



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK  
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

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**Interview with Oley Morgan**

**Interview Dates:** August 31, 2005 and October 25, 2005

**Interviewer:** Norman Metzger

**Transcriber:** Megan Rosenfeld

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[Editor's note: References to "Marty's" appear throughout this interview, because the interviewee was originally recommended to the Overbeck Project by John Boyle, proprietor of Marty's restaurant, which was located at 527 Eighth Street SE from October, 2003, to November, 2008.]

TAPE 1/SIDE 1

**METZGER:** How did you get your name?

**MORGAN:** How did I get it?

**METZGER:** Yeah—

**MORGAN:** My dad's name was Oliver, and they just named me Oley.

**METZGER:** Is that your formal name?

**MORGAN:** My father's name was Oliver—

**METZGER:** So your given name is Oley?

**MORGAN:** Yes, my given name is Oley.

**METZGER:** It's a great name.

**MORGAN:** And he was never known as Oliver, he went as Oley Morgan too.

**METZGER:** So were you Oley junior, or Oley senior?

**MORGAN:** I'm the senior.

**METZGER:** Now.

**MORGAN:** Now. Because I had one more brother. I had two brothers and four sisters.

**METZGER:** I'm sorry? You had how many brothers?

**MORGAN:** I had two brothers. And two sisters. And that was it. Now my family here, I've got four daughters and one son.

**METZGER:** OK, so you've got a large family. You have any grandchildren?

**MORGAN:** (Overlapping) I've got four girls—yeah I do, I've got five grandchildren.

**METZGER:** Wow. I imagine they keep you busy.

**MORGAN:** Yeah. Now my one daughter is—you've probably seen her picture many, many times. You ever see a loaf of bread with a little girl's picture on it? Miss Sunbeam?

**METZGER:** Yeah.

**MORGAN:** That's my daughter.

**METZGER:** Really?

**MORGAN:** Yeah. She was five years old when she was selected, and now she has two daughters of her who recently graduated. And they *still* use her picture. But they don't get any money for it. Yes, she was five years old.

**METZGER:** Now you came to the Hill when?

**MORGAN:** To what? To the Hill?

**METZGER:** Were your parents living on the Hill when you were born?

**MORGAN:** We were living over on East Capitol Street, Third and East Capitol. I was born right down on Louisiana Avenue, which is right almost near the Courthouse now.

**METZGER:** You were born at home? Or in a hospital?

**MORGAN:** Yes, at home. All of us were born at home.

**METZGER:** Okay, what year were you born? You were born in what, 1917?

**MORGAN:** 1917. July 1917. (pause)

**METZGER:** I forgot earlier. This is Norman Metzger, and I'm interviewing Oley Morgan on August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005. Interview started at about 11:20 and we're having our chat in Mr. Morgan's home in Annandale, Virginia. So let's pick up our chat. You were actually born on Capitol Hill—

**MORGAN:** I was born on Capitol Hill.

(some mumbling)

**METZGER:** Louisiana Avenue is really very close to the Capitol, okay—

**MORGAN:** (overlapping) very close to the Capitol.

**METZGER:** Well, let's try to see what the earliest memories you have of growing up on the Hill. Can you think back to your time when you were three or four years old maybe and began to have consciousness of where you were?

**MORGAN:** The only thing I can really remember from my mother saying, just the day before I was born, she looked out the window and troops were out there. World War I. All going up and down Louisiana Avenue. I guess getting ready to go.

**METZGER:** What month were you born in?

**MORGAN:** I was born in July.

**METZGER:** Okay. Probably a hot day.

**MORGAN:** Yeah, yeah. July 23, 1917.

**METZGER:** So anyway, your mother remembers the soldiers marching the day you were born.

**MORGAN:** Oh yes. And then of course we moved up to my grandmother's at Third and East Capitol. The 300 block of East Capitol. Right across from the Library of Congress. Up two blocks.

**METZGER:** Is that where the Supreme Court is now?

**MORGAN:** No, the Supreme Court is on Second Street, but it's around to the back. And if the fellow that is on First Street—you know—

**METZGER:** (interrupting) then the front of it is on East Capitol Street.

**MORGAN:** Then it comes up this way and I'm a block behind the Supreme Court.

**METZGER:** On East Capitol Street. All right. So all of you moved from Louisiana Avenue to a house on East Capitol Street—you remember how old you were when this happened?

