



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Patricia Briel

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Transcriber: Adam Graham

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

GRAHAM: Ok, that's great. This is Adam Graham and I'm interviewing Patricia Briel for the Overbeck Capitol Hill Historical Project. It's October 23rd and we're meeting at Patricia's house, which is in New Carrollton, Maryland. And so I just want to thank you Patricia for joining me and willing to talk to the Overbeck Project. And so I wanted to start off in the beginning, I wanted to find out a little bit about your birth. I know that you were born in 1929, but what is your birthday?

BRIEL: November 29th, 1929. I was born at Sibley [Memorial] Hospital. Old Sibley Hospital.

GRAHAM: Great. And your mother's name was Ramona de ...

BRIEL: No ...

GRAHAM: Sorry?

BRIEL: No, my mother was Dorothy Napp deGraffenreid.

GRAHAM: Dorothy Napp. And what was your father's name?

BRIEL: William Leroy deGraffenreid.

GRAHAM: OK. And your father moved to Washington in the nineteen teens. And he came from Kentucky ...

BRIEL: Right.

GRAHAM: Is that right? Was he already married to your mother when he came ...

BRIEL: No ...

GRAHAM: to Washington?

BRIEL: No...

GRAHAM: And so how did they meet?

BRIEL: Well he—my mother's mother rented, was renting, rooms and he rented a room from them. And my mother was engaged to somebody else at the time ...

GRAHAM: Oh, really?

BRIEL: And—but she was attracted to him. [Laughter] So she kind of flirted with him, you know ... so that they got—he wanted to ask her out, but he was a gentleman and would not ... live in the same house and take her out. So he moved out and move—went elsewhere and ... then he—they started dating and they ... ended up and got married. [Laughter]

GRAHAM: Great.

BRIEL: And they must have been married in like ... probably 1912, 1913 ...

GRAHAM: OK ...

BRIEL: Because my oldest brother ... was born in 1915 and they'd been married a couple years before he was born. So ...

GRAHAM: So why did he did he come to Washington to begin with ... from Kentucky?

BRIEL: I think maybe his mother might have been up here with one of his brothers. And ... so that's—I think that was the main reason why he came up here.

GRAHAM: And your mom was living on ... Capitol Hill?

BRIEL: She was living on Eighth Street NE. In fact ... she was in an orphanage when she first came here—Saint John's Episcopal [Church] Orphanage that's no longer around, it's now for emotionally disturbed children. And the people that lived on Eighth Street, they had one child, a son ... and they used to see my mother going by to the church, up there on Eighth Street, Saint James Episcopal Church. And they were attracted to her, and ... they wanted to adopt her. They were never able to adopt her—they were her foster parents, but she lived with them, took their name, Napp.

GRAHAM: Sure. Now your father owned seven, a chain of seven, White Front Markets in Washington. Now how did he come to buy them?

BRIEL: He was a very good businessman. He just would start one business, you know, it was mainly meat. That was the main thing. And ... he would ... get the business really going, then he would start another store. And he had like a chain of seven, but then when the Depression came that's when he really lost a lot.

GRAHAM: And do you know what he did before he bought the markets?

BRIEL: Well, he worked for another ... a market right there at Eighth and H Street NE. I think it was called Kidwell Market.

GRAHAM: And what did your mother do when they married?

BRIEL: She used to work on Capitol Hill for one of the Congressmen, but then after she got married she just stayed home. She was like a secretary ... on Capitol Hill.

GRAHAM: You don't remember which Congressman do you?

BRIEL: No, I don't.

GRAHAM: OK. Now you had a very large family ...

BRIEL: Right ...

GRAHAM: There are six children in your family?

BRIEL: Well, really seven. I was the seventh. There was one child, baby, that died when it was like ten days old.

GRAHAM: And you had two brothers ...

BRIEL: Yeah ...

GRAHAM: William and David, sorry, William and Donald.

BRIEL: Right—no. William and ... Duncan.

GRAHAM: Duncan. I'm sorry. And ... four girls, Dorothy, Ramona, Elizabeth and yourself.

BRIEL: Right ...

GRAHAM: Is that right?

BRIEL: And then the baby they lost was John.

GRAHAM: And ... I know that you were one of the youngest.

BRIEL: I was the youngest.

GRAHAM: You were the youngest. OK, so what was the order of the siblings?

BRIEL: The two boys, William and Duncan ... then Dorothy, Elizabeth, then John, then Ramona and then me.

GRAHAM: OK. And what was your relationship with them?

BRIEL: Very good ...

GRAHAM: Very good ...

BRIEL: Very close family.

GRAHAM: Were there siblings that you were closer to because of age or ...

BRIEL: Well, the one that died two years ago [Ramona], there was almost four years difference in our age, but we were very close. From kids on up wherever she went, I went. Her friends were my friends and ... then even the sister that just passed away [Elizabeth], she was eight years older than me, but I was very close to her. And the other one [Dorothy], ten years older than me. We were just very close. My brother Duncan ... he almost took it like a father to me because I was the youngest and ... spoiled me [laughter].

GRAHAM: And your house was on the 300 block ...

BRIEL: 315 First Street SE.

GRAHAM: 315 First Street. And that is where the Madison building is currently located, is that right?

BRIEL: Could be, I'm not ... well that's where the Metro station is. [ed: Capitol South station] Yes.

GRAHAM: And did you always live in that home or had you lived on another place on Capitol Hill as well?

BRIEL: No, that's the only one.

GRAHAM: And what was the size of the house?

BRIEL: It was a, what they called a row house at that time. Had three floors, plus a basement. It was brick, in all brick.

GRAHAM: And how many bedrooms were ... was there?

BRIEL: Oh let's see there were ... three bedrooms upstairs and then down ... the second floor ... there was—and the bathroom was on the third floor, one bathroom. Then the living room and then another bedroom and then - two bedrooms on the second floor. The lower floor was the dining room and a big kitchen and then another, what we called a little room, my mother used it for her sewing room.

GRAHAM: And all of you were in the house at the same time?

BRIEL: Yes.

GRAHAM: Wow. And how many bathrooms did you have?

BRIEL: One.

GRAHAM: One bathroom!

BRIEL: One bath—and they rented rooms. And after my father, especially after my father died ... my mother rented rooms. One man lived there with us for 11 years until we moved to Virginia.

