



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK  
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

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**Interview with Albert Samuel Turner**

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**Transcriber:** Sandra Schmidt



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*[Also present during this interview was Mrs. Albert Turner and their son Steve Turner.  
The interview took place at the interviewee's home in Springfield, VA.]*

TAPE 1/SIDE 1

**A. TURNER:** We're sitting at the edge of the park, a snow-covered park. [laughter because the Turner's home is on the edge of a park.]

**SCHMIDT:** OK, well to get started, we were just talking about your father and what your remembrances of him were.

**A. TURNER:** My father was a pharmacist for Peoples Drug Stores. He was the pharmacist on North Capitol Street across from the Government Printing Office, and that's where he met my mother [Albert's father was Albert Sylvester Turner and his mother Mary Fadeley Turner]. But Peoples had a strict rule that you couldn't date and work in the same location. You know back in those days. So he transferred to 15<sup>th</sup> and H Street NE on the corner of Benning Road and H Street and Bladensburg Road ran off from that, and he was the pharmacist there when he died [1935]. People in the neighborhood called him Doc because they'd get sick, and they'd come to him, and he'd tell them something to buy or else "I'll fix something for you."

So, I still have the patent that he made. If you buy Peoples brand toothpaste, that was my father's concoction, and I don't think he ever got paid any extra for that, but he had degrees, like he went to pathology school, working with the feet, and correspondence courses.

Prior to 1934 a pharmacist didn't have to go to college. He'd just go work and knowledge was passed down from an older pharmacist, and you made all your pills. As a matter of fact there is an apothecary jar sitting right there [indicating a jar on the top shelf of a glass case] and he used to mash all the pills and make them all and put them in the capsules. They wouldn't, you know, go to get a jar of pills and just count out so many. But he loved his work, and I'd go a lot of times. They'd take me over to see him at the drug store. Why I was only five or six, because I was seven when he died. And I loved cod liver oil. It was white like milk, but it tasted like fish. And I called it "fish," and he kept a pint jar of it back in the prescription counter, and I'd go and I'd get me some swigs of that, and I loved it and it was good for me. And, it was just an odd thing. I hated castor oil and milk of magnesia, and all that we used in those days.

But, I lived with my aunt and my mother after my father died. My grandmother [Ella Ophella Turner] died in '39 and my grandfather [Samuel Albert Turner] died in '40.

**KREINHEDER:** Where were you living when you were a small child?

**A. TURNER:** Well, let's start at the beginning. I was born [on July 7, 1928] at 1221 C Street SE, right off South Carolina Avenue. We lived there for only about a year and it was between 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> street. Right across C Street was a little block of just two apartment buildings, and they were on the 13<sup>th</sup> Street corner of South Carolina Avenue. And there was four apartments, and those apartments in those days had closed-in porches on the back of them. We had a second-story apartment with a porch, and of course when my father—my father had only one artery leading to his heart and he had an enlarged heart, and back in those days they weren't going in people's chests like they are now-a-days. So, it got too much for him going up those steps and all, so we moved in with my uncle who lived at 12<sup>th</sup> Street SE. We lived in 1210, he lived in 1212 and the Grahams lived at 1206.

**KREINHEDER:** And this was C not G?

**A. TURNER:** We moved to G Street from the apartment after I was born and lived there for a couple years, and then we moved in with my grandmother and grandfather on 1210 G Street SE. And my Aunt Elsie, lived at 1206, same row of houses—they were like townhouses. It was two bedrooms and we all had certain places where we'd sleep. My uncle and I had the back bedroom, and my grandmother and grandfather had the front bedroom. My mother slept in a little alcove underneath the steps where the steps came down.

[Note: an addendum at the end of this transcript provides addresses for the Albert S. Turner family, as found in city directories for that period.]

This is 1930, probably 1934, and my father was getting pretty bad then, and the doctor only gave him a certain length of time to live. So, we had a friend that had a cottage, a one-story cottage, down at Cobb Island. Maryland. That's down below Waldorf, like you're heading down towards that Harry Nice Bridge down 301. So, we spent a year down there, and my mother kept me out of school, so I missed a year and a little longer out of school. And of course the other kids were passing me by. So, I started school in the kindergarten at five years old, that's Cranch—[correcting himself] Tyler School and that encompassed grades kindergarten, one, two and three. And that was in the 500, let's see—600 block of 11<sup>th</sup> Street SE. The old John Tyler School. There is still a John Tyler there, but it's not the same school [chuckles].

**KREINHEDER:** Where was Cranch?

**A. TURNER:** Cranch was at 12<sup>th</sup> and G [Street SE], right across the street from where I lived. So when you got into the fourth grade, fourth, fifth and sixth, you went to Cranch. So I went to Cranch. Now both of them, the old Tyler has been torn down, Cranch is no longer a school there. And then I went to seventh grade—seventh, eighth and ninth—at Hine Junior School up at Seventh and Pennsylvania Avenue SE up

near the Penn Theater, and went there to the ninth grade. And then I went to Eastern High School, which I graduated from ... Eastern, that's 17<sup>th</sup> and East Capitol NE. But all the kids in southeast went to Eastern. Half the kids in southwest went to Eastern, and Anacostia kids used to come to Eastern, but then they built Anacostia High School in 1938.

But one of the interesting things that you'd probably like to know about—we lived at 12<sup>th</sup> and G [Street SE] which was three blocks down from the Commandant of the Marine Corps' house, and our street was all cobblestone. And a lot of streets in the District were cobblestone. I don't know whether you know the story of how that happened to be, but all these ships used to come to Alexandria and Georgetown, and these cobblestones were ballast. But when they got all their merchandise and all off, they didn't no longer need that ballast, so they sold it to the District government. And the District government used it to pave the street with [chuckles]. Well, of course, living in a place that had cobblestone, you couldn't really buy skates, because you couldn't skate on cobblestones. We had ice skates, and when it iced up we were able to move around a little with that, but in 1939 they black-topped all of our streets. And boy the kids just started buying the roller skates, and we were having a ball. [laughter]. And of course there weren't that many cars in those days.

My father had a car. But most of the people rode the streetcars, and I'll tell you I wish that the subway today was efficient and as good at moving people as the old DC Transit. You could go anywhere you wanted to go, and I can remember when school—you'd get a book of school tickets, 30 school tickets in a little book, and it was only three to five cents, and you could ride. Now I walked from 12<sup>th</sup> and G [Street SE] to 17<sup>th</sup> and East Capitol NE, which was a pretty good walk, every day except a rainy day. And if it was raining real hard, I'd use my little ticket, and I'd go down to Barney Circle. I'd take the streetcar to Barney Circle. Then I'd take a bus from there to 17<sup>th</sup> and East Capitol.

**KREINHEDER:** What did the streetcars do when it snowed?

**A. TURNER:** They had great big plows.

**KREINHEDER:** They could continue to operate.

**A. TURNER:** I can remember back in the 30s and 40s, we would walk up Pennsylvania Avenue to go up to either of the movies. We had three principal movies—the old Academy Theater on Eighth Street [SE] near the Marine Barracks, the Avenue Grand was at 600 block of Pennsylvania Avenue, and the Penn Theater. Now the old Academy played low budget movies, but you could go there for a dime and see three movies. And then on certain nights, like Friday night they would pick so many tickets—you'd get a little ticket with a number on it—and you'd win some pretty nice prizes. I won a couple of prizes on

Friday night, prize night, [chuckles]. And we had one girl, one young, well she wasn't young, well she was young—Margaret, and I can't think of Margaret's last name, but Margaret wasn't playing with a full deck of cards, and she loved Roy Rogers, and boy we would go to the Academy Theater, and it had a cement floor, and you could tell where Margaret was because she'd get so excited that she would mark her area. [laughter]. And she loved Gene Autry. Now is there anything else that?

**KREINHEDER:** You were talking about the Academy Theater. I think I know where it is, but kind of across the street, the Academy was on the West side of Eighth street right? Across from ...

**A. TURNER:** The Academy was on the West side.

**KREINHEDER:** Across the street from there, there's a big building, it was ...

**A. TURNER:** The bank was on ...

**KREINHEDER:** It was built as an Odd Fellows Hall, a real tall building. What was that building used for when you were a kid?