**MORGAN:** Oh, I guess maybe three or four years old.

**METZGER:** Okay, all right.

**MORGAN:** And I was there until I, well I was going to school, and after I guess I was in the fourth grade, third or fourth grade, my mother moved, and we moved down right by the House of Representatives on First Street. The 100 block of First Street SE. 126. I never will forget that number.

**METZGER:** 126 First Street SE?

**MORGAN:** Yeah. And we lived there for quite awhile. And then we moved to—my mother and dad, they separated, and then we moved to Ninth Street SE. One block behind Marty's. Where Marty's Restaurant was. And that's where I went to junior high school, high school, and high school.

**METZGER:** You went to Hine?

**MORGAN:** I went to Hine. And from Hine I went to Eastern.

**METZGER:** Eastern High School. All right.

**MORGAN:** Just one block behind Marty's Restaurant.

**METZGER:** About how long, do you remember, you were at 126 First Street? Was that a year, two years?

**MORGAN:** Oh yeah, I can remember that. Let's see. My brother Joe was in the first or second grade, and I'm five years older than him.

**METZGER:** Are you the oldest child?

**MORGAN:** I'm the oldest boy. The oldest boy, yes. I had just another brother that just passed away just a couple of years ago. A year ago. Well, yeah, that's where I lived until I went into the Marine Corps.

**METZGER:** Okay, so you lived on Ninth Street. I think you told me the number of the house.

**MORGAN:** 519.

**METZGER:** 519 Ninth Street SE.

**MORGAN:** Yeah. Uh huh.

**METZGER:** Let me take you back just a little bit to when you were still a young boy, three or four years old. Where did you used to play? Did you play on the Capitol grounds?

**MORGAN:** We played over on the Library of Congress grounds, and the Capitol grounds, and where now is the Supreme Court building. But that was a big lot, and before the Supreme Court was built my sister and I we used to play in all that are in there. The Capitol and the Library of Congress. And at night, we didn't have air-conditioning you know back in those days, when we were young. We lived with my grandmother then. My mother would take a blanket and take us over to the Library of Congress at night, spread the blanket out and my sister and I and my mother we would lay there and we would go to sleep.

And then she would wake us up and we'd go home and by that time the house would cool down. She'd wake us up and we'd cross the street and go to bed.

**METZGER:** Okay, so probably 10 or 11 o'clock at night—

**MORGAN:** In those days you could do that. You can't go lay on the grass now!

**METZGER:** Oh, no way you can do that—no way you can do that.

**MORGAN:** Not the way people are today, boy.

**METZGER:** Did you ever sleep on the Capitol grounds?

**MORGAN:** Did I ever what?

**METZGER:** Sack out on the Capitol grounds when it was hot?

**MORGAN:** Oh, no, no it was one block apart.

Every Easter Monday we rolled our Easter eggs on the Capitol grounds. The White House had theirs and we had ours on the Capitol. I imagine they still do they too. On Easter Monday.

**METZGER:** At the White House. But not at the Capitol.

**MORGAN:** No, Capitol's changed, with the security, see. They don't have it now.

**METZGER:** Easter egg roll on the Capitol grounds, was that an organized event, a formal event, or you just went over—

**MORGAN:** People from all over the city used to—(phone rings). This is my phone I think.

[Pause for phone call.]

**METZGER:** I was just asking you the egg roll on the Capitol grounds, was that organized or you just went over and did it—

**MORGAN:** Oh, they used to come from northeast, southwest, southeast, all the different neighborhoods. And they used to fill the back of—it was always held in the back of the Capitol you know—

**METZGER:** The Mall side—

**MORGAN:** Facing, going down toward Pennsylvania Avenue.

**METZGER:** A lot of fun.

**MORGAN:** What?

**METZGER:** A lot of fun.

**MORGAN:** Oh! Yeah, great. Yeah. [pause] And then, of course as I got older, I started boxing.

**METZGER:** When did the boxing start?

**MORGAN:** I was about 12 years old when my uncle took me to Knights of Columbus and they had a gymnasium there.

**METZGER:** Was that on the Hill?

**MORGAN:** Well, no, it was down sort of close to where police headquarters is now. I started fooling around in the gym, you know. And they took a kind of interest in me. And they opened up what they called the Merrick Boys Club. Owned by two sisters who ran the [unintelligible, but probably Christ Child] Society.

**METZGER:** Merrit? [spells out].

**MORGAN:** It was Merrick. [spelling]

**METZGER:** Where was the boys club located?

**MORGAN:** Yeah, that was a boys club. Oh that was on Massachusetts Avenue and Sixth. Six hundred block.

**METZGER:** On Capitol Hill? Southeast?

**MORGAN:** No. That was Northeast. Just a block down from Casualty Hospital and all that in there. But anyway that's where I got on the boxing team and from there I got to, you know as I got older, I was boxing and I was one of the first boxers for the Police Boys Club. 1935. At Number 5 Precinct. You know where that is?