GRAHAM: Wow. So ...

BRIEL: My mother had commodes. [Laughter] In case somebody had to use the bathroom ... someone else was in there.

GRAHAM: Sure. Did you have a yard at all? A front yard?

BRIEL: Yes. We had a front yard and a backyard. One time—see this was my mother's ... grandmother's house and it was left to my mother. When we had lived in Cottage City [Maryland] for up until I was six years old. And so then they had rented that house to bachelors that lived on, that worked on Capitol Hill. And they did a lot of damage to the house. They had done—my parents had new flooring put in and it was completely renovated. So then when we moved in there, of course they had a lot of work that had to be done, and from what we understand they used to have a lot of parties there. And one day one of my sisters was out in the backyard and digging—we found out we had a brick walk back there, because they had parties there—they'd throw their bottles out there and then people would complain, so they would have dirt come in and cover all of it.

GRAHAM: So you actually moved into the house when you were six then?

BRIEL: Yeah.

GRAHAM: OK. So you shared a bedroom I assume?

BRIEL: Oh, yeah. The sister that died that I was closest to, we slept together until I was married ...

GRAHAM: Now ...

BRIEL: And my other two sisters the same way. My two brothers—we had double beds with a big family, you couldn't have a lot of ...

GRAHAM: And your sister who just passed away was Elizabeth, is that right?

BRIEL: Yeah, right. And she was eight years older than me.

GRAHAM: Because it was so cramped, did you have a favorite room of the house besides your bedroom?

BRIEL: I think the kitchen.

GRAHAM: The kitchen ...

BRIEL: Because that's where we all congregated. You know, we just—we had a great big table down there, it was a big kitchen and ... people just went to the kitchen, and we had the coffee pot on all the time. It was just ... very warm.

GRAHAM: Did you all eat breakfast together?

BRIEL: We all had ... and we always waited for my father to come home. We all had dinner together.

GRAHAM: So it was a big room then?

BRIEL: It was a very big room. [Chuckling]

GRAHAM: Do you remember who your neighbors were at all?

BRIEL: Yes on one side, Mrs. Fogarty lived on one side of our house. Her son became a doctor ... on the other side ... Mrs. Fogarty owned the house on the other side of us and they were like three apartments and there was a Mrs. Grogan that lived there ... and ... Mrs. Mitchell and ... couples, and other people that moved in later that I really wasn't that familiar with.

GRAHAM: What about business on the block? Were there any businesses?

BRIEL: There was a printing ... a printing office right there on the ... on the corner of First and C.

GRAHAM: Do you remember the name of it?

BRIEL: No, no I don't but it was ... it was a nice ... and then over across from that was Guthrie's Hotel! And of course they had meals there and everything in their hotel and there was a cleaners right there ... on ... between First and Second on C.

GRAHAM: What was the neighborhood ... was it ... I know on Capital Hill during this time it was segregated for a while but it was becoming more integrated.

BRIEL: Well on D Street.

GRAHAM: Yes, well ...

BRIEL: On D Street there were several black families. And I ... forgot to say too there was a Sanitary which became Safeway, but there was a Sanitary there and a DGS [District Grocery Stores] on the other corner on First and D ...

GRAHAM: Okay and ...

BRIEL: And there were a lot of black families on D Street.

GRAHAM: Did your neighbors change over time or were they basically the same people?

BRIEL: They were basically the same.

GRAHAM: Did they move out about the same time that you did or ...

BRIEL: I think Mrs. Fogarty, she stayed there ... as far as I know she stayed there ... and then she ... I'm pretty sure she stayed there.

GRAHAM: And your father's businesses, were they mainly in your neighborhood ... or were they throughout the city?

BRIEL: They were throughout the city. I know there was one that was in Northwest Washington and the last one that he had was on H Street NE. 1117 H Street.

GRAHAM: You said mainly they sold meat?

BRIEL: Meat. Yes, that was the ... and then he would go to the market to get fresh vegetables but mainly...he didn't have cereal and all that sort of thing in there.

GRAHAM: Did he work in the store as well?

BRIEL: Oh yes. And my two brothers when they were growing up they worked for him too ... delivering and ...

GRAHAM: And they didn't want to take over the business?

BRIEL: No, in fact, my father really kind of discouraged them because it's kind of a big headache but they were both meat cutters ... they—my oldest brother worked for Safeway well, I guess it was still Sanitary and ... so did my brother Duncan and then Duncan went to work for ... GSA [General Services Administration] or for the government.

GRAHAM: Did you ever visit your father or brothers in the store?

BRIEL: Yes, when my father had the store, yes. And my brother, Bill, we used to go his when he worked over in Virginia because ... get some of our meat from him when he worked at the ... Safeway over there.

GRAHAM: Do you remember your father's employees at all?

BRIEL: There were the Lusbys ... Mr. Lusby, he had two sons ... twin sons that I don't think the sons worked for my father but Mr. Lusby did.

GRAHAM: What kind of relationship did your father have with them?

BRIEL: He had a good relationship with them.

GRAHAM: They were close?

BRIEL: Because he had worked with Mr. Lusby when they worked at Kidwell Market, before ...

GRAHAM: So who shopped in the store? Was it mainly local ...

BRIEL: I think it was mainly local ... people that came in.

GRAHAM: Was it a ... do you know if it was a segregated store at all ... or?

BRIEL: I ... I don't think so.

GRAHAM: You don't think so ... and ... after your father died in 1938.

BRIEL: Right.

GRAHAM: And what did your mother do after your father died in order to ...

BRIEL: She rented rooms.

GRAHAM: She rented rooms.

BRIEL: Rented rooms and then ... the older ones, my sister Betty—Elizabeth, she was only 16, but she had just graduated from high school so she got a job. My sister Dorothy—my father didn't believe in ... women working and she had been out of high school for like a year and a half so she had to get a job. And then my two brothers ... they all helped ... and ... to help support us too, so my mother didn't have to go out to work ...

GRAHAM: Sure. So your mother stopped working as a clerk when she married your father?

BRIEL: Oh yes.

GRAHAM: OK. After he passed away, did she ever remarry? Or ...

BRIEL: No.

GRAHAM: No ...

BRIEL: She said she couldn't find anybody else ... that she would ...

GRAHAM: Sure. So did you ever work yourself on the Hill?