**A. TURNER:** Now that, was it on the corner?

**KREINHEDER:** No, it's kind of in the middle of the block. It would be almost ...

**A. TURNER:** There was a funeral home in the middle of the block. There was an oyster house in the middle of the block. There was a clothing store. There was a big bank on the corner. That would be on the southeast corner.

**KREINHEDER:** That's down near the Marine commandant's house, right?

**A. TURNER:** That's right.

**KREINHEDER:** The bank is down near the Marine commandant's house.

**A. TURNER:** It was the corner of Eighth and G. There was a drug store on one corner. The Marine Barracks was on the other corner. The other corner had, well the Academy Theater ... was a couple doors up, but there was a big bank on the corner. And if you wanted shoes, you went to Lemler's.

**KREINHEDER:** Where was that?

**A. TURNER:** That was across from the fire house up on the next block on Eighth Street. And then of course you had the number 94 and 92 streetcars used to come out of the car barn, right at the entrance of

the Navy Yard. On M street, there was a car barn, and you could catch them and go to Georgia and Alaska [Avenues], way up northwest.

**KREINHEDER:** Closer down to you on Pennsylvania Avenue, between Eighth Street and like 12<sup>th</sup> Street and on towards Barney Circle. Was there a lot of commercial along there on Pennsylvania Avenue?

**A. TURNER:** A lot of what?

**KREINHEDER:** Commercial, like stores ...

**A. TURNER:** Yeah. Well, of course you had the old Navy Hospital home, there at Ninth and Pennsylvania Avenue. That was Spanish American War, and I had an uncle that was a Spanish American War vet, and he could stay there any time he wanted to, and that, oh, they used it as a hospital in the Civil War. I think it is still there.

**KREINHEDER:** It is. But did he, was it more like a retirement home, or old folks home, or it has to be military?

**A. TURNER:** It was mostly Spanish American War veterans, and it was military. My uncle always kept his papers. He ended up dying in the veteran's home up in Martinsburg.

**KREINHEDER:** Then east of that would have been Frager's, because Frager's would have been ...

**A. TURNER:** Fragers. I knew all the Fragers.

**KREINHEDER:** So you knew, you actually knew the Fragers?

**A. TURNER:** Oh, I knew George and all the Fragers. They had two sons. Their two sons worked there, and then they had a boy my age. He was George's son, Eddie Frager, and he had a hardware store business when he grew up. Up in northwest.

**KREINHEDER:** But then going east from Frager's, were there more small stores along Pennsylvania?

**A. TURNER:** On that block where Frager's was, on the corner was a cleaners. You had Fischer's Bakery, which was—we would line up on Sunday morning and get these pans of rolls. And people would be lined from the whole neighborhood. When they pulled them hot out of the oven, we'd buy round pans of rolls. They had good bakery stuff. Then you had a drugstore up on the corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and—I can't remember the name of that drugstore ...

**KREINHEDER:** Was that Fealy's?

**A. TURNER:** Fealy's drugstore, and across the street from him was Bob's Liquor. Now Bob lived around on G Street [SE] in the next block that I lived on, and they had [chuckles] they had a call box right in front of the liquor store. A police call box. So I was walking up there one day, and this fellow that lived—he was a World War II vet and he went in when the war first started—all of the National Guard reported to the old hotel at Sixth and Pennsylvania Avenue NW, where the Indians used to sit when they came to town, and they'd stay in this ... hotel. A lot of them are buried in Congressional Cemetery. But, I can remember the ...

**S. TURNER:** Why were they coming to town?

**A. TURNER:** Government business.

**KREINHEDER:** They wanted money from the government.

**A. TURNER:** And land, and protect their land. A lot of different reasons. But ...

**KREINHEDER:** What was down at the Salvation Army place that was near where you lived?

**A. TURNER:** Salvation Army. It used to be in a store-front building up at Barracks Row on Eighth Street [SE], between G and I. In 1941, they laid the cornerstone for the Salvation Army, there right across the street from my house, in '41. And the first head of the Corps was a man named Lonnie Knight. He was a captain in the Salvation Army. But the Salvation Army evidently, see [chuckles] that house was actually my grandfather's and my aunt, which is his sister [Elsie Turner Graham]. They owned a big two-story house there that the Salvation Army bought. That was 1211 G Street. What happened ...

**KREINHEDER:** And what was the name of your grandfather, what was the name of the people that owned that house?

**A. TURNER:** My grandfather, Samuel Albert Turner and his sister. He was Samuel Albert, and I'm Albert Samuel. And my father was Albert Sylvester Turner. But the Salvation Army used to come and have their open-air. They'd bring their music and preach and right on the street corner right there at 12<sup>th</sup> and G, because they knew that they would eventually probably were going to build a building there at that land. But the funny thing, that piece of land had a great big tree in the back yard. And it had—it was like a gum tree, because it had great big knots, but you could just step up. So all the kids in the neighborhood, girls and boys, would all sit in the tree and just talked and had a good time. Well we had, in those days, every ethnic group in the world lived on G Street SE. We had Italians, Irish, British, Polish. You name it and it was all of ...

**S. TURNER:** Jewish?

**A. TURNER:** Jewish, because Abelman's store was a grocery store on the corner, and I worked for Mr. Abelman when I was probably eight and nine. I would sweep his store out, and replace the canned goods, and one of the main things that I would do, is—he had a kerosene oil tank. A great big tank with a crank thing on it, and you could crank a gallon of kerosene. People would come to buy it. And I'd do that job. Another thing about the grocery store [chuckles], every Saturday I'd be working in there for Mr. Abelman, and the rabbi would come. And the rabbi's church was up at, behind the firehouse on Ninth Street between Pennsylvania Avenue and C ...

**KREINHEDER:** Right near where the gas station is, isn't it? Just below ...

**A. TURNER:** Yeah, where the Amoco gas station was, right next door to it was the synagogue. Well the rabbi would come every Saturday, and he would kill the chickens to make them kosher. So, he would take them and take an axe and cut the heads off. Well, they wouldn't die right away. One day, one of them got loose and ran half a block, blood just flying everywhere [laughter] and the people hollering. You know there would be kids and all, and it was just funny the way things happened back in those days.

**KREINHEDER:** Did you ever go to the boys club at 17<sup>th</sup> and Massachusetts Avenue?

**A. TURNER:** Oh yeah.

**KREINHEDER:** Was it all boys? Or ...

**A. TURNER:** It was all boys. No girls.

**KREINHEDER:** And, so everybody from every ...

**A. TURNER:** It was mostly southeast kids. See, that was right there at 17<sup>th</sup> and Massachusetts Avenue.

**KREINHEDER:** But you went up there all the time?

**A. TURNER:** Yeah. We also went to Friendship House, which was in back of the Avenue Grand Theater. Friendship House is still there as far as I know. We either could go to Friendship House or to the boys club. And they had a pool. That was a big thing, the pool.

**KREINHEDER:** A lot of kids from the whole Capitol Hill area went there?

**A. TURNER:** Capitol Hill southeast. It was a little far, but like I say, the northeast kids had Merrick Club up at Stanton Park at Sixth Street [NE], Sixth and Massachusetts Avenue was Merrick Boys Club.

**MRS. TURNER:** Al, what was the grocery that you delivered groceries from? Was that on ...

**A. TURNER:** I can't hear what she's saying.

**KREINHEDER:** The grocery, where you delivered groceries.

**A. TURNER:** On the corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania Avenue which is where G Street [SE] came out on Pennsylvania Avenue was the Maryland Meat Market. It was the Holland family. George Holland [correction: John Holland] ran the place, and his brother was the butcher. And he had a couple of other brothers. They sold liquor and they sold groceries and everything. In 1943 and '44, I guess I was 13, 14, maybe 14, 15. I rode the delivery bicycle for them. It was one of them bicycles with a little wheel on the front and a big on the back with a great big basket, and I'd ride all over southeast. They paid me \$27 a week, which was pretty good money for a kid back in those days. And I knew all the alleys and shortcuts. My longest delivery was Sixth and A Street NE, and that wasn't a very good tip. So, I didn't like to get that one. But there was one right down beside the cemetery at 18<sup>th</sup> and Potomac Avenue, was my best tip. So, I always liked to get that order. But if the order was too big, they had a truck that would deliver them. But, I delivered the orders to the Marine Barracks to the commandant's house. And I used to go to the commandant's house and he had Filipino cooks. And I'd go back in the kitchen with the merchandise that they'd bought, the meats and groceries and what have you, and eventually—Holcomb and Vandegrift were the Generals back during the war—were the commandants of the Marine Corps. And they would come in there sometimes and talk to me, and then General Holcomb was always telling them, "Now make sure that young man gets some cookies." And they'd give me cookies, and I ended up going in the Marine Corps.

