



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK  
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

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**Interview with Maureen Nolan**

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

**ECK:** Today is May 31<sup>st</sup> and my name is Beth Eck and I am here with Ms. Maureen Nolan in her home on A Street NE and you were just about to tell me when you first arrived in Washington in '61.

**NOLAN:** It was at least 75 percent black and for some reason I didn't feel threatened by it or out of place. I don't know why I, I suppose I should have, but I didn't. And my brother-in-law had a friend who worked for the unions and he and his wife used to come to Washington every so often and they'd always invite me out to dinner. And they used to say, "Why don't you move?" I said, "Where to?" Because I liked, I like Capitol Hill. I must tell you when somebody asked me that, I wasn't long here at the time, where I lived and I said "on Capitol Hill," they said "where in Capitol Hill?" I said, "208 Mass." And they said, "Is that north or south, on the south side or the north side?" "That's the north side." "Then you're not in Capitol Hill." Capitol Hill was only from Massachusetts Avenue to C Street SE.

**ECK:** Everybody's got a different definition.

**NOLAN:** That was 1961. And then, as far as Seventh Street, it didn't go any farther, that was Capitol Hill in those days. And, as far as I was concerned, that's OK but I remember being at the National—I think it was the Warner Theater—and I wanted to get a cab home. And I wanted a cab, I said, "Northeast." "I'm not going Northeast." Three different cabs. So somebody said, "Don't say 'Northeast'. Say 'Capitol Hill' in future." So that was the kind of, there was that.

**ECK:** And that was when you first moved here?

**NOLAN:** That's right. St. Joseph's [Catholic Church] was integrated from way back, from the time Cardinal O'Boyle had come to Washington which was the 1940s. He insisted that there'd be no more of this, backs for the back of the church for the blacks or that. I didn't feel out of place and, you know, other people thought, well, you know you're in the wrong area, you shouldn't be there. And those days you could get a house for five thousand dollars, you know?

**ECK:** Wow.

**NOLAN:** Yeah. I was sharing with another woman. I paid 65 dollars a month.

**ECK:** That was in 208?

**NOLAN:** That's right. It was a big apartment, two bedroom apartment, big rooms, big living room, not a very big dining room but big enough to hold, you could seat eight. Not much room to go around it but...and we paid two dollars extra for the phone because everybody didn't have their own. They had a

phone for the central desk downstairs and they would put the calls through here. And you paid about two dollars a month for that.

**ECK:** So the connection to the main...

**NOLAN:** To the main, yes. Of course, that would be—if you had long distance calls, they'd be extra. We took our laundry to the corner. You know where Peabody School is? Well on that corner now, there's a big, new big building there. There used to be a place to wash your clothes there, wash and dry. So we used to take our laundry there.

**ECK:** And was that self-service, or you took your laundry there?

**NOLAN:** We took it in and did it ourselves. You couldn't have air conditioning because the electricity hadn't been upgraded in 1966 it was so hot, I couldn't stand it, you know. I used to go to seven o'clock Masses at St. Joseph's and go to work. I was working at the USCC, United States Catholic Conference. They were on 12<sup>th</sup> Street NW at the time and. I'd go to seven o'clock Mass and then go into work. And one day I saw this man who I knew, Mr. Davis. And he was moving away from the fan and I was moving to it. And I said, "You're moving away from the fan?" He said, "Yes, I can't stand them." And I said, "Because you're living in an air conditioned building." He was living at 305 C Street and I said, "Is there any vacancy? Have you any vacancies?" He says, "They always have a waiting list but you could call Mrs. Hackrotte and tell her I told you to call." So I called Mrs. Hackrotte, she was the manager. She said, "No, we have no vacancies." And I said, "Well, I didn't think you would but Mr. Davis said to call." She said, "Do you know Mr. Davis?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Well come and see me." She had three people on the waiting list. I got two—the choice of two apartments.

**ECK:** Good for you!

**NOLAN:** But if I hadn't known him I wouldn't.

**ECK:** But it was all because of the air conditioning that you moved.

**NOLAN:** That's right. I moved there, I was there from, it was five years the first place. Then I was 16 years at 305 C Street. And they were converting into condominiums. That the rents were going up, you know, the rents—when the rents the people are paying now. In those days we thought we were paying an awful lot but we weren't really.

**ECK:** When was it switched over to condominiums?

**NOLAN:** 1978 I think. Steve Cymrot bought the building and it hadn't been put up—you know it hadn't been publicized that it was going to be for sale so that, there was no tenants' organization or anything like that, you know? The people could have bought it, you know? But anyway we fought it for a while. Then what happened was I saw a house for sale for \$75,000 near where a friend of mine lived on Ninth Street and I called her and she wasn't home. Her husband said he'd tell her when she came in so in the meantime I called the number that they had and they said, well, someone had already gone to settlement on the house because, you know, for \$75,000 even in 1982 that was a steal, you know?

**ECK:** Yeah!

**NOLAN:** But, so when she, she came. She said, "You know, you don't want a house." And I said, "Well, I don't want"—I didn't want to buy at 305 because they were all efficiencies. Well there were a couple of one bedroom apartments but I really, you know, they were asking too much I thought. So anyway, I went to see Dale Denton and, this was on the market and I bought it for \$48,000.

**ECK:** Really? So this building is all condominiums?

**NOLAN:** No, it's co-op.

**ECK:** OK.

**NOLAN:** But I really didn't want a house. I'm too lazy to take care of it.

**ECK:** It's a lot of work. I'm in a one bedroom too.

**NOLAN:** So then. I did not want to leave the Hill. Didn't want to leave St. Joseph's, I rather liked that church.

**ECK:** So what brought you to the Hill in the first place?

**NOLAN:** Well, I got a job at the USCC and a friend of mine saw this place advertised to share. So she called and found out that the woman was really good [noise on mike] oh sorry.

**ECK:** That's ok.

**NOLAN:** She was older but it was alright with me, so. She was a very nice lady from Alabama who worked for the Department of Defense and we got along fine.

**ECK:** How long did you live there?

**NOLAN:** Five years. Yes I said, if we had had air conditioning and if I had been comfortable, I would have been there for a lot longer, but it was just, you know. It was, because we were on the top floors, it never got cool, you know? And the next, you just like to get up and go to work.