BRIEL: Not on ... well I worked over for the ... Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation at First and Indiana which was under ... the Federal Home Loan Bank Board.

GRAHAM: And what did you do there?

BRIEL: Pardon?

GRAHAM: And what did you do there?

BRIEL: I was a secretary.

GRAHAM: Okay. How long did you do that?

BRIEL: Well I started working there ... first I went with ... Alien Property which was Department of Justice which is in the same building ... I was a secretary there and that was right after I got out of high school in 1948. And my sister Ramona worked for Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation and ... so there was a job opening down there so ... I went down and interviewed and got the job there. And I worked there until ... I had my first child which ... I left there in like 1956. I worked for five men and I just ... did not want to stay there. You know some women work until the very last minute ...

GRAHAM: Sure.

BRIEL: But I left kind of like I was three months pregnant and ... so that was in 19—let's see, Dutch was born in ... May of '57 so ... I probably left there in 1956 I guess ... like toward the end of the year.

GRAHAM: Now you moved out to Virginia in ... '51 ...

BRIEL: It was around '51

GRAHAM: But you continued working ...

BRIEL: Oh yes. Yes.

GRAHAM: Okay

BRIEL: We carpooled.

GRAHAM: And you say ... you mentioned high school ... you went to Eastern?

BRIEL: Eastern High School

GRAHAM: Okay. And where is Eastern?

BRIEL: 17th and East Capitol NE.

GRAHAM: OK and ... how large were your classes while you were going there?

BRIEL: They were large ... well ... you mean the number in each ...

GRAHAM: About how many students, yes ...

BRIEL: In the students in each class? I'd say maybe 20 or 25 they weren't really big classes. But that was a big school.

GRAHAM: How large was the school?

BRIEL: It's still there [chuckle] I don't know. I graduated in January because at that time you know that's the way it was, you didn't have to go one full whole year.

GRAHAM: Sure.

BRIEL: And ... I'm not sure how many. The January classes were smaller ... but I would say 200 or more just in the January class ...

GRAHAM: Wow.

BRIEL: Now the June class were like 500 or 600 so ... it was a lot different.

GRAHAM: Did the people who ... went to the school live around the school or ...

BRIEL: Yes.

GRAHAM: And I know that there were no school busses back then ... is that right?

BRIEL: Yes ... took the streetcar.

GRAHAM: The streetcar?

BRIEL: Yes ... and you got a ... school ticket I think they were like ... two cents ... [Laughter] The school tickets were like two cents. [Patricia's husband says three cents] Or you know ... I would ... well three cents. But anyhow ... in the morning I would take a ... streetcar. I'd go up on East Capitol Street get the ... streetcar. And ... I'd usually walk home. You know a group of girls. You know drop them off as you ... go home.

GRAHAM: And you remember when the streetcar ran ... if it was out ... out late or ... if it was open early in the morning?

BRIEL: Oh it was running ... all the time [chuckle] night and day, yes.

GRAHAM: When you were at school do you remember where you bought your clothes?

BRIEL: Down on F Street.

GRAHAM: Down on F Street?

BRIEL: Northwest, yes. F Street was really nice.

GRAHAM: Around Hecht's?

BRIEL: Hecht's, and there was a little ... store that I used to like to go to ... oh I can't think of the name of it where ... it was just a very ... well the Princess Shop was one place I used to go to and I was in a ... sorority in high school and we used to have a lot of formals. I would go and get my gown at ... the Princess Shop, and I can't think of this other ... but it was a small ... dress shop that I used to like to go to.

GRAHAM: What about, what about your hair? Did you do that at home or did you go to ...

BRIEL: Yes. I did it at home. Curled it every night. [Laughter]

GRAHAM: Oh really?

BRIEL: Put it up in bobby pins. [Laughter] Pin curls.

GRAHAM: Your sisters help you?

BRIEL: No I did it myself. And when I was a kid my mother used to save the bread wrappers. You know the wax ... the bread used to come in ... wax paper and then we would curl our hair with those.

[Laughter]

GRAHAM: What about ... school supplies and things like that? Where would you buy ... pencils and pens?

BRIEL: People's. It was People's Drugstore at that time.

GRAHAM: Now when you were at school you played softball, is that right?

BRIEL: I enjoyed sports. I really enjoyed ... phys ed ... I ... enjoyed playing softball ... and ... that was my favorite. Basketball, and volleyball.

GRAHAM: And you played in a vacant lot ...

BRIEL: Yes.

GRAHAM: Where the Congressional Hotel was built ... is that right?

BRIEL: Right.

GRAHAM: In which is now the O'Neill ... Building ...

BRIEL: I don't know what it is but ... [chuckle]

GRAHAM: OK. [Laughter] So ...

BRIEL: Yes, a lot of the ... the boys and the girls in the neighborhood would get together and we'd have a softball game up there. We just had a good time.

GRAHAM: You remember which position you played ... was it ...

BRIEL: Well I would pitch sometimes [chuckle] wherever they wanted me you know. But I mean they were all ages. I mean you know some of them a lot older than me. And there was this young boy that lived up on C Street ... he kept his pony up on the ... on the lot.

GRAHAM: I saw ... and he brought it down for you to ride sometimes, is that right?

BRIEL: Oh no, I didn't ride. No.

GRAHAM: Oh no?

BRIEL: No I'd just go up there and ...

GRAHAM: See the pony.

BRIEL: Yes. [chuckle]

GRAHAM: Were you a fan of the Senators at all?

BRIEL: Yes, later. I think more when my children came along ... out here that's ... I wasn't really into the ... that. Mainly the high school ... teams and everything.

GRAHAM: What other kinds of activities besides the sorority and sports were you involved in?

BRIEL: Well I was a kid ... there was a place called Friendship House, I don't know ... and my sister that was closest to me she was in they had a ... called the Girl Reserves. You had to be ... 12 to belong to it but they made an exception for me, I was only ten. And ... I was part of the group which ... I don't know if it was too good or not because they were all older than me. They were like 12, 14 years old but ... I used to go to that with her.

GRAHAM: How was ... what was the Girl Reserves?

BRIEL: I guess it would be something kind of like maybe the Girl Scouts or something but ... I don't know ... remember that much about it. [chuckle]

GRAHAM: What did you do for entertainment on ...