**S. TURNER:** Do you think that influenced you to go to the Marines?

**A. TURNER:** I was the only Marine ever in my family until some of Mary's family offspring went in the Marine Corps.

**KREINHEDER:** Down near the Hollands' [Maryland Meat Market], was there an Italian grocery store down there too?

**A. TURNER:** Which one?

**KREINHEDER:** Where you said you worked for Holland, was there an Italian grocery store down there?

**A. TURNER:** Yeah, right down the street. Mangialardo's. Mangialardo's. See I'm 86 years old, but senility has passed me by. [laughter].

**KREINHEDER:** You talk about working in the store during World War II. I have two questions. First. Was the neighborhood, you said all ethnic groups, but were their blacks and whites or was it mostly white?

**A. TURNER:** No. I didn't know whether you wanted to get into that, but we will get into that.

**KREINHEDER:** OK. Now my other question is, what was your neighborhood like during World War II? Did people have to take a lot of extra people into their houses, and so on, because of the housing shortage in the city? What was it like during World War II?

**A. TURNER:** Well, we couldn't. The houses on G Street [SE] and all these ethnics, they had so many people already in the houses. [laughter]

**KREINHEDER:** There was no room for anybody else?

**A. TURNER:** There wasn't any room for anybody else. But the funny thing is I lived on—what we call Capitol Hill—we lived in a row of about 10 houses, with Abelman's grocery store on the corner. Those houses still had the gas-light fixtures. We wouldn't use them any longer, but they were still in the walls. But, we didn't have indoor plumbing. We had out-houses in back, and a coal shed in the back yard. And, that was pretty rough, because you had to have, well, what they call slop jars to keep in the house if there was an emergency in the cold winter. And somebody had the duty to take care of that.

And my job was to keep a bushel, oh not a bushel, a bucket of coal in. A bucket of coal would last you through the night. And, we had a potbelly coal stove in the dining room downstairs, and that heated the whole house. It was supposed to heat the whole house, but I remember some winters with every coat and every blanket and everything we'd cover up. We'd have a stack on us going like that [indicates several inches], to keep warm, and man it was hard to keep warm when you only had a coal stove.

**KREINHEDER:** Was there a lot of action at the Marine Barracks and the Navy Yard during that time?

**A. TURNER:** There was a lot of action during World War II, and the funny thing—11<sup>th</sup> Street SE of course goes down to the 11<sup>th</sup> Street bridge, and you go over to Bolling Field—and Bolling Field is where all of the dignitaries from other countries would come here during the war. And President Roosevelt would come in his limousine, with all the Secret Service and all, and he'd come down 11<sup>th</sup> Street. Well, we knew when he was coming, because all the roofs had service men with weapons, up on the roofs on 11<sup>th</sup> Street, and peoples houses. You know, they'd knock on the door and say "The President is going to be coming down, and we need to get up on your roof and protect the President." In those days there was a

streetcar line that ran right down 11<sup>th</sup> Street and went up to Congress Heights up to St. E's [Elizabeths]. It went up Nichols Avenue—it's Martin Luther King now.

I just remembered something—you were talking about places for young people to play—we also had a No. 5 Police Boys Club that I played ball for, and that was at Fifth and the old Providence Hospital. Fifth and C or D. It was a precinct. And a fellow that went to our church, Wilson Memorial Church on 11<sup>th</sup> Street, was a captain named Earl Edwards. And he had a couple of sons, and all, and everybody knew everybody.

If you went on Friday night—we lived at 12<sup>th</sup> and we'd walk up to Eighth Street SE—there was a promenade. The whole neighborhood was walking, looking in the stores, and strolling and meeting neighbors, and talking. And from the Navy Yard up to Pennsylvania Avenue, and from Pennsylvania Avenue up to Second Street near the Library of Congress, would be just like a parade marching. And you'd see the whole neighborhood on Friday night. The neighborhood was just—everybody knew everybody. Like, my cousin, my first cousin—was female—she and I—on a summer night was really hot. We didn't have air conditioning. We didn't even have a fan. Sometimes we'd get a block of ice, and gather around it. And, so, she and I sometimes would tell her mother, and I'd tell my mother, "We're going to take a walk." So it could be one or two o'clock ...

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

**KREINHEDER:** You were talking about Mr. & Mrs. Frager sitting on the front steps.

**A. TURNER:** Are you ready? Yeah, first we'd see the Fragers, then we'd go up and we'd see people all along the route. And of course the men would be sitting out there at the soldiers home, but we wouldn't be worried. Nobody would ever bother us. Nobody. And, of course we'd walk by and Frager would say, "Oh, you're the Turner kids, or the Graham kids." "Yep, that's us." Because I used to go—my uncle was always building or fixing something—he'd send me to Frager's. "Get a little bag of tenpenny nails." Tenpenny nails, a bagful, cost about 5 cents or 10 cents.

The movie theater back then on Saturday, if you went to the Academy, a man would come out Saturday morning early, on the corner, and hand these circulars to put at each door. It's the week's movie schedule, and then he'd give you free tickets to the Academy Theater. If you were a good kid, you'd deliver them. Half of the kids would take them, and take the tickets, and put them in the sewer. But if you were a good kid, you'd put them at the door.

**KREINHEDER:** Was the 5-and-10, Kresge's 5-and-10 up there by Hine School?

**A. TURNER:** Right on the corner.

**KREINHEDER:** Right on the corner?

**A. TURNER:** Right on the corner, down from the—you had the 10 cent store. You had the Chinese restaurant. There was a bicycle shop, and the Penn Theater.

Now the Penn Theater, was a first class theater, because they got the best shows. On Saturday, you didn't want to go to the Academy and Grand because it was full of kids, with westerns and Buck Rogers and things that pertain to kids—serials—they'd drop you off with the guy getting killed on one Saturday. Next Saturday he survives, and ... [laughter].

But, you asked me about where the people of color lived back in that day. Until 1950, blacks could not live in white neighborhoods. They could own the property, but they couldn't live in it. But then that law went out in 1950, so we got our first black family on 12<sup>th</sup> Street SE in the 500 block. The Bakers sold their house to blacks, and boy you'd have thought there was a riot starting. But, the problem with that was—I don't know if we should put it on here or not—but when they moved in—the black folks—they were from North Carolina. And I think they thought they were still in North Carolina, because they would sit out in the yard, burn rags, and it was just such a different environment, that it was hard for the old timers to take. And, of course, we never made friends with those folks. It was just—they were there and you would just walk by them, and they were just there. They were like a monument.

But we knew all the other black people that lived in the neighborhood, because they lived in the alleys. They had what I would call the original townhouses. They were row houses, and they were like two bedrooms with out-houses, just like we had, but we had it out on the street.

But back in the alley was Rice's Bakery. Rice's Bakery was a big bread ... They made one of the top breads back in those days, and they'd deliver them with horse and carriage. So, all the horses and the carriages were stored back in the stable.

But back in there was a whole row of houses for the black folks. And we knew them all, and there was a big field there, and we used to play ball, and they'd play with us, just like they were living the way we lived.