**ECK:** Because work was air-conditioned?

**NOLAN:** Yes, right.

**ECK:** Did most buildings have air?

**NOLAN:** No they didn't. No they didn't. That was just new, that was coming in.

**ECK:** 305 C Street was window units air conditioning?

**NOLAN:** No, it was central air conditioning. That was a new building. It had only gone up a couple years before that. I remember seeing it going up. All that area, you know where the parking lot, the Senate parking lot is now? That was all apartment buildings and hotels.

**ECK:** Oh.

**NOLAN:** And the Hart Building, that was Schott's Alley and there were two or three apartment buildings there. Schott's Alley was a lot of small houses. You know those little, like you see in the courts. You know those.

**ECK:** The old servants' quarters?

**NOLAN:** That's right, yes.

**ECK:** So it was like that?

**NOLAN:** That's right.

**ECK:** Where were you before you came to Washington?

**NOLAN:** I was in Connecticut for a year. I worked for Travellers Insurance Company. I lived with my sister and her husband. She [was] the reason I came at all. I had no intention of staying in Washington, of staying in the U.S. I was supposed to stay for two years. My sister had a baby and she said she wanted me to be the sponsor for it so I said [yes]. But she said, you better get a permanent visa because you won't be able to see anything of the country and you can't afford to travel if you don't work here. Which was true.

**ECK:** So did you enter the lottery and get a...?

**NOLAN:** No no no. In those days it [a quota] wasn't filled ever. There was never a quota and, I mean there was a quota but it was never filled. So I went to the Embassy and applied and you had a health examination. If you had TB you didn't get in of course. I think, that was about the only thing that kept you out. And so I came, I was supposed to spend two years, so then I got this job and I thought, well, I'll be here for six months and then I'll go somewhere else. But you know, when you come to Washington for some reason, and especially 1961, it was just after Kennedy was elected and everything was on the up and up. It was an exciting place to be and, you know, compared to now, there was concerts on the—you remember? You probably remember those. Down on the waterfront? On the waterfront there was a concert every week too. You used to go down to that. And there was a band would be out on the barge.

**ECK:** I remember hearing about that.

**NOLAN:** And we had three or four, the Navy and the Army and the Marines. They were all there. And we'd go over there at night and it was, you know, different. And, I don't know, but everything was happening, it was very... Of course I didn't know what was going on with politics then. My friends primarily, that's all they talked about was politics and I didn't know what they were talking about. I said, why can't they talk about books or plays or something? You know, I'd know what was going on. But after a while you begin to know who's who, you know?

**ECK:** It's hard not to.

**NOLAN:** Yes. I remember the Monocle was the only restaurant that I remember. There were hotels, there were several hotels that you could go and eat there if you wanted to but the Monocle was the one place that we'd go and on the weekends we'd go drive to someplace. Down to Virginia or Maryland or somewhere away, you know?

**ECK:** To go to eat?

**NOLAN:** Yes. To go for the day and then you'd eat, you know? And down by where the Watergate is, there were two or three restaurants down there. I think there was, oh what was the name, I think it might have been the Watergate Restaurant. It was Pennsylvania Dutch food. They had those popovers, you know? That was their big thing. And then down on the Waterfront there was Hogates and, what was the other, Harrigans, which was a big student place, it was mostly. They'd ask you for...

**ECK:** Your ID?

**NOLAN:** Your ID, yes. Even though they knew...

**ECK:** So they carded you...

**NOLAN:** ...even though they knew, well I think they did it just to make us feel good, you know?

[Laughs]

**ECK:** Wow, Hogates was there for a long time.

**NOLAN:** Hogates and the, there was three of them. The Gangplank, Captain something, can't remember.

**ECK:** Oh yeah.

**NOLAN:** There were four we'd go to—you'd go to one one week and the other another. If you didn't go out of town, you know?

**ECK:** But there weren't many restaurants on the Hill, except for the Monocle?

**NOLAN:** The Monocle was the only one that I remember. I was trying to think, when you gave me this, and I read through it, and I cannot think of any but the Monocle.

**ECK:** Do you remember Sherrill's Bakery?

**NOLAN:** Oh yes.

**ECK:** I guess that really isn't considered a restaurant.

**NOLAN:** Yes. And they were so mean there. [Laughs]

**ECK:** They were.

**NOLAN:** We used to go there too. And there was Mike Palms. Mike Palms. Now I remember that one.

**ECK:** Where was that?

**NOLAN:** It was, I'm trying to think what was there now. I think it was about—

**ECK:** Wait, is that the one where Mr. Henry's is now?

**NOLAN:** No. I think it was on the other side. I don't think there's a restaurant there now. Or maybe, I remember going to Mike Palms. And further down there was a Hungarian one for a while. It didn't last very long. Can't remember the name of that one either. Between Third and Fourth Street on Pennsylvania. There were none of the Chinese restaurants there. There was one Chinese restaurant near Seventh, between Sixth and Seventh on the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue. It was very popular.

**ECK:** Is that the one that's still on the block where the Penn Theater is?

**NOLAN:** No, it's not. It was that block, but it's not there now.

**ECK:** OK. Because, Hine Junior High changed. Did that change when you were on the Hill? I know that they had built a new building. They switched, they had an old building and an old playground and they switched places of it? I don't know when that happened.

**NOLAN:** I don't remember.

**ECK:** That's more on the Southeast side so maybe that's, you were closer over to Peabody.

**NOLAN:** Yeah, uh huh.

**ECK:** Edmonds School is also in Northeast, isn't it?

**NOLAN:** Edmonds?

**ECK:** That was an elementary school. I can't remember where.

**NOLAN:** Stuart-Hobson's the one I remember, yeah, I remember that one. That's where we used to go to vote.

**ECK:** So, you came as a permanent resident and then, you became a citizen?

**NOLAN:** Yeah.

**ECK:** When did that happen?

**NOLAN:** 1965. Or was it 1966? 1966, early 1966. And then I worked. That was when all the big march, you know we had Martin Luther King march, but that was 1963 when we had all this. Kennedy assassination and all that. [Coughs] And.