BRIEL: Well we would ... go to the movies maybe ...

GRAHAM: Do you remember which movie theatres?

BRIEL: The Penn Theatre up on ... Pennsylvania Avenue. Avenue Grand once in awhile, but the Penn was the newest one.

GRAHAM: Do you go to Glen Echo at all?

BRIEL: Oh yes. Or we used to go to the movies downtown where they had the stage shows too. And they'd have the different stars coming. And that was a lot of fun.

GRAHAM: That the Earl Theatre?

BRIEL: Well it was the Capital where they had ... and the Earl but the Capital was the one that really ... was our favorite I think.

GRAHAM: Now I heard that they used to play polo games on the Mall in the 40s. Do you remember seeing any polo game ...

BRIEL: I never went down there for that, no. But we talked about Glen Echo, we ... we enjoyed going out there too.

GRAHAM: Did you go out often ...

BRIEL: Riding the rollercoaster ... well not a whole lot I mean its ... it took money to ... to go out there to spend which you didn't have a lot of times. [chuckle] Or going to the zoo ... we ... we ... my sister we didn't have bikes of our own but ... we would borrow bikes and my sister and another girlfriend of hers ... we packed our lunch and we rode from our house on First Street out to the zoo [chuckle] rode through the fords out there and ... didn't have anything to drink ... we stopped at a ... drugstore on Connecticut Avenue to ... see if we could get a drink of water but they wouldn't give it to us [chuckle].

GRAHAM: Cruel.

BRIEL: So I had a sister who lived on Q Street ... you know she was married so we stopped by her house it was a hot summer day but ... that's where we got our water. [Chuckle]

GRAHAM: What did you do in the summer to ... to keep cool?

BRIEL: Well there wasn't much, I mean we didn't have air conditioning, we had fans and our ... my bedroom was up on the third floor ... so it got pretty hot. But ... I don't know we'd just go outside and ... during the summer we had the band concerts that we always went to up at the Capitol on Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays. And a lot of the ... young kids you know ... we'd go up there for the band concerts.

GRAHAM: What kind of music did they play?

BRIEL: Well they had ... I'm trying to think I think Monday night may have been the Navy Band. I'm not sure. The Army Band was maybe Wednesday night and ... then they had the Marine band ... I forget I forget exactly what order ... they were in but no ... they played you know ... good music at this ...

GRAHAM: What year was that ... about?

BRIEL: Oh golly when I was growing up. It was ... in the 40s.

GRAHAM: In the 40s? ... and what about public pools or ... the Chevy Chase Lake or ...

BRIEL: There was a pool at Fairlawn over in Southeast we would go over there. But maybe ... once or twice in the summer ... or we would go to the Beach. Beverly Beach, which was in ... in Maryland. But I mean we didn't go that often.

GRAHAM: What did you do on the holidays? Did you do the Easter Egg Roll in ...

BRIEL: No well we did it at home. And if it was raining my mother used to set up her ironing board so we could roll the eggs down those [chuckle]. And my mother that's true but think about ... oh and Easter Monday we'd go down to the Mall ... and you could rent bikes down there ... 25 cents an hour ... my mother would put up her watch as collateral ... and we'd take our baskets and you know roll our eggs a little bit. We didn't go to the White though, not the White House or anything. But we'd rent a bike for an hour and just ride around. She sat on the bench while we ... while we did that. [chuckle]

GRAHAM: And she always got her watch back?

BRIEL: Oh yes.

GRAHAM: Do you do trick or treating at all?

BRIEL: No we they didn't do that at that time in D.C.

GRAHAM: Oh.

BRIEL: And there was a lady this Mrs. Grogan that lived next door to us when my sister and I we were ... I guess in our teens or our I forget exactly. And one night she came out and she said I better ... treat the little witches before they trick me and she gave us this napkin full of candy and we ... we didn't know what it was we used to like to play tricks not the treats.

GRAHAM: What kind of things did you do?

BRIEL: Well one time we decorated this person's house and ... we didn't know they were home ... [Laughter] So we had to ... we really ... there were a bunch of us that did it ... but they came over and said something to my Mother so my sister and I ended up going over and cleaning it up. [chuckle] But usually we wouldn't do anything that was destructive ...

GRAHAM: Right.

BRIEL: You know it was just we had a lot of fun because my father didn't like people soaping his windows ... so we were not allowed to do anything like that.

GRAHAM: What did you do on the ... Fourth of July? Did you ... go down and see the fireworks or ...

BRIEL: Oh yes. We would go down to the Capitol ... and sit on the hill there to watch them. And of course you know ... in DC at one time we just had a lot of parades. And they would ... line up on New Jersey Avenue [SE] which was the next street over from us and our street would be ... you know there

was no parking on there but they never really ... used our street like that but ... the parades were a lot of fun.

GRAHAM: Did you entertain at all at home? Did you do dinners or tea parties or ... anything like that at the house?

BRIEL: Well I used to have sorority meetings ... at the house ... and you know the sorority girls and then all the boys would come over afterwards but ... course with a big family my mother was ... we always had somebody there for ... for meals.

GRAHAM: What about dating? Did you ... did you date a lot in high school or ...

BRIEL: No a whole lot in high school ... I think more when I got out of high school I was kind of shy.

GRAHAM: Oh yeah? Were you? What would you do when ... when you did date though ... when you went out on a date ...

BRIEL: Usually just went out to the movies

GRAHAM: And you went to St. Mark's Church right? Is that right?

BRIEL: Right.

GRAHAM: And that's Episcopal?

BRIEL: Right.

GRAHAM: Now how were you involved with the church while you were there?

BRIEL: Well I went to Sunday school. I really didn't go to any youth activities that they had there. And ... when I got older, well my mother and sister and I during Lent the women were allowed to sing in the choir. They had an all male choir for Sunday's and that's the only thing that ...

GRAHAM: Did your family own a car?

BRIEL: Yes.

GRAHAM: You did?

BRIEL: Yes. My father had a ... I don't know if it was called a Oakland or a Opland or something. It was like a big limousine with the seats that would come down ... to take all of us in the ... and usually we'd had other neighborhood kids that would go too, and plus he had a truck for his business.

GRAHAM: But you still used the streetcar a lot here ...

BRIEL: Oh yes. And my sister and I later bought an automobile ourselves but ... no the streetcar—it was so convenient.