**KREINHEDER:** So this was behind G Street, when you lived on G Street?

**A. TURNER:** Right. That was the block where the Salvation Army was in. It's a great big block between G and I, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> [SE]. And, the stable was half way down the block. It was an alley that went all the way through, and there was a stable. After Rice's Bakery closed down, a man name Jim Driscoll, owned the stable, and he sold horses. And he had buffalo, and he had all kind of animals there. One day a buffalo got loose, and ran through the alley up to 11<sup>th</sup> Street. Ran all the way down 11<sup>th</sup> Street, because when a buffalo goes wild, they head for water. So he went down 11<sup>th</sup> Street and jumped in the Anacostia River. And here's all these guys on horseback—like you thought you were in Texas. They're riding down there trying to catch this buffalo. They finally lassoed him and got him out of the water.

**KREINHEDER:** Did you go down to the river very much?

**A. TURNER:** Oh yeah. Fairlawn. There's a good story about Fairlawn. That's when the Redskins first came to town in 1937, they used to practice where the golf course is. It was a golf course then and ball fields. But then you had the club house at Fairlawn, right off the Anacostia River between Sousa Bridge and 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge. And the Redskins would practice. I would stand next to the greatest quarterback that ever played—Sammy Baugh, Wayne Millner, Turk Edwards. No security. I'd walk right up. Then they had these old helmets that were leather, but you could bend them. Wasn't all this protection that they wear now. They had—Sammy Baugh was one of the toughest guys that I've ever seen. He was playing in a football game in Chicago, and this guy kept coming in and sacking him, tackling him. So he told his lineman, he says "Next play let that guy through. Let him come on, right on." Sammy Baugh took that football and splattered that guy's nose all over his face. [chuckles]

**KREINHEDER:** Now this was down on the banks of the Anacostia?

**A. TURNER:** Right. On the Anacostia. Between the Sousa Bridge. Although another funny thing.

**S. TURNER:** Wait a minute. Sousa Bridge and what?

**KREINHEDER:** 11<sup>th</sup> Street.

**A. TURNER:** 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge. But back in those days, prior to say 1939, Sousa Bridge was a wooden bridge. And the drawbridge on the 11<sup>th</sup> Street bridge was wood. And you'd walk—the rest of it would be cement, you know, poured cement. But when you got on that span that was the drawbridge, so the sail boats could get in the upper Anacostia, man that was scary. Because if a truck or something went by the boards would be bouncing, and you'd be looking down seeing the water. And the same thing with the Sousa Bridge.

**KREINHEDER:** Well now, what's the bridge called before it was called Sousa Bridge? Did they name that after he died? Did they name it after him?

**A. TURNER:** Named it after him? Well, that's another story. My grandfather was a friend of his, and lived in the apartments next to—Sousa lived at Seventh and G [SE], and he lived right next to Christ Church that owned the cemetery [Congressional Cemetery], because he was right up there, you know, near the Marine Barracks. Well my grandfather, when he got married, moved in the apartments right next to the Sousa's. So he became friends with John Phillip Sousa, and my father, my grandfather, my grandmother and one of my uncle's sons are buried with my father about 6 or 8 plots from Sousa's grave right inside the G street gate [of Congressional Cemetery]. And, my grandfather marched in the parade for Sousa's funeral service.

My grandfather and his father, Zachariah Turner, and Samuel Albert Turner were both boilermakers in the US Navy Yard. They used to go down—my grandfather would walk from 12<sup>th</sup> and G up to H street, down H street to M, M to Fourth Street. And right inside the Fourth Street gate was a big foundry. They made the 16-inch guns that were on the battleships in World War II, and most of the battleships had guns from the Washington Navy Yard. He had arms like that [indicates very large circumference of arms]. He was a boilermaker, and he made his own tools, and he was in good shape. I can remember it well. President Roosevelt came out with a law that at 65 you had to retire. Well, my grandfather wasn't ready to retire, and it really affected him. They said he had hardening of the arteries of the brain—it was probably dementia or—what they weren't calling it back then. Because we actually had to—for a while they had a building up at St. E's [Elizabeths], full of old men, and he stayed there. We could bring him home any time we wanted. But my grandfather was a character. He chewed Browns Mule tobacco, and he'd cut off a plug. He'd sit in his chair in the living room, looking out the window. He had two things—a brass spittoon—and he never missed—and he would always be reading the Police Gazette magazine. He had to have his Police Gazette and his Browns Mule. I can remember him cutting a chunk. And he made all his own anvils and tools, and he was always working in the back in the coal shed. He had all that stuff.

**S. TURNER:** Is that the one that was like a policeman?

**A. TURNER:** His father, Zachariah Adam Turner, was one of the first policemen in the District of Columbia. That's when they had like two men for the whole city. And he was the first one. [Note: Mr. Turner is describing the situation in the early police force. The modern MPD was created by Congress in 1861 and a force of 160 men was authorized. Zachariah joined the MPD in 1863 and resigned a year later to accept a position at the Navy Yard where salaries were higher, and he was better able to provide for his family. His letter of resignation is in the MPD files at the National Archives.]

But, the Navy Yard was like—for the Spanish American War, they hired more people, and when things got calm, they slashed off. Then World War I, they hired them again. World War II, of course my grandfather was dead then. He died in the 40s. But he loved his work until the end. And I'll tell you another thing. If you were in a room, and they played the national anthem, you better stand up and be attentive, or he would have a piece of you.

**KREINHEDER** (to Schmidt): Didn't you want to ask about the police?

**SCHMIDT**: Yes. I was ... how did you get into the police force? Because you were with the Capitol Police?

**A. TURNER**: Well, prior to that. Well let's get back to World War II. In 1944 and '45, I was 16 and 17. All of the men were in the war, and a lot of women were serving. Margaret Graham which was my uncle's sister, had a supervisory job with the Justice Department. So, the summer of '44 she told me to take the Civil Service test. I took the Civil Service test and passed it. I didn't get a great score, but I got 79 and that was enough to pass [chuckles], and I was only 17 years old. I went to work for the Justice Department in the Bureau of Prisons at first and then at Indiana Avenue down by the Hoffa building, the Jimmy Hoffa building, right there—that was in northwest because it was on the other side of North Capitol Street. Anyway, I was filing correspondence and prisoners' records of all the jails, all the federal jails all over the country—Lewisburg, Danville, all the big ones out in California, and we [chuckles] we would get a new young girl in, and the supervisor would say "Take her and show her what we do here in filing this correspondence." So, there was one record where [chuckles] this prisoner that was in jail had taken somebody, I don't know if it was a man or woman, up in the attic and cut their head off, and they had the pictures [chuckles]. So, we would go through to that. And this girl says "My God are all these prisoners' records like that?" And I says "No."

But another unusual thing, we had a boy in the neighborhood that was a klepto... a robber. He would rob stuff. Nice, nice kid, but he was ... Of course he was about 17, 18 years old, and he broke into Abelman's store, and was taking a telephone box off the wall to get the coins out of it, and his name was—I'm not going to say his last name—but his name was Clyde. Well, Clyde was up in Lewisburg prison in Pennsylvania, and I was doing correspondence, and I knew Clyde well. I played ball with him and all. So, here were these letters to the President, trying to get him out of jail and into the military. And it took I don't know how many letters, but they finally, Clyde got out of jail, and if he served in the service he would be pardoned when he came back to the States. Well [chuckles] Clyde was made a tail gunner in a B-17, which is—they didn't live too long, and it was a very precarious job. But, Clyde went over and distinguished himself and got all kind of medals. When he came home he was straight like anybody else,

and he—Clyde just died about two years ago—but he had all kind of medals, and the war straightened him out.

**S. TURNER:** Weren't you riding a bike? What deliveries were you going through blackouts? Talk about ...

**A. TURNER:** Oh, OK. During World War II, I was also the air raid warden's messenger boy. I had a white helmet with the insignia of the warden, and the warden and I had these white helmets. And we had these practice air raids, and there'd be planes in the sky and spotlights spotting them. But when they turned all the lights off it was so dark, I might as well not had the bike. I couldn't see to ride it. So, I'd walk these messages back and forth with my bicycle. But you, you couldn't see anything. Well, one time we had a practice air raid and Tony Torre had a shoemaker shop out on around the corner by the A&P. And Tony and his wife were going out and left the lights on. So here we got the whole neighborhood blacked out. Boy, the headquarters is all ... they're raising the dickens, "Get them lights out down there on Pennsylvania Avenue, 1200 block. And of course that was our area, so we're knocking, practically knocking the door down. Finally he came home, and [chuckles] turned them out but his wife [chuckles] used to—Mrs. Torre, used to get naked sometimes and run around the block. [laughter]. That was some neighborhood, I mean ...