**ECK:** Did you go to the funeral parade?

**NOLAN:** I and a friend went to walk, we said we'd wait until the crowd cleared so we wouldn't have to stand so long in line to get through the wait at the Capitol, you know? And we went at eight o'clock because we'd go over, I bet the crowd should have gone. Well, we went over and we waited and we waited and we waited [unclear] and she decided after three hours she couldn't take it anymore so she went home. And I said well I'll stay. And we walked, and we waited and it went all around Lincoln Park and back. And four o'clock in the morning...

**ECK:** Oh my gosh.

**NOLAN:** ...I got through, and got back at 4:30. And they hadn't gone to bed. They had stayed up watching, you know, there was news constantly. It was all the time. And then when, that Sunday I was on the corner of, you know, that corner at the very, going...you know, the first building where, you know the three Senate office buildings.

**ECK:** On Constitution Avenue?

**NOLAN:** Yes.

**ECK:** OK.

**NOLAN:** We were on, was waiting for the funeral to come, the hearse to go by there. And it was 12 o'clock. We were standing on the steps at that corner building.

**ECK:** Oh, so the Sewell-Belmont House?

**NOLAN:** No no no. Oh, not Constitution Avenue, it was...

**ECK:** On the Independence side.

**NOLAN:** Yes. And, they said Jack Ruby had shot, somebody had a radio on and you could hear the [static on mike]...I tell you it was something.

**ECK:** It was such a turbulent time.

**NOLAN:** It was. It was.

**ECK:** Do you remember where you were when you heard that Kennedy had been shot?

**NOLAN:** I was at work. Of course nobody did any work from then on.

**ECK:** Sure.

**NOLAN:** You know, I've been trying to think. We mustn't have had work the next day because I don't remember going to work the next day on the Monday. That was on Friday and Saturday. Saturday we had been invited to a friend's who was having an open house. I don't know what she was having, but it was kind of a wake time, do you know what I mean? There was about 20 people there and everybody was kind of mourning. It was like, you know, a death. But she decided we might as well go on, we'll, you know, as long as she had all this food and all and the rest, well why not have it. So we went and, but I don't remember going to work, on the Monday. I can't remember. I think we might have had the day off or something. I can't, I've been trying to think. I don't remember being at work. I remember watching the

John John saluting, so on, on television. So I don't know whether it was later or whether it was during that time it was happening. Because that's what everyone was, glued to their televisions, you know?

**ECK:** Yeah.

**NOLAN:** And then, the big march. Then we had, they had all these people come to Washington from, you know, they had, they were camped out on the Mall.

**ECK:** Oh that was the, there was a demonstration against poverty, when they built houses down on the Mall?

**NOLAN:** Yes. That must have been 1963 too, I think it was. Can't swear to that now. I remember that. I remember.

**ECK:** Did you go to any of the demonstrations? Or, did you participate, or did you watch?

**NOLAN:** I always went, so I could be counted, but I stayed on the outside, because I don't want to be in a crowd ever. I always stay on the very edge but when I hear that they were counting I always made sure that I [unclear]. If they were counting at all I made sure that I was there, whether the count, counts were never accurate, of course.

**ECK:** Well now they've stopped counting.

**NOLAN:** That's right. They'd tell you there was 250,000 and you knew darn well that there was more like a million people, you know? It was, there was. I remember the riots very well. It was 11 o'clock. I'll tell you, on the night that Martin Luther King was shot, I was down on H Street. We had the, they have the Capitol Hill Group Ministry now. I don't know what they called it in those days but it was part, it was the same thing, it was all the different ministries...

**ECK:** Interdenominational.

**NOLAN:** ...yes. And we had this. Can I give you some more? It's probably cold [pours Eck some tea]

**ECK:** Oh, thank you.

**NOLAN:** We had a room over one of those [ed: Thrift Stores]...

**ECK:** You said you were down on H Street?

**NOLAN:** Yeah, we had a room, there was three of us supposed to be there. Two men and I for when people would come in looking for, trying to find housing, you know, rents. They'd have trouble with their

landlords. We were trying to help them or things like that. And getting jobs for them. I remember one man, he was, he had the loveliest child you ever saw. He always brought her with him, you know? And he was—we would set up an appointment for a job interview [for him] and he'd come back and say he didn't get the job. And he was drunk. And I said to him, "You went for a job interview looking like that? You weren't shaved. Who'd you think was going to hire you?!" The two men were horrified. They thought, "How could you talk to him like that?" I said, "You should be ashamed of yourself. Now get lost." And they were furious with me! "You don't talk to anybody like that!" I said, "Yes, I do because he had, if you're going to pussyfoot around you'll never get anywhere." But, you know, he didn't want a job [unclear].

**ECK:** He didn't come back?

**NOLAN:** Well, I don't know because then, the next time, we were supposed to be there, they didn't show up. And every night, a whole lot of children would come in. Like we'd be shooing them away but, you know, we weren't really, our hearts weren't in it, you know. You'd talk, and you'd let them through. Then we had clothes. If somebody came in looking for clothes, we'd give them a bag. But that night, I had left because at a quarter—because I had the key to open the place. And I was there by myself at a quarter of nine and Marie Cavanaugh came in. She said, "Have you been here by yourself since?" I said, "I've been here since seven." And she said, "Has anybody been in?" I said, "Not a soul," I said, "I've never seen it like this before." And we'd been doing this for a couple years, you know, at that time. She said, "Do you know what happened?" And I said, "What happened?" "Martin Luther King was shot." And she was so mad with those men. And I was mad with them too.

**ECK:** Because nobody had come to be with you?

**NOLAN:** They didn't even tell me! All they had to do was call, we had a phone.

**ECK:** And so did you lock up then and go home?

**NOLAN:** We locked up and went home. And then we had a meeting with them and she laid into them. Boy, did she ever lay them out! Good thing too.

**ECK:** So, how long did you work with, was that part of your job or that was part of your volunteer...?

**NOLAN:** No, that was volunteer work. That was volunteer, that was part of St. Joseph's ministry. Oh, each church was supposed to provide so many, you know, at least three people every night. And we weren't there on Sunday nights. I know Thursday night was the night we were supposed to be there. So that's the next morning, we went to work. And about 11 o'clock, we heard that the city was burning.