**METZGER:** I think so. I can look that up. [overlapping.]

**MORGAN:** And I was on the boxing team there. And from there of course I had many, many fights there.

**METZGER:** How did you—you say you were 12 years old, they took you over to this boxing club—your uncle did. And you just sort of really liked it?

**MORGAN:** Oh yeah. Yeah.

**METZGER:** Did you like the idea of getting hit?

**MORGAN:** Oh, well, you learn to take that too, you know.

**METZGER:** Okay.

**MORGAN:** But I had good instructors, and they taught me, they taught me pretty much about how to protect yourself too, you know. And then I fought in a lot of tournaments.

**METZGER:** As a boy?

**MORGAN:** Yeah, yeah.

**METZGER:** How did your parents feel about that?

**MORGAN:** Well, uh. I was in the gym every day exercising and all you know. And she knew where I was you know. Not getting in trouble, like. And they went along with that. But then I had many, many bouts. And I boxed everywhere. I boxed [at] Congressional Country Club, I boxed at University Country Club, I mean University Club in Washington. I boxed at the Elks. I boxed out at Griffith Stadium.

**METZGER:** You boxed at Griffith Stadium?

**MORGAN:** Yeah. I boxed in Norfolk, Virginia. And of course when I went in the Marine Corps, I boxed for four years in the Marine Corps. So then when I came out I was almost finished boxing. It was 1946. And they looked up my record from the Washington Time Herald, old Dick O'Brien was the Sports writer.

**METZGER:** You were 29 about then, right?

**MORGAN:** Twenty-nine, yeah. And that's when I was selected into the Hall of Fame.

**METZGER:** The Boxing Hall of Fame?

**MORGAN:** Yeah. Along with Sugar Ray Leonard [ed: Sugar Ray Robinson].

**METZGER:** Same year?

**MORGAN:** Same year. He went in as the Pro, he was selected as the Pro, and I was selected as the amateur. And we had a big party at the Hilton Hotel. There was a gang of people there.

**METZGER:** I'd like to back up a little bit. So you got interested in boxing, and you were an amateur boxer through all your career. At what point did start boxing in tournaments, how old were you then?

**MORGAN:** Oh I was maybe 14. Fourteen or 15. It was like one Boys Club fighting another Boys Club. All the different clubs had teams. Boxing teams, you know. Northeast Boys Club, Southwest Boys Club, Washington Boys Club, Washington D.C. and of course Police Boys Club.

**METZGER:** How many rounds would fight, how many rounds is a fight?

**MORGAN:** Three. Average three. Of course as we got older, when I was 18, 19 years old, I'd go to Norfolk to fight, we'd fight four rounds.

**METZGER:** But that was the most you'd ever fight.

**MORGAN:** Yeah, yeah.

**METZGER:** Did you have the kind of protection, I mean that they give boxers now. I mean boxers in the Olympics they have the head gear, they have large gloves—

**MORGAN:** Oh, yeah, when you were training, but not when you were fighting. That comes off, you didn't have that kind of protection in the ring you know. But sure, when you're working out.

**METZGER:** Did you have injuries as a result of boxing?

**MORGAN:** Uh, no, not really. I had a little cut that they sewed up here on my eye one time. But I had a bout a couple guys, a big boy—I was I guess 18. I was slated to fight one night at the Police Boys Club, and my coach is named [?] Fox, and he said “The man you're supposed to fight tonight didn't show up, and there's a man here who his man didn't show up. But he's a lot bigger than you. Would you fight him?”

I says, “Well how might does he weigh?” He says “168 pounds.” At that time I was 140, about 140 pounds. I was fighting welterweight.

**METZGER:** So he outweighed you by about—30 pounds—

**MORGAN:** And he was so much bigger than me. Anyway, we fought, and I wound up breaking his jaw.

**METZGER:** You won the fight.

**MORGAN:** Oh yeah. And he and I turned out to be good friends later on, you know, but all for a whole summer season he had his teeth wired together. Where I had broke his jaw. I was lucky. I never got

anything other than this eye. Well I used to get some black eyes, cut lip or something, you know. But nothing major.