**KREINHEDER:** The A&P was at 12<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania, right?

**A. TURNER:** No. Prior to about 1950, there was a Sanitary [Grocery Co.] on the corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania, where the Exxon station is now. That was a Sanitary [now Safeway]. Next to it was a diet kitchen for Metropolitan Life, and that's where my mother and all the people in the neighborhood that had babies and had Metropolitan Life Insurance, they could go to this diet kitchen. But then the A&P was up in the middle of the block and Dr. Butler had all that land on the end of the block. Had a big house.

**KREINHEDER:** What was on the north side of Pennsylvania? There's a CVS there now. And then there is a church that faces E Street, but that's on the north side of Pennsylvania. At 12<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania.

**A. TURNER:** 12<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania used to be the A&P, around the corner. On the corner of Pennsylvania was Hallberg's store, and he was Swedish. And I joined a club in high school to correspond with other nations. So I used to have a Swedish girl that I used to correspond with. I would send her a letter in English, and she'd get it translated later. And then I'd go to Hallberg's store. Mr. Hallberg ... but, it was called Allied Youth, and we would correspond and let them know life was like over here, and then they would tell us what life was like over there. What was that girl's name, I should remember.

**S. TURNER:** What was the A&P before it was A&P?

**A. TURNER:** That was American Pacific Tea Company.

**S. TURNER:** Yeah. But was there a different store there? A different grocery?

**A. TURNER:** No. That's the one that Mary used to go with you. Her father [chuckles], he'd tell her "If cabbage is over five cents a pound, don't buy it."

**MRS. TURNER:** I never shopped in southeast. My dad never ...

**KREINHEDER:** So now you worked at—this is during World War II—you worked at ...

**A. TURNER:** I worked for the Bureau of Prisons '44 and '45. I was making \$1,500 a year. But, that was good money back then.

**KREINHEDER:** That was good money.

**A. TURNER:** And then in 1947 we were the first Marine—the Marine Corps deactivated a bunch of squadrons after World War II. Well, somebody has sense enough to know it wouldn't be peaceful for too long. So, we were the first Marine reserve fighter squadron stationed at Anacostia Naval Air Station, and I joined them in 1947, March of '47, and then I was activated for three years during the Korean War with this fighter squadron—VMF-321 Hell's Angels. And we were activated and went to California. It was interesting.

**SCHMIDT:** Did you go into the police force after the Marine Corps?

**A. TURNER:** No. After the Marine Corps I went to work for the telephone company. I was a lineman.

**KREINHEDER:** Were you still living down on G Street?

**A. TURNER:** No. In 1950 my mother remarried, and they bought a home on Carpenter Street SE, right off of Branch Avenue. On the Pennsylvania Avenue hill towards Alabama [Avenue]. But they were off to the left of Pennsylvania before you got to Alabama.

**S. TURNER:** If you're interested in that area, my grandmother, the two sisters and brothers of her first husband (deceased) all lived within a block and a half of each other, up near Carpenter Street, and the other sister lived up near Branch and Alabama Avenues, on 34<sup>th</sup> ...

**A. TURNER:** I'm trying to get back to where we were though, because I had something interesting I want to say.

**KREINHEDER:** We were at the end of the Korean War, and I asked if you were still living, if your family was still living—and you said in 1950 your mother got remarried.

**A. TURNER:** Well they moved in 1950. Well of course I was away, and then when I came back, I moved back in with my mother and my stepfather. They had a room for me. And I got a job—well I went to Maryland University on the GI Bill, and I went for a year. And I was living on \$21 a month, that they paid us for going to college. And, of course, I had to buy books, and so I went to college for a year, and then the telephone company was—you know this was considered a pretty good job, so I accepted it, and ended up being a lineman over in Arlington, Virginia. Over near Parkington [Shopping Center]. And I stayed with them until I—they came out with a union contract. If you had 15 years service, and I had over 15 years service, then you could take a vested rights retirement. So, I had enough in for social security, to draw social security, and a job came open. A bomb went off in the Capitol, and I had a friend that was with the Capitol Police. He was a lieutenant, and he took me up then and put me on the Capitol Police. But, before that, when I was with—this is very interesting—when I was with the telephone company, I was promoted to installation, and I was in government installation. I was at Arlington Hall, which was a big secure military base for the Defense Intelligence Agency, the army security agency. I had clearance for the CIA. I had clearance for the Defense Communication Agency, and I had top secret, need-to-know, which was one below presidential.

**KREINHEDER:** When was this? Was this in the 1950s?

**A. TURNER:** This was in the 50s, 60s. Yep. And then when Kennedy was killed, my area was north and south of both Fort Myer and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier—that was my area. So, I was in charge of all communications for Kennedy's funeral. Well, the day he was killed, I was up on a telephone pole at Columbia Pike and Walter Reed Drive, at the Old Dominion Bank—it's BB&T now—it's been several other names. It was First Virginia when I—I'm up on a pole, and I had to call the central office. Well, I called the central office, and they says, "Turner. Did you hear about the President?" This is 11 o'clock in the morning. He says, "The President was just killed out in Dallas, Texas." I says, "No, I didn't hear anything about it." So I called my wife. She says, "On no, he's not dead. They haven't announced he's dead." They didn't announce he was dead until about 1 o'clock. Well, I knew it at 11 o'clock, soon after he was killed. So I was working in the bank. I came down off the pole, and went in the bank, and I told some of the people, "The President was just killed." "Oh, no, no, they still haven't announced that he is dead." And I says, "Well, he's dead."

So my boss calls me at the bank. He says, "I've got special work for you to do." He says, "You've got to go to Arlington Cemetery and handle all of this." I had a hundred different lines where they can broadcast

from the gravesite. One all the way to Mexico City. But, the thing that was strange about it—that was on a Friday. He says, “You’ve got to go to 14<sup>th</sup> and New York Avenue over town and pick up some telephone equipment.” So I got that equipment. He says, “They’re shipping you stuff, it’s on its way now by plane to National Airport. You’ve got to pick up this equipment. So I was at National Airport.

I spent the whole night with one other guy. A guy named—we called him Uncle Horton. He worked with me. Well, we didn’t have enough telephone stuff in the cemetery at that time for this big a program. So, there was a great big, what we call BD telephone connection box down in the railroad yards in Rosslyn. So they had to ship all the telephone lines to that box for me to make a connection there. Then I had to make a connection over on Columbia Pike by Navy Annex, by the Pentagon. So then when we got to the cemetery there was a captain in the Third Old Guard that was working with me, and he says, “You know we got a lot of restrictions in the cemetery here.” And I says, “Well, I got to get a bull gang in here and lay a cable.” He says, “Well, you can’t dig nothing.” He says, “All you can do is take that cable—it was cable about that big [indicates]”

**KREINHEDER:** Two inches, three inches?

**A. TURNER:** Two to three inches. So, I told him that we’ll do the best we can. So, I had to get them to snake it through all the trees. All the trees. And that’s from Columbia Pike, and Kennedy’s grave was right inside the main gate. That’s a pretty good haul. So they got it over there, and we had another box in the Custis-Lee Mansion. And another big box right under the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers. Well, that’s where they used to store that thing that they lay the bodies on. Catafalque or something. The thing that they lay the body on. They use it a lot in the Rotunda. Anyway. I was in there Friday night, Saturday, Saturday night I finally took Horton home. He lived ... he wanted to goto Dixie Pig Restaurant ... he lived in Alexandria.

But, on Friday night I was in the crypt down there underneath the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and I saw Horton. I says, “Take the truck. Go to the Custis-Lee Mansion. Go down in the basement, and I says, “I’ll check out these pairs of communication lines with you. You know, how many lines we have there that we can use, and what have you.” So he comes back, and it’s 3 o’clock in the morning, and he says, “Turner. Don’t never send me nowhere in this cemetery by myself.” He says, “I came back and that guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, challenged me.” And [chuckles] we had this test set that we had on our belt, and he’s got a flashlight “Telephone man, telephone man.” [Laughter] So he was scared to death.