That's right. And there was only Valerie Costello and I that were the only two that worked at the USCC at the time, of our friends anyway, that we knew, of us, that lived in the city. And the others wanted us to go home with them, you know? I said, "If anything happens, I want to be in my own place. I'm going home, not any out of the city." So we came home, she went home too. She lived on 16<sup>th</sup> Street and I lived at 305 C Street at that time.

**ECK:** 16<sup>th</sup> Street?

**NOLAN:** Northwest. And that was Monday. No, that was Friday. Saturday, there was a curfew. We weren't supposed to be out after four o'clock. And...

**ECK:** Four in the afternoon?

**NOLAN:** That's right. The woman that I used to stay with before I went and moved to 305 C Street. She'd invited us for dinner. Or for lunch, or for lunch. And we had gone, my next door neighbor friend of mine. We went over there. We were coming back and it was four o'clock. Father Gillen was out then, said, "Four o'clock! Four o'clock! Four!" I said, "Father, they're not going to arrest us." And he said, "You never know, they could!"

**ECK:** Yeah, they could.

**NOLAN:** They could, they could. So, then there was a lot of strange stories going on about it. Monsignor Awalt was at St. Peter's at that time and he happened to be passing by. And there was a men's clothing store there on, between Second and Third. And he saw this kid who was an altar boy coming out of the [store] [laughs] taking a whole lot of clothes! And he said, "Guess I got to go to confession, Father." He said, "Yes, you do. You've got to put them back too!" [laughs]

**ECK:** So there was looting on the Hill as well?

**NOLAN:** Oh yes. Yes.

**ECK:** Because I hear a lot about it on U Street, and I guess on H Street.

**NOLAN:** Well, anyplace there was anything that they could loot. But oddly enough... Now all the stores barricaded them, you know, so there was no stores open. So the next day, people rushed out, bringing in food from the suburbs. And we had.

**ECK:** Because you couldn't shop at all during that time? Stores just closed?

**NOLAN:** Well, the stores were closed. They were smart to close, you know? And there was, but they brought in all kinds of things, cheese and bread and tea and sugar and, you know, staples, you know? And there was, we had a few old ladies that we used to look in and take care of, and we'd call them to find out what they wanted. And, enough to keep them going for a week, maybe if they want like. But, there was one little old lady, Bessie Boston. She was about so big [gestures] and, I knocked on her door. She'd come out for the food and, her next door neighbor wasn't one of our parishioners. And she said, "My church always takes care of me," shaking her behind.

**ECK:** [Laughs] And did her church?

**NOLAN:** Well, we were from, yes, we...

**ECK:** She was very proud?

**NOLAN:** Oh yes! Was she ever! But we *were* always taking care of her because she wouldn't pay either her gas bill or something. She loved going to court.

**ECK:** Oh geez!

**NOLAN:** [Laughs] She was...[laughs]

**ECK:** She just liked the company?

**NOLAN:** I don't know what it was with her. But she'd say, "I paid it. That was Washington Electric and Gas." She didn't realize that they weren't the—there were two separate bills. So she'd pay one, she wouldn't pay the other.

**ECK:** My goodness.

**NOLAN:** Yes.

**ECK:** Did she come out for Mass?

**NOLAN:** No, she was, she hadn't been out for—she had an icebox. Ice for her. So when I told this friend of mine, that she was using instead, so they got her a refrigerator. And of course she couldn't believe her good luck that she got a refrigerator.

**ECK:** What year was it that she was still using an icebox?

**NOLAN:** 1968.

**ECK:** Wow!

**NOLAN:** Well, invariably 1965 or '66, I'd say. Because this was a couple years later.

**ECK:** Could you still get ice deliveries?

**NOLAN:** Yes, there was the Uline Arena. That's what the—

**ECK:** And that's where they sold ice? Really! Isn't the Uline Arena where the Beatles played when they...?

**NOLAN:** Must have been, if they did play here because that was the only big place. I remember the Ice Follies would be there, you know. Must have, that was the only place there was at the time. The Kennedy Center, I mean, you know, Robert Kennedy thing [ed: Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium], that wasn't built then.

**ECK:** That was the one place. You had mentioned your friends talked about politics a lot. Were most of them involved in politics?

**NOLAN:** Well, one of them worked for a congressman from North Carolina. And the others all had relatives that worked for congressmen or senators or what, you know. So they knew them.

**ECK:** Were there a lot of young people on the Hill?

**NOLAN:** There were, there were. Nearly everyone at St. Joseph's, at that time. There was...well, it's the same now, though more Hill staffers than anything else, you know?

**ECK:** Have your neighbors changed, I mean, have you seen the neighborhood change in terms of the people who are living around you? You mentioned that DC was 70% black. What was Capitol Hill like?

**NOLAN:** It would have been that, it would have been that. It would have been the same.

**ECK:** And were blocks integrated? I mean, did you have black families and white families living on the same street?

**NOLAN:** Yes, you did. Not, there'd be more black than white, but there were. Like, I knew a lot of blacks on E Street and Fourth Street. I knew people there, on one side of the street would be white and the other side would be black.

**ECK:** Wow.

**NOLAN:** But there were, they seemed to get along fine. I mean, I didn't notice any—maybe there was friction but I never noticed it. I don't remember any discrimination or any. I won't say that there wasn't,

now there could have been. But if it was, it was very hidden. We had a lot of black parishioners at St. Joseph's then. An awful lot.

**ECK:** So was that where you met most people, was through St. Joseph's?

**NOLAN:** Yes, it was.

**ECK:** I know, since I grew up in St. Peter's, I'm used to having a strong Catholic community around me but, I mean in many ways, the Catholics, it's not the majority of the city. And yet...

**NOLAN:** No no. That's right, it's not.

**ECK:** But there were a lot of people living close by that went to St. Joseph's that...

**NOLAN:** Yes.

**ECK:** ...were Catholic.

**NOLAN:** There was. We had friends that were not, you know. But the majority of our friends were Catholics to be honest with you.