GRAHAM: You ride the bus at all or ...

BRIEL: Well when you couldn't get the streetcar if we would ... yes. Like we'd have to take the bus ... when we would go to some of the games I guess ... and then to get over to bar ...

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

GRAHAM: We're on tape 1 side 2. You had just mentioned about the streetcar and when you were traveling on the streetcar ... could you ... talk about that a little bit more?

BRIEL: Well like on Sundays ... you could get a ... pass ... and I guess two with a pass two people could ... ride on it at a certain ... on Sundays only. Or holidays. And a lot of times we'd just get on the streetcar and go for a ride to the end of the line and come back home. And it was a lot of fun going out to Glen Echo ... on the streetcar. Because once they got out to a certain point they would just ... fly along and you know you'd just bounce along. It was a lot of ... it was a lot of fun.

GRAHAM: So Glen Echo was the end of the line?

BRIEL: Yes that was about the end of the line.

GRAHAM: Did you skate at all when you were in ... Washington?

BRIEL: Oh yes.

GRAHAM: Yes?

BRIEL: I'd like to roller-skate ... and in the wintertime when there was ... snow and it was packed down by the cars ... I used to like to go out and ice skate on the street. [chuckle]

GRAHAM: Did you sledding at all in ...

BRIEL: Oh yes.

GRAHAM: Yes?

BRIEL: Oh yes ... And we would go up to the Capitol ... and sleigh ride and ... it was ... what they call the west front of the Capitol I guess where all the steps are and ... we were out there sleigh riding ... and we would ... well I would go down one flight. My sister thought she would be smart and she would go down two flights. She went up in the air ... luckily she wasn't hurt. She broke her sled but ... but yes we would ... and sometimes you'd try to roller-skate up there but then they would make you go away ... shoo you away. [chuckle]

GRAHAM: But no one ever got injured?

BRIEL: No. Except well I'll tell you there was a little girl that ... she went to school with my sister she had the short arms ... and she was roller-skating up there and she fell and couldn't catch herself and she ... she was killed.

GRAHAM: Oh really ...

BRIEL: Yes and she was in like I think in like fourth or fifth grade.

GRAHAM: Now you were young when the Depression was going on ... but do you remember at all how it ... affected his stores or his ... business?

BRIEL: Well that's how he really lost his ... his business ... during the Depression ... yes but they really kind of kept us kept it from the youngest ones but my two brothers and all they really ... things were pretty tough. That's what one of my sisters was saying because our Christmas was going to be kind of bleak and ... so my two older sisters ... with all they wanted was a volleyball ... and they were happy to get it and ... and my oldest brother Bill ... he had ... unbeknownst to my parents he had went out and he had gotten me a little red fire engine and ... and a snowsuit and all that so it was just ... and it was one sister said it was the best Christmas we ever had.

GRAHAM: Oh really ...

BRIEL: So...

GRAHAM: Your other siblings weren't jealous?

BRIEL: Oh no. No. They weren't.

GRAHAM: And how did you end up trying to save during that period in order to ... get through the economic downturn?

BRIEL: Well I was so young ... I wasn't even aware ... of how ... my mother was very saving about everything. She said like when they were first married with my father having his own store, she didn't even save leftovers. She would just throw them out. Then when the Depression came she found out she really had to ... save and it was really better. The leftovers a lot of times were a lot of times a lot better anyway.

GRAHAM: You were about 12 when World War II started is that right?

BRIEL: Yes.

GRAHAM: About 12 ... do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

BRIEL: I was at home I just ... well my oldest sister she hadn't been married too long ... she had got married the 20th of November and ... I'm not sure ... I guess I was just at home.

GRAHAM: By that point some of your siblings were getting married ... how many people were still living at home?

BRIEL: Well my sister Betty was still there. And Ramona. Just ... yes ... that's ...

GRAHAM: Just the three of you then?

BRIEL: And I think ... Yes.

GRAHAM: And your brothers ... were they married as well?

BRIEL: Oh. Well let's see ... my brother Bill got married ... he got married in 1940 and my brother Duncan ... not long ... there were three of them that got married within a year and a half. My sister Dorothy got married in '41 so ...

GRAHAM: Was it a lot quieter once they left?

BRIEL: I never ... I don't think really that ... it didn't ever seem that noisy unless I was used to it.
[chuckle]

GRAHAM: How did Washington change in the lead up and in the start of the war? Do you remember how it affected your neighborhood?

BRIEL: Well you know we have the ... blackouts. And of course right up there at the House office building in the atrium there ... they had the Army up there. They had tents ... set up in there. We always saw the soldiers the Army around in the neighborhood.

GRAHAM: What was your relationship with them? Did you interact at all?

BRIEL: No.

GRAHAM: I heard there were a lot of guards posted around the Potomac in order to protect the water supply and around the Lincoln Memorial to protect it from Japanese bombers ... did you notice at all any type of tight security measures around your neighborhood?

BRIEL: You know I really don't remember that part of it either.

GRAHAM: Was your school used for any type of wartime purpose when you were there?

BRIEL: Not that I recall. No.

GRAHAM: You don't remember? I heard that the hours that school ran though changed during the war ... is that right?

BRIEL: I can't even remember exactly what the hours were ... but—oh, we'd have paper drives ... that what ... see I lived on ... like down on First Street. I went to Hine Junior High School which was up on Seventh Street [SE]. And we would have a paper drive and I would carry as many newspapers ... I had to walk to school. Because we'd have a paper drive and you know your different sections of the school ... you know you'd try to outdo the other classes. I would carry stacks of newspapers ... to school. That was during the war.

GRAHAM: About ten pounds you carried?

BRIEL: I don't know but it was a lot.

GRAHAM: Very heavy?

BRIEL: Very heavy. Especially when you have all that distance to walk too.

GRAHAM: You sell war bonds at all ... or anything like ...

BRIEL: No I didn't do that, no.

GRAHAM: Do you remember what was rationed during the war at all?

BRIEL: Shoes and sugar and meat. [chuckle] In fact I have one of the ... I think I had one of my ration books around here somewhere.

GRAHAM: Oh really? I saw that nylons were also rationed?

BRIEL: Oh yes.

GRAHAM: Did rationing of shoes or nylons or anything like that affect how you went about your daily life? Did you find new ways to ... deal with those issues?