So then the next day, Saturday, we watched them dig the grave, and then Sunday, we were still working to get all these hundred phone lines in. Well, on Monday evening ... They buried him late on Sunday evening, thank God, because I wouldn’t have had them all in. AT&T is calling me up from New York.

When are you going to get that line in for the television shot of the Kennedy funeral coming around the Lincoln Memorial and across the Memorial Bridge. I says, "It'll be in. It was in about 10 minutes before they came across there. But that was quite interesting.

**MRS. TURNER:** It was hunting season, that was why ...

**A. TURNER:** It was hunting season. That's the reason I couldn't get much help. Everybody was out hunting. The telephone men, and my boss didn't have too many choices. So, I guess I was it. But that's pretty interesting.

**S. TURNER:** You always told us about the snow ...

**A. TURNER:** When I was a kid ...

**S. TURNER:** The snow with Kennedy ...

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

TAPE 2/SIDE 1

**A. TURNER:** I worked all of the funeral, and that was in like, what October, November?

**KREINHEDER:** November, he died.

**A. TURNER:** November. So, it's Christmas Eve. My stepfather was down in the basement of our house, helping me put a kitchen set together. You could wash dishes and water would pour out, and it had about 900,000 nuts and bolts of all different sizes [chuckles]. So he and I were down there ... it's about 2 o'clock in the morning. I get a call from the telephone company, "Turner, you've got to go down to Kennedy's grave. That phone that you put in down there a month ago is not working for the security people that are there guarding the grave." I says, "Look. I'm being Santa Claus." And I says, "I'll never get this child's kitchen set done." I says, "I can't go." But, I says, "I'll tell you what. You get hold of somebody and you have them call me before they go, and I'll tell them right where to go and what happened." And I just had it in my mind, you know, what had happened. Well, this line, when I put it in in November, it was the day after they buried Kennedy, and here comes a woody station wagon with Bobby Kennedy, Caroline, John John and Kennedy's wife.

**KREINHEDER:** Jackie.

**A. TURNER:** Jackie. And the secret service came up to me and says, "Would you mind just backing off a little bit, but let me have your flashlight." So they went up to the grave and did their thing, and then I

finished putting that phone in. Well that phone came out of the Custis-Lee Mansion, and came straight down the hill to Kennedy's grave. But, the Army Signal Corps dug me a trench all the way down there, that I could put this army field wire in. So, when they called me in December, Christmas Eve, I analyzed what the problem was, and what it could possibly be. So I figured, "It snowed today." Those guys were out there shoveling and digging, and that wire went underneath the sidewalk at the Custis-Lee Mansion, and down that hill. I says, "At that sidewalk, they've cut that wire in half." So the guy called me, and I told him, "The first place you go, you go up the top of that hill to the Custis-Lee Mansion. You look at the sidewalk. That wire goes under that sidewalk, and they chipped that ice with some kind of cutting tool, and cut that wire." He was only gone maybe an hour. He called me and he says, "Man, you saved my life." He says, "I'd have had to trudge down that hill. You were exactly right. They cut that when they were cleaning the ice off of that walk path." And he was really thanking me.

Now was there anything else you want?

**S. TURNER:** We're trying to get back to how you ended up on the police force.

**A. TURNER:** Oh, well. I was getting tired of what I was doing with the telephone company, and I saw an opportunity to get into a little more exciting work.

**MRS. TURNER:** And the bombing?

**A. TURNER:** And the bomb went off in the barber shop of the Capitol building. And, I don't know, it intrigued me. I was 42 years old. And I went on the police department. And I did everything that was required. And another interesting thing we ought to get in this talk. I was in three inaugurals—first one was probably Roosevelt. I was a boy scout in that. I was a high school cadet—I was in the cadets—we wore blue uniforms and all –

**KREINHEDER:** This was Eastern High School cadets?

**A. TURNER:** Eastern High School cadets. I was in Truman's. And then the Marine Corps, who was after Truman?

**MRS. TURNER:** Eisenhower.

**KREINHEDER:** Eisenhower?

**A. TURNER:** I was in Eisenhower's as a Marine. So I was in three inaugurals. One as a boy scout. One as a high school cadet. One as a Marine. And then, I was in many, many, many. Because I pulled 20 years on the police department, and I was in every inaugural, and before you all leave I'll have my wife take

you downstairs and show you the commemorative badges. I've got a whole slew of these badges, and each represents something significant that happened for the badge to be issued.

**KREINHEDER:** So you went into the Capitol police?

**A. TURNER:** In '71. And I stayed until '90-'91.

**SCHMIDT:** Did you patrol just the Capitol or the neighborhood around it?

**A. TURNER:** We used to patrol the whole Capitol Hill, and we had concurrent jurisdiction like—we would try to stay within a boundary. I worked North Capitol Street all down around Union Station. [Chuckles] I had one of the first policewomen to come on—it was all men—and one of the first women, she came to the Senate—I was on the Senate detail. So they assigned her to me to show her the ropes. So I had her down there on Second and F Street [NE], Union Station, and all around there. That was a pretty rough area at one time. They had all these motorcycle joints along Second Street [NE], and beer halls, and so we got a robbery. And I figured, if this guy had robbed where he had robbed, he was going up into this alley. So I told this young girl, I says, "We're going up in that alley and look for that robber." [chuckles] She says, "I'm not going up there." And I says, "Well you're getting the same money I'm getting. You've got a badge and gun on you just like I've got." I says, "If I can go up there, you're going up there." But, I says [chuckles], "You're going to go ahead of me, because I don't want to get shot in the back." [laughter] So she went up there, and, of course, we didn't plan to look. I guess luckily we didn't find the guy. But, she was one of the first ones—but she stayed on the department about six months, found her a man there at the Senate, married him and lived happily ever after I guess.

**S. TURNER:** Over your territory, did you use to have that friend Chester, it was—how far did ...

**A. TURNER:** Chester worked at the Post Office, and he lived there on—lived with his uncle on E Street [NE], but he was always bumming money, and they had a liquor store on the corner [chuckles] , at Second and—there is a Gandy Dancer restaurant there now, Second and E, and where that Gandy Dancer restaurant is ...

**S. TURNER:** Are you sure it is still there?

**KREINHEDER:** It was right near Massachusetts, I think, wasn't it?

**A. TURNER:** Yeah. One block by the Gulf gas station, right there on the next corner.

**SCHMIDT:** I think it's an Italian Restaurant now.

**A. TURNER:** Dave owned a liquor store, and I used to patrol the area, and I told Dave, I says, “I’ll drop by every night when you’re putting your money together and closing up.” So about 10 minutes before closing at 9 o’clock, I think he closed, we had this guy that terrorized the whole—he was a black fellow, and he terrorized that whole neighborhood. But he lived up on North Capitol Street, and would come down and terrorize that whole neighborhood. Well, somebody fixed him good. [chuckles] They must have been laying for him one night. They had a 2-by-4, and they must have gone in some alley, and this guy was waiting for him, because you could see, you could measure two inches where this 2-by-4 had just splattered his nose. But it was a while after that, I’d gone into the liquor store, and there he is in there, going to rob Dave. So there was a bunch of other neighborhood guys hanging around. I don’t know where this reputation came from, but the one black fellow—he saved my life probably that night. He told this guy, he says, “Don’t mess with that policeman. I know him, and he’ll kill you in a minute.” [laughter]. I had my hand on my gun.

**S. TURNER:** So why don’t you also tell them about with the Watergate Trial.

**A. TURNER:** Oh, during the Watergate hearings, they put me in civilian clothes, and I was assigned as a personal bodyguard to Sam Ervin, who was the Senator from North Carolina. And he was on the Watergate council. And I used to go with him everywhere, and people—they tried to pass me off as one of his aides, you know—not a policeman, but I’d travel with him and he lived in the Methodist Building right next to the Supreme Court. Maryland Avenue comes through there at First Street, and he had a top apartment in the Methodist Building. Right next to the Supreme Court.