**ECK:** Was there a buzz after Kennedy's election? When Kennedy was elected in '60 and you came in '61.

**NOLAN:** Yes. Yes, there seemed to be, you know, everybody seemed to be happy and everything was, you know, there would, take notice of what Caroline did and all those columns with comics with Caroline on, what's the ice cream she'd show up at the party with, you know. The party, and they'd talk about the party. So, where's the ice cream, you know, things like that. Stupid little [things] but they were funny, like, funny little cartoons.

**ECK:** Was that in the *Post* or?

**NOLAN:** I think it was, there was an evening paper.

**ECK:** *Evening Star*?

**NOLAN:** Yes.

**ECK:** Tell me a bit about just daily shopping.

**NOLAN:** Oh, well, there was a lot of mom and pop stores around. And some of them, there was one ,where there's a store still at the corner of Third and Mass[achusetts Avenue]. That used to be Safeway.

We used to do our shopping there mostly. And then we'd go to Eastern Market for some. And then there was other markets. There was the O Street Market, you know.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

**ECK:** I'll be able to tell when...ok. OK, it's back on. So O Street, NW, you said...

**NOLAN:** Yes.

**ECK:** ...there was a market.

**NOLAN:** It was like the Eastern Market but, you know. But, we didn't have all those stalls then. It was only the food inside, well you had the farmer's market on Saturday. And sometimes we went down to the farmer's market at New York Avenue, you know? But not very often.

**ECK:** The one on Florida?

**NOLAN:** Florida, yes. But not very often. So that's where we did. There were so many stores downtown, you know. I mean, any number. You know, there was Hecht's and Kann's and Lansburgh's.

**ECK:** Woodie's.

**NOLAN:** Woodie's and Raleigh's. Oh, there were so many, you couldn't—and they were all good.

**ECK:** So for clothes shopping, it was all downtown?

**NOLAN:** Yes. You know, on F Street. You didn't have to go any further.

**ECK:** Did you have a car?

**NOLAN:** Yes, I had a car. I had a car in '68, then my sight was getting worse and I couldn't, when I couldn't see, you know, when I couldn't see what the, I couldn't read the signposts I decided it was safer [to stop driving]. I wasn't a good driver anyway. But we also, we used Seventh Street, that was later of course, in the seventies. We had a nice clothing store over on Seventh Street. Perlucci's. Did you ever hear of that?

**ECK:** Seventh Street Northeast?

**NOLAN:** Southeast.

**ECK:** Near the market?

**NOLAN:** Yes.

**ECK:** And it was called?

**NOLAN:** Perlucci's. And there was Cheese and Cheer was there. Yes. And there was also, there was a Safeway there so if you didn't get what you wanted—

**ECK:** Did they still keep the one on Massachusetts Avenue, the Safeway open?

**NOLAN:** No, that was closed long, way way back. But somebody else took it over. But after that closed we used to go to Seventh Street, Seventh Street Southeast. There was also another one on, before we went to Seventh Street. Now, there's two big houses there. It's about on the first block of Seventh Street [ed: Northeast] between the East Capitol and E [ed: A] Street, there was a store there. A Safeway. It was a small one but, then they closed that. But there was a lot of mom and pop stores, you know? There was one nice one that had very good meat at the corner of Third and Maryland Avenue. That was the place to go for good steaks, good chops or you know, chops or anything like that. I remember, that's what I remember about that. I don't think [we bought] anything else there except meat.

**ECK:** So you would do your shopping, go to the butcher for meat, and...

**NOLAN:** Yeah, you know.

**ECK:** It's so different now.

**NOLAN:** Oh yes, yes. I still like Eastern Market.

**ECK:** Have the shops inside changed a lot?

**NOLAN:** Not that much, not that much. They kind of cleaned it up a bit but. The food, I mean the meats and fish and all the rest was always good there, you know. I mean, you just, I was lucky maybe. I don't, I don't think I ever got a bad, bad, I mean, meat that wasn't top quality at Eastern Market.

**ECK:** Do you, the Capitol Hill Natatorium is right next...

**NOLAN:** Oh yes.

**ECK:** ...Do you know when that was built? I mean, do you, was it always there when you were?

**NOLAN:** No, it wasn't. I remember it being built but I can't say what year. Must have been the early seventies. Yeah. They renovated it recently. Did you go to there?

**ECK:** I learned how to swim there. I remember very distinctly. Did you go for swims there or?

**NOLAN:** Yeah, I went. I used to go for aerobics, for the water aerobics for the senior citizens. I haven't been this year, nor last year's too. I'm too lazy.

**ECK:** So tell me, how long did you work for the Catholic Conference?

**NOLAN:** I went to work for the government in 1968. It must have been six years, seven years.

**ECK:** What part of the government?

**NOLAN:** National Park Service. I worked for them until 1977 and then I went to work for EPA. And I retired in 1989.

**ECK:** So you said, you didn't plan on making Washington permanent.

**NOLAN:** No, no.

**ECK:** Did the city just grab you?

**NOLAN:** It did, it did. I think that's what happens to everybody. You know, there was so much, well—there's no place, where can you go that you can go into a museums like we have without paying? Or going to the art galleries that we have without paying? Even at a senior citizen rates it's eight dollars when I go to Connecticut. And my nieces take me there. It's always eight dollars for mine. It's ten dollars for their tickets.

**ECK:** You get spoiled.

**NOLAN:** Yes, I know. Rotten. Spoiled rotten. And then the concerts, all these free concerts. And the Library of Congress. I mean, where could you get something like the Library of Congress?

**ECK:** That's true. Did you know Margaret Tappan?

**NOLAN:** The name is familiar but I can't...

**ECK:** She worked at the Library of Congress. That's why I brought it up. But she was, she was a parishioner at St. Peter's. Lived on A Street, SE, right close to St. Mark's.

**NOLAN:** No. I don't think, I may not have.

**ECK:** Was there much interaction between the parishes of St. Peter's and St. Joseph's?

**NOLAN:** Yes, there was, quite a bit.

**ECK:** What other churches were involved in the Capitol Hill Group Ministry?

**NOLAN:** Well, I know there was a group, some of the Jews there, St. James Episcopalian Church, the Lutheran church on Second and East Capitol, and the Baptist church across the street [ed: from where she lives now at 516 A Street NE]. And I think the Methodists. I'm nearly sure the Methodists. There were about six, at least.