**METZGER:** Were you still living on Capitol Hill then?

**MORGAN:** Oh yeah.

**METZGER:** How long did you actually live on Capitol Hill?

**MORGAN:** All my life, practically. Practically all my life. I lived South Carolina Avenue, I lived on First Street, then this is all southeast—the old Providence Hospital, do you know where that was?

**METZGER:** Yeah.

**MORGAN:** I lived right around the corner from there. I lived on Third and East Capitol. I lived on Ninth Street. I lived on, yeah, South Carolina and First Street. So all my life I've been practically on Capitol Hill.

**METZGER:** I want to come back to boxing, but let's talk about—you were living on Ninth Street, you lived there for several years—

**MORGAN:** 519.

**METZGER:** 519. And you were there—you remember for about how long?

**MORGAN:** I was there for oh, four years I guess. I went from Hine to Eastern High School there, at the Ninth Street address.

**METZGER:** Taking you back even further—where did you go to elementary school?

**MORGAN:** I went to Branch, uh, Brent, and Dent. They were down there Second Street, at the bottom.

**METZGER:** Yeah, I know. I know where Dent is, it's now Capitol Hill Day School. [overlapping]

**MORGAN:** By the park, yeah.

**METZGER:** Garfield Park.

**MORGAN:** And I used to play down there at that playground in the summer times.

**METZGER:** Garfield.

**MORGAN:** Yeah, Garfield.

**METZGER:** What sort of play equipment do you remember that Garfield had? (pause) Was there a playground there?

**MORGAN:** Playground, oh yeah. We used to play softball there. They didn't have any pool, any swimming pool. We used to go to athletic clubs to go swimming. And I used to swim in the river, too.

**METZGER:** Garfield in those days if I remember was segregated—so it was whites only?

**MORGAN:** Oh yeah. The schools were too.

**METZGER:** So Dent and Brent were white only schools?

**MORGAN:** Oh yeah. But then I went to Hilton when I was living with my grandmother, in first, second or third grade, and the Hilton was right near Stanton Park?

**METZGER:** I'm not following you. The Hilton High School?

**MORGAN:** No, the Hilton elementary school. And I went there my first, second or third grade. But that was about it. Then I went to Buchanan. At 13<sup>th</sup> and D SE.

**METZGER:** You went to a lot of schools!

**MORGAN:** Oh yeah, yeah. Because I moved around. Different places.

**METZGER:** All those schools were segregated?

**MORGAN:** All of them, yeah. And at that time Eastern High School was classed as one of the most beautiful in the city. They had their own hothouses, they raised their own flowers. But now it is [unintelligible].

**METZGER:** Yes, it certainly hasn't been maintained the way it should be.

**MORGAN:** [laughs] No. Different element. Different element of people.

**METZGER:** Yeah. And all of Capitol Hill, at least where you lived, was segregated, right?

**MORGAN:** Oh, yeah.

**METZGER:** Did you have any black neighbors?

**MORGAN:** No, not really.

**METZGER:** Did you play with any black children?

**MORGAN:** Did I ever play with them? When I was a kid, you know, at my grandmother's, you know when I was in second, third, first, grade, we lived right next door to an apartment, and they had a janitor that lived there, with the [a] family that took care of the apartment. And they had a boy and a girl, and I played with them. We were taught, we were never taught to be anything but good to them, nice to them. And we were. And there wasn't really any tension then, you know, like it is today. Like my grandmother, she had a wash lady that washed clothes for her, she must have washed clothes and ironed for her for 15, 20 years. And my grandmother used to buy her all her coal, all her wood in the wintertime, buy her turkey for Christmas and Thanksgiving. So we were always good. And these old colored women they'd look out for us, too. But see that's all changed now.

**METZGER:** I was going to ask you—your mother and father separated, and you were what, about eight years old, something like that?

**MORGAN:** No, I'd say—yeah, I was around eight. Third or fourth grade I guess.

**METZGER:** And after they separated you moved to a house on First Street, Southeast, is that right?

**MORGAN:** Eeh, yeah, I think that was where it was.

**METZGER:** Okay.

**MORGAN:** I think that was where it was. From then to First Street. Yeah, because I was in about the fifth grade, my brother was in the first. So it was then.

**METZGER:** Who provided the support in the family?

**MORGAN:** My mother worked, and of course we lived with my grandparents. They both worked in the Government Printing Office. My grandmother worked in the Government Printing Office 50 years. My grandfather worked there for I don't know how many years. He was a pressman. And my mother she worked at the House of Representatives, on First Street. I forget what the name of that building was.