**S. TURNER:** He said it was a bit like “Zelig.” I’d love to have photos, but also because of his size, at 6’ 4” and his stature, he was on special operations unit there, so ...

**A. TURNER:** Yeah. I was in the ...

**S. TURNER:** But then all the people, Alan Alda, and I can’t even think of the long list of names, you know all the celebrities that came to the Hill. Many times being on the Senate side, he would be accompanying them. But you know they couldn’t do autographs or pictures, because he was on duty.

**KREINHEDER:** How far east did you come onto Capitol—you went to Second Street. Did you go any further east than Second? You said you went up to N.

**A. TURNER:** Well to give you a broad spectrum. A car comes speeding through Capitol Hill. Right there near the Capitol on either Constitution or Independence. Our scout car chased him, and apprehended him at Glen Echo. Which is way out in Maryland. That’s another thing I’d like to put ...

**S. TURNER:** But your walking beat, though, on foot how far did you go, perimeter-wide? I know they expanded it while you were there at the Capitol.

**A. TURNER:** Well if you were in hot pursuit you could go ...

**S. TURNER:** But, foot patrol?

**A. TURNER:** Normally we stayed in a perimeter of Second Street [NE], Union Station, North Capitol and then down and back of the Rayburn, and we had a building over on the other side of, like at C Street, Second and C Street SW. So it was a pretty good area. But, we, if we saw something—like, my cousin Michael worked for the telephone company. He was an engineer, and he was on an engineering job in the Amtrak building, there on North Capitol. Well, I knew he was in the building, so I went down to walk out with him. So, we walked out of the garage onto E Street [NE], turned north on E Street. Next thing I knew, a guy comes out of the bank there on the corner of North Capitol and E. He had just robbed a bank, and I knew he'd robbed a bank because the dye bag went off—exploded. [chuckles] Boy he had red dye from his waist to his ankles. Well, I got my gun out, and had him up against the wall and put my pistol right on his head, and he must have been about 6 foot 6, but he was a druggie—had railroad tracks on his arms. And he was telling me, he says, "I want to be dead." I says, "Well, you're only about a quarter inch from being dead right now" [laughter] And he had the dye bag—had about \$300 in it, and he'd thrown that underneath a car when he saw me.

**S. TURNER:** Didn't you used to see President Truman, I thought, walking all the way over ...

**A. TURNER:** Oh. Truman would walk all over. See, he was a haberdasher in real life, rather than being the President, in Independence, Missouri. He was a haberdasher. Well, he used to go—I can't remember the name, but it was on G Street in back of the Willard Hotel. And, he used to go in there and talk to the clothing guys. I can't remember ...

**KREINHEDER:** Garfinckel's?

**A. TURNER:** No it wasn't Garfinkel's. Garfinkel's was over near the Capital Theater. That's another thing ...

**KREINHEDER:** Garfinkel's was at 14<sup>th</sup> and F, I thought behind the Willard.

**A. TURNER:** Yeah, but it was on this side. This was on the side of the street towards the White House. You know between 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>.

**S. TURNER:** But I thought you used to see him way over in southeast walking?

**A. TURNER:** No, No.

**S. TURNER:** No, he didn't go that far?

**A. TURNER:** He used to just walk out of the White House, and the Secret Service wouldn't know that he was gone, and he would go and talk to the guys about haberdashery. He just wanted a little free time that's all. But, I think he was one of the best Presidents.

**KREINHEDER:** Do you have any special recollections of anything at Congressional Cemetery?

**A. TURNER:** Yeah. The day that my father died, I can still hear that bell on the front gate. They ring that bell every time they have a funeral. And I can hear that sound now.

**S. TURNER:** Not at the church? At the gate?

**KREINHEDER:** No, at the gate.

**A. TURNER:** It's right at the gate. At the little house there. But they say, and I think it is true, when my father got buried in 1935, the funeral procession went all the way from 1210 G Street [SE] up across Pennsylvania Avenue to E Street, and all the way down E Street to the cemetery. It was just a continuous procession of cars. It was probably one of the biggest funerals that—people just packed in—because he was well-liked, you know, in his job and in the neighborhood.

**S. TURNER:** Well he was young.

**A. TURNER:** And he was young.

**KREINHEDER:** Only 31 years old.

**S. TURNER:** How about some of the mausoleums, and ...

**A. TURNER:** Oh, I want to tell them about the one—it still bothers me to today. Mrs. Mellie White owned an apartment building on 12<sup>th</sup> Street where the gas station is now—12<sup>th</sup> Street and Pennsylvania. There used to be an apartment building there. It probably had 20 apartments. Nice. It was called the Alton Apartments, and Mrs. Mellie White—now, she's the lady. If you come in the G Street gate [of Congressional Cemetery], and you're looking at the little church—the little church building. Just behind it and off to your right, there is a stone burial vault. It's all stone, beautiful stone. She had her husband buried there and they broke into it so many times, and even I heard rumors that some street people even lived in it, that she had him disinterred and moved out of the cemetery. And I'm wondering what's—I don't know whether she sold it. It's a beautiful stone ...

**SCHMIDT:** It's a brick vault?

**KREINHEDER:** It's above ground.

**S. TURNER:** Brick or stone?

**A. TURNER:** Stone. All stone. But if you're looking at the church—you have a road that goes down, and another road came off of H Street. There is another gate below G Street. But they never open that gate. They wouldn't even open it years ago.

**S. TURNER:** Down near the bridge. Near Barney Circle?

**SCHMIDT:** Oh, I know which one you're talking about.

**A. TURNER:** I think it's H Street. There used to be a guy who made burial stones right across on the corner of that gate.

**SCHMIDT:** That's interesting.

**KREINHEDER:** There was a—tombstones?

**A. TURNER:** He used to make tombstones right there, on that corner. Because that's the guy we dealt with to buy the stone. But I'd like to know what the deal is, whether she sold it and somebody else is using it. But I know she spent a lot of money, because it is one of the prettiest—you know, all stone. It has a beautiful iron door, and glass. And the person, her husband was above ground.

**KREINHEDER:** And, what was her name?

**A. TURNER:** Mrs. White. And I think his name was Mellie White. No, it might not have been Mellie White—Alton. Maybe she named the apartments after him. I know the apartments were named Alton, but her name was White. Matter of fact, she helped deliver me when I was born.

**SCHMIDT:** I know which one you're talking about. I'll find out for you what happened to it. [Note: records show the vault is still in use and no one was disinterred. The most recent family member interred was in 1996.]

**A. TURNER:** Yeah. If you go in the G Street gate, you go up to the little church, the little interment place. You go halfway around to that road and before you get to the next road off to your left, there is—you can't miss it. It's beautiful.

**SCHMIDT:** I think it's called "Alton White." I think it's along the top.

**S. TURNER:** It spells it out?

**KREINHEDER:** You're turning. When you're facing the chapel, you go to your left or to your right.

**A. TURNER:** To your right around the chapel and take that road like you're going towards Sousa Bridge.

**SCHMIDT:** Right, and then you go down ...

**A. TURNER:** Before you get to the next street, it's on your left, and it's five or six plots in. But she owned—that building would have taken maybe ten plots.

**SCHMIDT:** There are people in there, so I'll find out what happened to it.

**A. TURNER:** Now, she might have sold it, because I heard that she had her husband disinterred, because they were breaking into it all the time. You know they had a lot of robberies, and all, at one time, out there.

**S. TURNER:** I'm going to the interment website to see if I can find Alton or White listing on the page.

**MRS. TURNER:** One thing he didn't tell you when he was talking about being on the Capitol force, he has a letter, a personal letter from Strom Thurmond's wife commending him for his service and how he had taken care of her during the long months and so forth. It's very, very nice.

**A. TURNER:** I also got a letter from Margaret Chase Smith.

**KREINHEDER:** I don't know if that's going to pick up what your wife said, so will you repeat, somebody repeat that about the letter that your wife just talked about from.