**ECK:** This is the same group that sponsors the Easter Parade, right?

**NOLAN:** I think so, yeah.

**ECK:** I remember as a child walking to Lincoln Park and joining the other churches for the parade.

**NOLAN:** Yeah. It was nice.

**ECK:** Tell me about the streetcars.

**NOLAN:** Oh, they were, they were fun. You know, they ran in the middle of the street. But, I think they must have stopped around 1970, I'm not sure exactly when. Or maybe before that. You could go, you know, so far. We used to go. I remember one, when it was very hot, we'd get on a bus and just drive to the end of the line because the buses were air-conditioned or there were fans or something, you know. So that you wouldn't have. Another thing we did was we'd go to the movies. Because, to get, you know. That was before I moved to...

**ECK:** To C Street.

**NOLAN:** ...to C Street.

**ECK:** Which movie theaters do you remember? There were a lot of them on the Hill, weren't there?

**NOLAN:** There were. There were quite a few then. But, those, the one we really liked was one over in Georgetown, Macarthur Boulevard. I don't know why we liked that one. There must have been a streetcar or a bus that went there directly. I'm not sure.

**ECK:** There was a streetcar that used to go all the way to Glen Echo.

**NOLAN:** Yes.

**ECK:** I wonder if that's the same line?

**NOLAN:** I don't know. It could have been. It could have been. It probably was. And Glen Echo was, you know, the Clara Barton House. I remember going to see that. There's a lot [to see], you know.

**ECK:** Now, you said it was your sister who was in Connecticut?

**NOLAN:** Yeah, I have a brother there too.

**ECK:** And they didn't want you to stay up close to them?

**NOLAN:** Well, they did but I, you know, that wasn't what I had intended. They were living in the suburbs and, you know, I didn't have a car then. And the leisure, everybody had children and that's why, I was bored stiff. That's the truth of the matter.

**ECK:** [Laughs] Yeah.

**NOLAN:** So, this was quite a change and it, as I said, there was so much to do, you couldn't, you know. You never had, you couldn't be bored here then. Couldn't be bored here now either.

**ECK:** No. I think it's still the same way. What about your parents? Did they stay in Ireland?

**NOLAN:** Oh, my parents were dead long since my mother died, way back. Dead before I came.

**ECK:** Where in Ireland are you from?

**NOLAN:** Clare. It's on the west coast. I've seen a lot of changes. A lot of things pulled down, built up. One thing that I was thinking of, when I came the first time, I was surprised at the litter. You'd see bottles and we had—there were a lot of green spaces but there was a lot of trash.

**ECK:** Really? More than now?

**NOLAN:** Oh, a lot more than now. And then Lady Bird Johnson came along. And it changed, you might say overnight. Because she was one for the beautification. And that was, I think that was one of the big-- when you gave me that part, that was one of the things that I must remember to tell. Because, like I said to you, there would be bottles and cans and trash, you know, paper. People were not, as well as that, they didn't have all those trash cans around for people to put the trash into. But, then they started cleaning up the place and it made a difference.

**ECK:** It's interesting. I wonder what, I guess there was just a big campaign, a push to have people clean up after themselves?

**NOLAN:** I think so, I think so. I don't know, but it made a difference anyway. I think once it was drawn to their attention.

**ECK:** Can you think of other ways that the neighborhood's changed? I mean, obviously, prices have gone up. But a lot of buildings have been torn down. Is the first building that you lived in, is that gone now?

**NOLAN:** No, that's the Heritage [Foundation Building].

**ECK:** Oh, that's the Heritage site.

**NOLAN:** They bought the middle one and then they bought that one. As I said, where the parking lot for the senators [is] there were houses, there were multi-family, you know, at least three family houses, as well as apartment buildings and hotels, all that lot was full of people.

**ECK:** You mentioned there was a hotel there too?

**NOLAN:** Oh yes. There was the Continental Hotel and there were several [other] hotels.

**ECK:** There were a lot of houses on the Hill that were boarding houses? Was that still the case when you were there?

**NOLAN:** Yes, there was. There was, a lot of them. A lot of them.

**ECK:** I'm curious, going back to when the riots happened. Did anything happen to your H Street office?

**NOLAN:** No, no. No it didn't. Of course we didn't go to it, after that, we didn't go back there. You know, we just cleaned out everything. Took the clothes down to the Salvation Army and that. But it was, it was a good—it did good work for a while, you know? I mean, maybe for a couple of years. I think it might have started after Martin Luther King came to Washington. I think that would be about 1963 or '64 it started. Because I remember going there for a couple of years, or it seemed like that anyway. We had, you know, the people would come. Like one woman, she wanted a bigger place. And, you know, you'd go through all the listings and find and call, call and see what they had. Sometimes you'd be lucky and be able to find a place for her and sometimes you wouldn't. But if it was a question of clothes that they wanted, well, we could just, you know, find out what fitted them and give them to them. That was, all we had to clear out of there then was the clothes. We had quite a selection of clothes. People were pretty good at giving things that they didn't want.

**ECK:** When you helped people find apartments, were there places that discriminated, or you said it was...

**NOLAN:** Actually, there were.

**ECK:** ...but they didn't say why.

**NOLAN:** Well, I don't know. They always had, somebody told me, I think it was Mrs. Curran who told me, that they always charged more for black families. I don't know.

**ECK:** But it's always hard to prove.

**NOLAN:** Yes, that's the whole trouble.

**ECK:** Unless you can prove it.

**NOLAN:** Yes, that's right. The thing was, you know, like most of the people didn't want to move to a place that they, that they weren't familiar with too, you know? They wouldn't feel comfortable then. That was one of the [problems]—like you might find a place for somebody in Northwest, and they'd say, oh I don't want to go that far away, you know? Even if it wouldn't be half a mile but, somebody who's used to being in [Northeast], especially.

**ECK:** Around people that they know?

**NOLAN:** That's right, that they know. Yeah.

**ECK:** You had mentioned at the beginning that taxicabs wouldn't take you if you said you were in Northeast.

**NOLAN:** That's right.

**ECK:** When did that change?

**NOLAN:** Well, I never checked up, because I never told them afterwards that it was Northeast. I'd say, "Capitol Hill," get in and tell them where then.