BRIEL: No. I don't think. Of course I didn't wear many nylons that much then. I was younger then. Most girls didn't wear them that often.

GRAHAM: Do you think it hurt local business at all? The rationing?

BRIEL: I guess maybe it could ... I mean ... if you ... you know ... if they couldn't get the supply. And chewing gum that was hard to come by. [chuckle] I was ... I had a cousin ... he was in the Navy over in ... the South Pacific and he sent some clothes home with some chewing gum in it and it had moth balls in it and the chewing gum had that moth ball flavor in it but we chewed the gum. It was good to get it. And bananas. Another thing. There was a lot of things that you just couldn't get then.

GRAHAM: Now there was a big housing shortage during the war. Because of the new people moving in for the government and I know that the rents skyrocketed ... due to that. Did that affect your family at all due to the ... or anyone you knew ...

BRIEL: No I don't think so.

GRAHAM: No?

BRIEL: No. It didn't affect us at all.

GRAHAM: And you had said that you had let out a room in your house ... was it during this period or was that later?

BRIEL: Yes it had to be during that period. Because this one man ... and I told you he lived with us for 11 years ... so I ... that would involve part of that time, yes.

GRAHAM: So he was a man who came to Washington to work for the government during ...

BRIEL: No he worked in a ... I think it was called the B&B Cafeteria right up there on the avenue. On B Street.

GRAHAM: And do you remember any of the air raid drills or blackout drills that they did at school?

BRIEL: Oh yes.

GRAHAM: Did they do that a lot?

BRIEL: Not a whole lot but I remember them ... yes it was kind of exciting. [chuckle]

GRAHAM: Oh yes?

BRIEL: With everything ... all the lights out and everything.

GRAHAM: And after the war, there was still housing construction that went on. How did that affect the neighborhood? Were there new buildings in the area? New businesses?

BRIEL: I think ... that it stayed just about the same ... as far as I remember.

GRAHAM: I saw that there was a lot of ... big problems with drinking and alcoholism after the war ... and that the highest alcoholism arrest rates in the country were in Washington ... did you really experience any type of a big problem with public drinking or anything?

BRIEL: I never really noticed it, no.

GRAHAM: So gambling was also a problem, but ... no experience with that?

BRIEL: I ... no.

GRAHAM: In the early 50s there was a Congressional inquiry into the D.C. police and they found that the police was very corrupt. What did you think of the police during that time ... were they known for that in Washington or ... was that a surprise?

BRIEL: I don't know I've heard of how they would ... take bets and that sort of thing but ... I just never gave it that much thought really.

GRAHAM: In 1949 the sales tax started in D.C ... did that affect the ... were people angry at the sales tax at all or ... just kind of rolled with it?

BRIEL: I guess you just kind of accepted it. I really ... I don't really remember that part either about ...

GRAHAM: OK. So in 1954 ... D.C. schools became integrated. And leading up to that there was a lot of integration that was happening in the businesses in Washington. Did you notice that at all?

BRIEL: Well see I got married in 1953 so ... where I worked I mean there ... are you talking about where I worked too?

GRAHAM: Sure.

BRIEL: But where I you know where I ... there were just all white people really that I worked with. Except you know in the mailroom they had people you know that delivered the mail right? But you know I was never prejudice, because we always had there like I said there was a lot of blacks, black families on D Street. In fact I used to play with some of the kids growing up.

GRAHAM: Oh really?

BRIEL: So I just never felt ... prejudice at all.

GRAHAM: So in the early 50s you moved away with your mother and two sisters to ...

BRIEL: Just one sister.

GRAHAM: One sister. To Arlington. And why did your family decide to move? Why did your mother decide to move?

BRIEL: Well the neighborhood had changed a lot. And it was too big of house for my mother, and so we found a smaller place over in Arlington and ... I had a brother there at that time so ... that was the reason.

GRAHAM: How had the neighborhood changed when you say it changed a lot?

BRIEL: Well ... you didn't feel as safe [chuckle].

GRAHAM: Yes?

BRIEL: Yes, at one time ... you know growing up you left your door unlocked and you couldn't do it at ... you know it had completely changed. It was ... other people moving in I guess and everything ... it's growing up in D.C. it was like a small town ... it was just so different. But after the war it ... it did change a lot.

GRAHAM: It was just a higher crime rates or ...

BRIEL: I think there was a higher crime rate.

GRAHAM: And more people?

BRIEL: More people, yes.

GRAHAM: But you had the same neighbors?

BRIEL: Well just right next door. Yes.

GRAHAM: But the streets around you changed a lot?

BRIEL: Well in fact like I said we had that house right next door where they had like an apartment, and this couple they had a baby, and she had gotten out of the car she and her husband, she left her pocketbook on seat of the car well I saw a man take it.

GRAHAM: Oh really?

BRIEL: So then the police car came and I had to ride around in the police car you know looking for the person but that's how it had changed too. Of course that was her stupidity leaving the ... on the seat.

GRAHAM: So you think your mom was scared at all?

BRIEL: She was a little. I think I was more scared than she was. [chuckle] If I went somewhere and had to come home on the streetcar she's the one at night she'd come up there and meet me at the streetcar.

GRAHAM: And what did ... and what happened to the house? Who did you sell it to?

BRIEL: Well someone else bought it. And ... they ... refurbished it or whatever and sold it. I think they sold it for 24,000 at that time. And then of course I don't know how much time. That block was condemned by the government.

GRAHAM: Right.

BRIEL: And in case they wanted to take it over so ... I don't know how long the people finally lived there that when it was finally taken over.

GRAHAM: Where did the rest of your family move? Did they all stay in Washington?

BRIEL: Oh well they all stayed in Washington. They ... trying to think of my brother Duncan he lived over in ... off of Minnesota Avenue [SE]. Had an apartment at that time. They were all in the area and then some eventually moved out here to Prince Georges County and in Virginia.

GRAHAM: Right. What did you notice between living on Capitol Hill and then when you moved to Arlington?

BRIEL: Arlington it was ... never really felt like home. Not like Washington. It was a nice area. Smaller home. My mother was happier there because she didn't have so much work to do or anything. I wasn't there too long when I got married.

GRAHAM: Now how did you meet your husband?