**SCHMIDT:** Strom Thurmond?

**KREINHEDER:** His wife.

**MRS. TURNER:** Al. The letter from Strom Thurmond's wife.

**A. TURNER:** Strom Thurmond's wife. She was a Miss South Carolina and much younger than him. Because they had two children, a son and a daughter, and her daughter was killed on the campus, well right off the campus ...

**MRS. TURNER:** I was telling them about the letter she sent, honey.

**A. TURNER:** I know, but here is something that is interesting. All of these badges are commemorative badges, and they are really beautiful and this tells you what each badge is. What it represents.

**SCHMIDT:** I'll take a picture of it when I get my camera out.

**A. TURNER:** See we have a retirement association, and every second Thursday we gather at a restaurant in Maryland or Virginia. We have 50 to 70 guys that generally show up. We have a real good time. I don't know anything else.

**SCHMIDT:** Oh, I have one quick question. When we first started talking about this, Steve mentioned Jimmy LaFontaine.

**A. TURNER:** [laughter]

**SCHMIDT:** Can you tell us ...

**A. TURNER:** If you're going to mention Jimmy LaFontaine, you've got to mention Emmett Warring. Emmett Warring was one of the biggest gangsters in town.

**KREINHEDER:** When was this?

**TURNER:** 30s and 40s. Ninth Street NW, where the FBI building is now, the new FBI building, used to be the Gayety Theater which was a burlesque theater. Jimmy Lake owned that, and Jimmy Lake also owned the Pier at North Beach, down near Chesapeake Beach, at North Beach. And they had slot machines, and that was something for a kid. Of course, I loved Glen Echo. I loved Marshall Hall. I loved, there's a place that the Catholic Church owned, and our church used to go and have picnics, down around Leonardtown. And taking that Wilson Line boat down to Marshall Hall was a real deal. And we could get a train. I think Buzzy said something about that at Chesapeake Beach. [Note: Buzzy is the nickname of Walter Graham, Albert's first cousin. Walter was interviewed by the Overbeck Project in 2002 and his transcript is available at [http://www.capitolhillhistory.org/interviews/2002/graham\\_walter.pdf](http://www.capitolhillhistory.org/interviews/2002/graham_walter.pdf).]

There was a boat, Wilson Line, came from Baltimore and brought people to North Beach. They had a big rollercoaster, called the Blue Bolt. They had one of the best swimming pools in the area, because the water there—there was a long pier with a little train that you could ride out to the end of the pier. But, swimming, you had to walk half a mile to get up to your chest. The water was so shallow. That's why the pier was so long, because the boat couldn't get too close in that shallow water. They had a carousel, that had the rings, had an arm with these rings. And you'd ride on your horse, and the guys would try to snatch those rings. One of them was gold, and you got a free ride.

**S. TURNER:** What about Jimmy LaFontaine?

**A. TURNER:** Oh, Jimmy LaFontaine had the road house out there at Southern Avenue and Bladensburg Road. And, one thing about Jimmy LaFontaine, if you won money in there, he sent his men with you and took you home. He didn't want you robbed or anything. He kept a tight ship. And they had a bouncer. I mean I'm going by hearsay on this because I was just a kid practically in those days, and I wasn't going to burlesque shows and the gambling houses. [laughter] But Emmett Warring, see the biggest gambling thing was the numbers racket. That was big in Washington. Everybody was playing the numbers. If you bet a dollar, which not a lot of people could, but if you bet a dollar, you got \$580 back if you hit a three-digit number. And my uncle, he used to play the numbers, and he used to get me to go to Hallberg's store. Hallberg outside of his front door had a glass sign, and if you knew what races—Aqueduct, first race in Aqueduct, second race at Laurel, third race somewhere—you could get the numbers before they ever came out the next day in the paper. So my uncle sent me up there to check this race, and this race, and this race, and "Get me that number." so he would know what the numbers were. But, just about every barber shop took numbers. My uncle was involved with Emmett Warring in bootlegging. I wish I had those pictures of my uncle driving those big cars. He used to go get bootleg in Virginia and the farmers would tell him where the local police were, and let them cut through their property, and he'd bring all the bootleg in.

**S. TURNER:** My uncle is Russell, and he lived up the street on 12<sup>th</sup> Street.

**A. TURNER:** He lived at 1211—no, he lived at 1212 [G Street SE], and I lived at 1210. But we lived with him for a while. But he was known to take a drink.

**KREINHEDER:** He didn't have any children?

**S. TURNER:** No. He obviously took in a lot of money. He'd tell the story about the amount of money his wife, Ruth, spent on a dress way back in the day. Like she spent over \$200.

**A. TURNER:** When he died they found all kind of money, and magazines, and books. But Jimmy LaFontaine, he lived down on Southwest, around Sixth and G Street SW. But, he's responsible for that great big Catholic Church that sits up and at Sixth and D Southwest, off the freeway.

**SCHMIDT:** Saint Dominic's.

**A. TURNER:** Right. Most of his money went to that church as donations to help build it. And they claim that inside the walls of his house was all kind of money. Now I dated one of his nieces, well it had to be in the 40s, because I met her [indicating his wife] in the 50s, and every one of those nieces got a million dollars, I know that. But, she wasn't pretty enough for me [laughter].

**S. TURNER:** I thought you told us that the church was partly for his—to make up for feelings from his mother about his being a gambler, or being ...

**A. TURNER:** Oh, I don't know that much.

**S. TURNER:** I thought that's what you had told us. It was guilt-money to some degree.

**A. TURNER:** I know I missed a lot, but I have quite a good ...

**KREINHEDER:** Was your family living there when the houses were torn down in that neighborhood for Potomac Gardens? Or had they ...

**A. TURNER:** That was the biggest mistake. That was a beautiful block. Beautiful houses. They had on 13<sup>th</sup> Street—there was this rich lady that lived right near the alley, and had a beautiful home. Back in the 50s, she was running around in an electric car that had a bar. She and her sister would ride around in this electric car, and it was really unique.

**S. TURNER:** They [indicating his parents] were married in that Salvation Army in 1956.

**A. TURNER:** We were married in that Salvation Army, but all they've got there now is a façade. See the Salvation Army is where my grandfather and his sister owned that big two-story family house. They got in an argument and neither one of them would pay the taxes, so they lost the property. That's when my grandfather moved his family across the street. Well, since then, in 1941 the Salvation Army moved in, and it was great. We had a great congregation, wonderful people. And, of course, they moved and died off, and when they desecrated that block, and put in that Potomac Gardens, it killed that [church. It has since relocated].

END OF TAPE 2/SIDE 1

END OF INTERVIEW

### Addendum

Because this transcript is not completely clear regarding the locations of Turner family residences, the following information was gleaned from District of Columbia city directories for the pertinent years:

<b>Year</b>	<b>People</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Address</b>
1928	Turner, Albert S.	clk Peoples Drug Stores	r248 10th se.
1929	Turner, Albert S. (Mary)	clk Peoples Drug Stores	r1257 C se
1930	Turner, Albert S.	clk Peoples Drug Stores	h 1634 B se, apt 5
1931	Turner, Albert S. (Mary F)	clk Peoples Drug Stores Inc.	h 1208 G se
	Abelman, Harry		1200 G
	Graham, Walter D.		1206 G
	Turner, Samuel A.		1210 G
	Turner, Russell S.		1212 G
1932	Turner, Albert S. (Mary)	clk Peoples Drug Stores	h 1210 G se
1933	Turner, Albert S. (Mary)	clk Peoples Drug Stores	r1212 G se
1934	Turner, Albert S. (Mary)	clk	r1212 G se
1935	Turner, Albert S. (Mary)	pharm, Peoples Drug Stores	r1212 G se
1936	Turner, Mary F (wid Albert S)		r1210 G se

Notes:

Albert S. (Sylvester ) Turner and his wife Mary F. (Fadeley) were the parents of the interviewee, Albert Samuel Turner.

People whose addresses were also copied from the 1931 directory:

- Harry Abelman, neighborhood grocer
- Samuel A. (Albert) Turner, grandfather of the interviewee
- Walter D. Graham, uncle (by marriage) of the interviewee
- Russell S. Turner, uncle of the interviewee