**ECK:** [Laughs]

**NOLAN:** But it wasn't too often that I had to take a cab, but whenever I did, you know. For one thing you didn't want to drive downtown and find a place to park. It was always hard to find a place to park. But, that night I was so mad. Three different cabs refused to take me. Finally somebody did.

**ECK:** People still have that problem.

**NOLAN:** Oh yes. That's right. That's right, and black people have more problems than we have. And that's a shame.

**ECK:** So you didn't take cabs very often.

**NOLAN:** No.

**ECK:** And you were driving for...

**NOLAN:** I drove until 1968. It was after that that I had trouble with the cabs.

**ECK:** And then the Metro came in '74?

**NOLAN:** Yes, that was a big help. That really was.

**ECK:** The streetcars were...

**NOLAN:** I liked the streetcars.

**ECK:** Why?

**NOLAN:** I don't know. I liked them.

**ECK:** My grandfather was a streetcar driver. Not in Washington.

**NOLAN:** Oh. Yeah.

**ECK:** Cars drove around them? I mean, I've never been in a city that has them operating. And were they open air or air-conditioned?

**NOLAN:** Well, I think they were probably open air. Yeah. They could close the windows, they had windows but. I doubt if they had air-conditioning.

**ECK:** Do you remember how much they cost?

**NOLAN:** About, if it was 20 cents that was as much as it would have been.

**ECK:** Whoa!

**NOLAN:** I remember we used to take the bus to Rosslyn. You know there was a bus that would go to Rosslyn. I think, we had to go to Union Station or not? And Rosslyn then, it was different, kind of, you know?

**ECK:** How?

**NOLAN:** Well, it wasn't built up like it is now, for one thing. And, there used to be different stores that you weren't familiar with, you know what I mean? We'd just go and look around. Maybe buy nothing or buy some little thing or other, you know?

**ECK:** And so the streetcar or the bus would drop you very close to home?

**NOLAN:** Yeah. The bus, you'd get off the bus. When I was living at 305 C Street, the bus would stop at the corner of Fourth and Mass. which it still does, you know.

**ECK:** You can be in the city and get around and not have a car.

**NOLAN:** Yeah, yeah.

**ECK:** And so you bought this place in?

**NOLAN:** 1982.

**ECK:** Have your neighbors changed a lot? Do you know your neighbors?

**NOLAN:** When I came, yes. When I came here, they had only converted to a co-op in 1980. And the original tenants, the ones who were renters, they were nearly all, there was only one couple who had bought into this. There were renters here before, before it converted, and then I was the second one to buy into it. And now there's only two of the original, well there's one man who has an apartment. He never uses it, he's down in Georgia. He doesn't need it. He's old.

**ECK:** Does he rent it?

**NOLAN:** No he doesn't.

**ECK:** Huh.

**NOLAN:** It's empty. And all the others, that's it, only two of the original. Oh, there's three. There's Mrs. Bow. Dr. Bow's first wife died and then he remarried and he died, and she's—but you couldn't say that she was an original.

**ECK:** An original?

**NOLAN:** No.

**ECK:** Speaking of doctors, did you go downtown for medical care or were there people on the Hill?

**NOLAN:** There were. Well, there was Dr. Bow over at the corner of Third and Constitution. And then there was...the first. I didn't really, didn't have much to do with doctors. What was her name, there was a doctor, I don't know, was it Minor? I don't know. She lived on East Capitol Street. Like, someone would recommend a doctor to you, you know? So you went because they recommended it. And there was, Rogers Memorial Hospital. It was a Casualty Hospital then.

**ECK:** For the war?

**NOLAN:** No, for accidents. That was where, it's Medlink Nursing Home now. It's at Seventh Street NE. That was there.

**ECK:** So when you say a casualty hospital, that's just, like an emergency room?

**NOLAN:** Uh huh [affirmative]. That's when I had a car accident, that's where they took me. And I was very happy that they took me there because when my teeth had come out, through, I knocked out my bottom teeth.

**ECK:** Ouch.

**NOLAN:** And when the doctor—they said they'd have to send me to Georgetown because, unfortunately [they did not do dental work]. Dr. Rogers was the owner of the hospital. And he said, "Oh no, we can take care of her here." And I was so happy. And afterwards when he was—years and years later when they would have a benefit, you know, I didn't think he'd recognize me. And I said, "Doctor, do you remember me? I was one of your patients one time." And he said, and I had fractured the jaw too. He said, "Yeah, I remember you."

**ECK:** [Laughs] Nice.

**NOLAN:** He was a nice man.

**ECK:** So he was always, where was he on the Hill again? He was at the hospital.

**NOLAN:** Yeah, I don't know where he lived. He probably, I don't know, he lived where. His sister, Miss Rogers, I know. I don't know. But anyway, that was a good place to go.

**ECK:** I remember when I was growing up, there was a doctor on East Capitol Street, really close to the Baptist church across the street.

**NOLAN:** Yeah.

**ECK:** Just down the street, there was a corner store that was run by a Korean family.

**NOLAN:** Yeah, they're still there.

**ECK:** They're still there?

**NOLAN:** Uh huh [affirmative].

**ECK:** And there was a pediatrician just a couple of doors down from there.

**NOLAN:** Yeah, uh huh.

**ECK:** And there was a drug store, I think it's still there. Morton's.

**NOLAN:** Well there, Grubbs. There's Grubbs, yes. And Morton's. But that was on Pennsylvania Avenue. Yeah. And there's Morton's on Eighth and East Capitol Street.

**ECK:** OK.

**NOLAN:** The place was at all times, it was pretty well [taken care of]—you know, you had doctors and physicians and dentists and all the rest, everywhere.

**ECK:** Do you feel like it's a safer neighborhood now than it was?

**NOLAN:** To tell you the truth, I never found [it threatening]— I mean, in the beginning of course, there would. They didn't have the drug problem then. And I, I never did feel threatened. I've been held up a few times and [unclear] but that can happen anytime. Any place.