BRIEL: At a boy meet girl dance at the Roosevelt Hotel.

GRAHAM: OK.

BRIEL: And we come to find out we had mutual friends. He went to the same high school.

GRAHAM: Oh really?

BRIEL: He went there when my sister did. Of course he got out before I did. He got out in ... '43. And so we met in January we were married in November. [chuckle]

GRAHAM: What year was that?

BRIEL: We got married in 1953.

GRAHAM: And then did you stay in Arlington then? Or did you move to ...

BRIEL: Oh no. We moved over to Southeast. Over near Bolling Field. And we had an apartment over there ... I think it was 5419 Third Street SE. Then he got a job at Airco which is which was here in Riverdale. So we moved to Riverdale and that was ... I think 5419 53rd St. [chuckle] Then after that we lived there for ... a few years and then we moved here in 1960.

GRAHAM: Okay. So you moved out of Washington because it was ... becoming a different kind of neighborhood ...

BRIEL: Yes.

GRAHAM: But then you moved back into Washington a couple years later when you got married ...

BRIEL: Right.

GRAHAM: Was there ... was there any apprehension in coming back? Were you glad to come back to Washington?

BRIEL: No. No there wasn't any apprehension and I guess it was closer to our job. I didn't have a car and it was ... he was working in DC at the time. I think he was working in DC ... for Shutting and Company. Yes. So that's what ...

GRAHAM: Was ...

BRIEL: So that's what ...

GRAHAM: Was the neighborhood better at all where you moved to than where you ...

BRIEL: The apartment?

GRAHAM: Yes.

BRIEL: Yes it was a nice neighborhood at that time.

GRAHAM: Do you stay close with your family after ...

BRIEL: Oh yes. We're very close.

GRAHAM: Well those are all the questions I have. In thinking about the different things we've gone over ... in thinking about the Depression, and the war, and then after the war and then moving, is there anything that you think that I've missed or is there anything that you'd like to mention, you know that you thought was a really important part about living in Washington we haven't talked about?

BRIEL: I don't know if this is so important but I just wrote different things down ... you know a huckster would come to our house every week selling vegetables. And ... we had the Standard Coffee man. Man that came by in the summer ... little Italian man with a cart selling snowballs. Flavors that were really good. And another man would come through ... usually on Fridays selling ... you'd hear hollering—butter! Fish! I thought that would be pretty neat. [chuckle]

GRAHAM: So if everyone came to your door selling everything you needed, how often did you go to the store?

BRIEL: Maybe once a week and we didn't have ... I told you we had that Sanitary down there on the corner and of course when you went in there ... it's not like now you go in with your basket and pick out what you want. You had to tell the clerk what you wanted and he had to go and get it off the shelf. And they finally closed and it we had to go up on ... Pennsylvania Avenue and then later my older sister that was married we'd have to go to the Giant on 15th and H ... around 15th and H to get groceries. But I'll tell you another thing which was a lot of fun growing up on Capitol Hill. We would go up to the House office building and they would let us ride the subway.

GRAHAM: Oh really?

BRIEL: That was a lot of fun, of course you could not do that now. [chuckle]

GRAHAM: Yes.

BRIEL: That was ... that was a lot of fun.

GRAHAM: Did you do that a lot or ...

BRIEL: Well I guess ... quite often and we used to go up there and we would walk not where the subway was but we could walk through like a tunnel going through there we'd walk all through there ... go up to the Capitol and you could walk up the stairs ... spiral stairs up to the top of the Capitol.

GRAHAM: To the dome.

BRIEL: It was just you know we would go down to the museums ... it was like our playground. We would go down there and go through the museums. It was just so different growing up then. Not like it's just ...

GRAHAM: Fewer people you mean? It was fewer people or more access ...

BRIEL: I guess fewer people. I guess you just ... well right now you just can't do any of those things. I guess after the war a lot of things changed too. When I was in a sorority ... this is kind of not anything really but ...

GRAHAM: Sure.

BRIEL: For the initiation I had to push a peanut up the hill in front of the Earl Theatre.

GRAHAM: Oh really? How did you do that?

BRIEL: With my nose. [chuckle]

GRAHAM: Oh ... no! How far ...

BRIEL: Hands and knees ... had to go up the whole hill.

GRAHAM: But you did it.

BRIEL: I did it. My mother was down there. I didn't know she was going to be down there for these different things. We had to go beg for fish at a restaurant ... crazy stuff ... but it was it was a lot of fun.

GRAHAM: So your mother watched you do this?

BRIEL: She watched me and I'll tell you I had a swollen nose after that too.

GRAHAM: Did she say anything to you afterwards?

BRIEL: Oh she got a kick out of it.

GRAHAM: Yes.

BRIEL: Yes. She really ...

GRAHAM: Did your sisters pledge the same sorority?

BRIEL: Well no because the sister that I was closest to see we didn't have a whole lot of money after my father died so she's the one that really paid for me to be able to join a sorority. It was just a high school but you did have to spend money to belong to it. I was trying to ... there was an ice cream plant right down the street from us too ... on Ivy Street SW [ed: more likely Ivy Street SE].

GRAHAM: Can you remember the name of the plant?

BRIEL: You know I cannot remember. And Maura's furniture. That was right down on First Street. Zola Liquor Store. Oh, we used to go down to Garfield Playground.

GRAHAM: Oh yes?

BRIEL: It was real nice. And they had a small swimming pool ... I don't ... might have been a little bit bigger than this room ... I know ... wasn't very big but we used to have a lot of fun going down there.

GRAHAM: Was it a big playground?

BRIEL: It's a big playground. I think it's still there.

GRAHAM: Is it?

BRIEL: And I went to Dent Elementary School which is right down there too. And of course we still get together for high school reunions every year. We're with the 50 plus reunions we go over to University of Maryland and I think the last time there were about 400 ... 400 people there ...

GRAHAM: A lot of the people still live in the area?

BRIEL: A lot of them are still around here. And then of course some do come from out West you know where they've moved, but quite a few of them still live right around here. And there was a lady from the class of 1926. [chuckle]

GRAHAM: Really? This year?

BRIEL: Last year ... when we were there.

GRAHAM: Wow.

BRIEL: A lot of gray-haired people. But it's a lot of fun we sing the high school song and ... and just have a good time getting together. I was trying to think ... my good friend her father was the shoemaker across the street from us ... Pasqualli's ... Pasqualli Aquileano.

