: Yeah, they sure did.

MINGO: And did you use the trolley car yourself?

GETEK: Oh yeah, I used to go wherever with the kids.

(Inaudible)

GETEK: Oh they couldn't wait 'til Sunday to go down there.

MINGO: What kind of things could you do out there at that park?

GETEK: Merry-go-rounds, run around, play around, hot dogs, oh yeah. Yeah.

MINGO: Any activities particularly for you?

GETEK: Well more... keep an eye on my kids.

MINGO: (Laughing). (Inaudible.) That's wonderful. Oh. Well, I think your, your work at the Torpedo Factory. I was just thinking, uh, what did the women you worked with look like? I mean were there (inaudible) what were fashions like then?

GETEK: Oh my goodness. Pointy toes, I think, like they're coming out with now, like new style...

MINGO: Those pointy-toed shoes?

GETEK: Oh my goodness, I hate them. Boy if you didn't have a corn, you got a corn!

MINGO: Oh, right. And about hairstyles, do you remember what hairstyles were then?

GETEK: Mine, I always kept my hair pretty short; I never had my hair long.

MINGO: Oh, oh oh. And most people you had a good time when you were together, but did you keep in touch with them after a while?

GETEK: There were a few of them. Well, like I say they died young for some reason. I don't know. Oh yeah.

MINGO: Ah, well. And that connected you, the Torpedo Factory, I suppose.

GETEK: My sister-in-law is the only one still with us. She was 87 just this month, uh, so. And I think she's got two friends that are still around that worked at the Torpedo Factory. But everyone that I know—that she knows—they're all gone. Yeah.

MINGO: Did you have parties together, that sort of thing?

GETEK: Not really.

MINGO: You saw each other at the job... yeah, yeah.

GETEK: Yeah, right. Yeah.

MINGO: And what, what, here on the Hill, even now, what would you say is the best, that you think is the best thing about living up here?

GETEK: Well, it's just a nice place, that's all I can say. It's a nice place.

MINGO: Uh huh. And have you been in this house also for 49 years?

GETEK: Pardon me?

MINGO: You've been in this house for 49 years?

GETEK: This house for 49 years, in May. In May.

MINGO: In this particular house. Wow.

GETEK: (Inaudible.) Yes, we moved here in, uh, December and my youngest son, he was born here. The one that lives on the Eastern shore, he was born here.

MINGO: Oh, ok.

GETEK: And the other, other two kids were born in Alexandria, old Alexandria...

MINGO: Here's a picture of Tim. As a boy and graduating from college and uh... he comes and takes you out to the store, you told me.

GETEK: Yeah, he takes me to the store, he takes me to visit him. When I go visit him, my daughter comes to stay with her father. He can't be left alone, you know.

MINGO: Oh, right right. So um, so you go down and...

GETEK: It's a different world from here. You don't hear the fire engines, you don't hear the police sirens. It's so peaceful. You think you're in another world that's how peaceful it is out there. And nice people, he's got nice neighbors, very nice neighbors.

MINGO: So they're, so you enjoy those trips.

GETEK: Oh, I sure do. They've got a pig roast next Saturday, yeah, next Saturday.

MINGO: Oh, ok. Will you be going?

GETEK: I had to turn them down. I have an eye examination. May have surgery. And I think that's what he's going to talk about.

MINGO: Well that's a shame you have to miss that special time with your son.

GETEK: Pork is very heavy too. I've got to be very careful too with that many. I've got to be very careful with some of that stuff. But he says it's excellent. Because he's attended them every year. It's for a good cause, the Fire Department.

MINGO: Oh, ok. It's a fundraiser. Yeah, wonderful. Well, I certainly thank you for taking the time for this interview.

GETEK: I hope I did some good.

MINGO: Yeah. You certainly have. And it's a pleasure to meet you and talk with you. I really appreciate you being able to do this wonderful interview so we can keep some of these memories of things, of life on the Hill.

END OF INTERVIEW