**ECK:** Recently? I mean, I've had my share as well. I think it's just part of living in the city.

**NOLAN:** That's right, yes. It happens sooner or later to everybody.

**ECK:** I think maybe some people react better than others.

**NOLAN:** Yes. You know...

**ECK:** Close to home?

**NOLAN:** The first time, I was in 305 C Street and it was just before Christmas and I had been downtown shopping. And I had, we didn't, they didn't have the door locked in those days, you know. You just went in. Which goes to show you how things have changed. And I had three or four packages and my pocketbook was over [my arm]. So I went to the letterbox. There was this kid standing there and I didn't take much notice. And then next thing, he pulled my [pocketbook]—I went to open my mailbox, you know? And, he knocked me back flat on the floor. And I started yelling, "Help! Help!" And Dick Callahan who was living there, he heard me, came out and the kid ran then. And I was so, I was furious, I was so mad with him. I thought, if I could get him, I would have smashed that kid's head on the, against the steps. That's, I was in such a fury, which was awful, do you know, to think it. Just for whatever few dollars would have been in my pocketbook. It couldn't have been much. I scared myself, when I cooled down, it took me about an hour afterwards. I thought, you know I was ready to kill him and it wouldn't

have been, for just a—was really scared and I said, I'll never again say, I couldn't do this or I couldn't do that. Because I know you can do things when you're angry.

**ECK:** It's a violation, I think. That's what makes you angrier more than anything else.

**NOLAN:** Yeah, yeah.

**ECK:** It's violates the trust that you have in other people.

**NOLAN:** But it, I was scared of me then, you know. I think that I could, if I could have done him harm I would have done it, do you know what I mean?

**ECK:** Uh huh.

**NOLAN:** It's awful to feel like that. It really is, huh.

**ECK:** I think it's powerful to acknowledge it though. When you recognize it in yourself then you can try to control it or...

**NOLAN:** Yeah. But it kind of makes me not be judgmental anymore, huh. Not that I still have a touch...

**ECK:** [Laughs] I think we all are sometimes. But so they never locked the front door of the lobby?

**NOLAN:** They did after that. Well, not after that. Maybe a couple of instances after, they did. That was the first time. But, then another time. I went over to pick up, I was on my way to Ireland, and I went over to pick up my plane tickets. And I shouldn't have, I didn't need to take anything with me except the check that I—and I saw those two were going on bicycles. And I was watching them. But I didn't realize the one came back behind, came around, pulled it, and of course somebody. It was just outside 305 C Street. I was almost home when. But a man across the street saw and he called out. He said, "Stop that!" And those police were down at the corner of Third and Mass. [coughs] They got them [coughs] and he had my pocketbook over his shoulder, you know? On a bicycle. So, so that's mine, but they wouldn't give me the pocketbook. I said, well give me my keys anyway. You know, the police were so stupid. They kept it, they wanted it for evidence. And I had to go over to somewhere way over, Southeast, to get my plane tickets.

**ECK:** Oh!

**NOLAN:** I said, this is ridiculous, you know. And then [coughs] he was let go anyway.

**ECK:** Really?!

**NOLAN:** [coughs] The policeman was so annoyed, so annoyed. He said, he wanted to know would I come and pick him out in a lineup, and I said I definitely will, you know? But there was no [lineup], I mean it was plain to say that. But apparently whatever judge [there] was decided that there were too many in jail as it was which, no doubt about it, there are but.

**ECK:** Do you remember when that was?

**NOLAN:** About '75 I think. Yeah.

**ECK:** So, when you came over from Ireland the first time, how did you come? You flew?

**NOLAN:** Flew. To New York.

**ECK:** From Dublin.

**NOLAN:** No, from Shannon.

**ECK:** And your brother and sister were both here.

**NOLAN:** Yeah. And my brother and brother-in-law met me in New York.

**ECK:** How old were you when you came?

**NOLAN:** 35.

**ECK:** Had you been overseas before?

**NOLAN:** I'd been in Europe but I hadn't been across the Atlantic. And when I told my brother I was coming to Washington, he was—oh he couldn't. "It wasn't safe, it wasn't safe." And I said, "I've been all over Europe, what do you?" "It's not the same, I tell you." He was one of those scaredy cats too, you know? And I said, "I'm not going to be going to the slums or anything like that." He says, "Well, it doesn't matter where you are, you know. It's dangerous in all places." "It's dangerous if you're looking for trouble, I suppose, it's dangerous."

**ECK:** So did you have the job and that's why you came to Washington?

**NOLAN:** Yeah, uh huh.

**ECK:** It seems like a lot of people come to Washington with no job at all and they just come...

**NOLAN:** They're lucky, aren't they lucky.

**ECK:** ...and find something.

**NOLAN:** I wish I were that—I wish I were that brave, huh.

**ECK:** I know I'm not.

**NOLAN:** And I envy those people who go all over Europe on their own. I had a friend, she's dead now. And she was a journalist. But she went all over South America.

**ECK:** Wow.

**NOLAN:** And, you know, she'd spend, I don't know, six months or something, all over. Went to all kinds of places that I'd love to go to, but I certainly wouldn't go on my own. I think she'd been everywhere though.

**ECK:** Wow. Where did you and your friends go on holiday? Did you mostly go back to Ireland?

**NOLAN:** I used to go, I'd go to Ireland one year, and then I'd go to Europe or to South America or somewhere, Canada, every other, every other time.

**ECK:** Fun. Nice. Did you go to the beaches?

**NOLAN:** No, I never go to the beaches. Too hot for me. Went once. I've been twice, I've been to the beach in the States and that's all.

**ECK:** Which ones?

**NOLAN:** New London was once. And I've forgotten what the name of the other one was. Connecticut somewhere too but, it's not...

**ECK:** Not your thing?

**NOLAN:** ...not my thing at all. The mountainside suits me better.

**ECK:** Do you think we've covered everything?

**NOLAN:** I think we have, yeah.

**ECK:** It's really been delightful talking to you.

**NOLAN:** Well, it's nice to know finally know who you are. [Laughs]

**ECK:** Since we have so many people in common.

**NOLAN:** Yeah.

**ECK:** OK, I'm going to shut this off.

END OF INTERVIEW