GRAHAM: Pasqualli Aquileano?

BRIEL: Yes.

GRAHAM: That a ... last name or ...

BRIEL: Aquileano is the last name and ... they had the shoe shop right over there on the corner of First and D. Well her name well her sister is Antoinette. Antoinette is still living ... and I ran with her sister Mary but I was in Antoinette's wedding. Antoinette is still living ... she lives out at Leisure World. But ... just trying to think if there's anything else that ... well and the Trover Shop too and I think that's still up there on the Avenue too ... I think that's been up there for years. The card shop. The Trover Shop.

GRAHAM: I don't know the ... what is the Trover Shop?

BRIEL: Well it's ... they sold cards. Greeting cards. And I guess other little knickknacks and everything.

GRAHAM: And where was that?

BRIEL: It was right up there on ... Pennsylvania Avenue. They may have moved to ... I know they're still up there because I'm pretty sure they are because I met this lady one time ... she said she worked for Trover Shop. And she had been right there on Pennsylvania Avenue and then I think they had another ... store elsewhere. Maybe in Northwest.

GRAHAM: But that one closed down you say?

BRIEL: I don't think so. No, I think it's still there.

GRAHAM: Oh they're both still open?

BRIEL: Mm hmm, and you know different restaurants up there, there was a Chinese restaurant and a Little Tavern, of course there was the bank up there, O'Donnell's ... Drug Store, and ... you forget about a lot of the, you know, the places. I mean I didn't know the names of them, but there were a lot of places up there. And we used to just go out and walk. We didn't ride a lot of places like people do now. We just did a lot of walking.

GRAHAM: Just to ... in order to ...

BRIEL: For entertainment I guess.

GRAHAM: Where did you like to walk?

BRIEL: We'd go up on the Avenue and just walk around. [Laughter]

GRAHAM: Which avenue?

BRIEL: Pennsylvania Avenue.

GRAHAM: Pennsylvania Avenue, just walk down Pennsylvania ...

BRIEL: Yeah.

GRAHAM: Avenue.

BRIEL: Mm hmm, we usually walked just about everywhere. And my sister and I, we, like I said, worked on the other side of the Capitol. A lot of times we would walk home from there.

GRAHAM: When you were working, where would you get lunch?

BRIEL: We usually took our lunch and they had a cafeteria in the building, but I would usually pack a lunch and then get coffee or whatever.

GRAHAM: Well, unless you have any other thoughts ...

BRIEL: No, well when I worked, you might, this might of a little bit of interest, to the McCarthy Committee was in the same building too, and Robert Kennedy, he was on that committee at that time, which we would see him up in the cafeteria, which was a little, when you think about it, was something a little different.

GRAHAM: Did you have chance to meet him at all? Or say ...

BRIEL: No, no. We'd just see him from a distance, you know.

GRAHAM: Sure, sure.

BRIEL: I can't think of anything else that ... I think I probably covered most everything and it was just ... I'm glad I grew up in DC.

GRAHAM: You think you got a lot out of it that you couldn't have gotten somewhere else?

BRIEL: I don't know about that, but I mean it was just, oh we had so many nice places we could go to, like I said, the museums and everything where a lot of people don't have that where they live, it's just ... I loved going to the museums and ... you know growing up with it you don't realize what you have, if you didn't have it. It's just to us it was just a part of growing up I guess, living there.

GRAHAM: Now they didn't have all of the museums, they had the Air and Space Museum which was built in ...

BRIEL: Well that came, more like the Air and Space, but we used to go to the Natural History and I forget what the other one was ... you know just it was so nice to be able to go down there. Of course, during the war they had those houses down there, the office buildings, those temporaries down there.

GRAHAM: On the Mall?

BRIEL: Yeah.

GRAHAM: Oh really?

BRIEL: Mm hmm, during the War. Then they tore those down. And another thing, you know how kids now when it gets hot weather they let the kids get in those fountains, we couldn't put our big toe in them, you'd get in trouble. It was strict ...

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE2

TAPE 2/SIDE 1

GRAHAM: This is tape 2, side 1. This is Adam Graham interviewing Patricia Briel. We were just talking about constructing temporary houses on the Mall I guess during wartime and during World War II. Who are these houses for?

BRIEL: Well, they were really office buildings. Temporary—I guess maybe the War Department, I'm not sure what they ... I think it was the War Department that they had these temporary buildings down there.

GRAHAM: Now, how did they construct them?

BRIEL: There were just big, they were just white, looked like asbestos maybe, you know, the shingles or something. As I remember they were white buildings, I'm not even sure how they constructed them there. Or maybe they brought them in ... like army barracks type of thing, I don't know.

GRAHAM: Sure. Now you said before that there were a bunch of tents that were pitched on the ...

BRIEL: Well, that was in the House Office Building, the atrium of the House Office Building. That's where the soldiers, you know, the army ... was there.

GRAHAM: So you didn't notice at all in your local community, with all these different soldiers coming in—to me, it seems like business would be booming, you have all these new customers, did you see many more faces walking around? Did the businesses seem to be doing a lot better?

BRIEL: Well, I'm not sure about the businesses, but I mean you did, you were aware of the soldiers, I mean they were right the next block up from us and around the neighborhood, but I don't know how it affected the businesses.

GRAHAM: What happened to the museums when the temporary buildings were on the Mall? Did they ...

BRIEL: Well, the museums were still there.

GRAHAM: They were still there.

BRIEL: Oh, yes.

GRAHAM: You just had to walk around the buildings.

BRIEL: Well, the Mall was more open there, it's not, I can't really explain exactly where those ... where they ... do you remember where the buildings were exactly? Do you remember the buildings on the Mall? [Laughter] I can't ... I'm not sure that I exactly ...

GRAHAM: Was it more towards the monument? Or ...

BRIEL: Well not that far down.

GRAHAM: No?

BRIEL: Not too far from the Capitol.

GRAHAM: Well, that's interesting. Well, I thank you again and I appreciate your time and I know the Overbeck Project appreciates your time and I'd just like to say thank you again. And we will be sending you a transcript of this ...

BRIEL: OK.

GRAHAM: very soon. And thank you very much.

BRIEL: Sure.

END OF INTERVIEW