**METZGER:** The Cannon Building?

**MORGAN:** No.

**METZGER:** The Rayburn Building? No, it's too new.

**MORGAN:** But, anyway.

**METZGER:** I can't think of the other building [ed: Longworth]. But whatever the other building was—

**MORGAN:** Yeah, right on First Street. Right up to Pennsylvania Avenue and First. All the way down to C Street it would go. Big—still there. I think it started with an R, the name of it.

**METZGER:** (overlapping) What did your mother do?

**MORGAN:** But anyway, that's where it was.

**METZGER:** What did your mother do in the House of Representatives?

**MORGAN:** My mother? My mother was a charlady. She cleaned offices.

**METZGER:** Does that mean she worked at nights?

**MORGAN:** She worked days. She used to go in 5 o'clock in the morning, and get out of there just about 9:30 or 10 o'clock. And we lived right directly across the street, at First Street, 126, and my mother would leave to go right across the street into the building, but she would fix our cereal, and stuff and had it all fixed for us, and I was five years old then, my brother, he was in the first grade. [ed: some confusion here about ages and grades] So she'd have all his clothes out, and I would see that Joe would get dressed. And I could do everything for him except comb his hair. And we would go across the street when we were getting ready to do to school, and my mother would be at the door, she'd come to that door every morning, and she'd have to comb and brush our hair. And she'd comb Joe's hair, and off to school we would go. This is from little kids on. So. We had a nice life.

**METZGER:** So your mother was home, once she finished with her charlady duties, then she was home the rest of the day—

**MORGAN:** (overlapping) Oh yeah. But then my mother wound up years later going to work at [sic] Government Printing Office. And she also retired from Government Printing Office.

**METZGER:** The income she had from the charlady job was enough to keep you guys going—

**MORGAN:** Oh yeah. And of course we had our grandparents too. They helped us too you know.

**METZGER:** When you were living on First Street were you living in an apartment or a house?

**MORGAN:** On First Street? No, like a rooming house. We had like a top floor. Like two bedrooms and a kitchen. Real nice house. It was right between Carroll Street and C Street. On First Southeast. Four hundred block. [ed: seems like the wrong number.]

**METZGER:** A terrific location.

**MORGAN:** Pardon?

**METZGER:** (Repeats.)

**MORGAN:** Oh, yeah. It is. And right up on the Avenue, that corner you know, all along Pennsylvania Avenue there were restaurants and all in that 100 block.

**METZGER:** Where did you play when you were living on First Street? You played after school, you played in Garfield Park, is that your—

**MORGAN:** Yeah, more so. At the park. Garfield. But I didn't get at that time I didn't go much farther than Garfield because I had my brother, and he would tag along right after me, you know. But I was at Garfield, and then we played in the neighborhood, you know. Carroll Street was just a one block long, right behind First and Pennsylvania SE. And we used to have games up in there, on that street. There wasn't a lot of traffic and we played ball up in there, you know. Softball.

**METZGER:** Did you have a job as a kid?

**MORGAN:** Did I have a job? I had a newspaper route with The Washington Times Herald, and The Evening Star, and you know who one of my customers was?

**METZGER:** Who?

**MORGAN:** J. Edgar Hoover. And he lived at Fifth and Pennsylvania Avenue SE, but it was right across there, what they called Seward Square, and he lived right next door to the church, the church was at Sixth, and he lived right next door. And I used to go up to collect from the week after or when it was due, and he would be in the dining room, I could see him in the dining room, and his mother would come to the door, white haired lady. And I'd say, "collecting for The Star," and I could see him sitting' in there. Old J. Edgar Hoover. Yeah. But I served newspapers for a long, long time.

**METZGER:** How many papers did you have in your route?

**MORGAN:** Well I never will forget one time I was working, and I had The Daily News, I sold the News, The Herald and the St—no, The News and The Herald. I sold The Star for awhile—not sold, I served them—for a little while. The largest route that I had was The Daily News, and I served 123 papers. And they were all down at First Street SW. All down in the black neighborhoods and all, you know. They never bothered me. Some of them wouldn't want to pay, right away you know, but they never bothered me.

**METZGER:** Did you punch their lights out if they didn't pay?

**MORGAN:** (Laughs) No, I wasn't quite that big then. But I was boxing then. I was maybe 12, 14 years old. I always had a paper route.

**METZGER:** So you had several paper routes? One in the Southwest, you had—

**MORGAN:** (Overlapping) They were different papers. See, when I served The Times Herald, that was strictly Southeast. That's where J. Edgar Hoover was born. And The News, the News was down in Southwest. By the Navy Yard, right down in there.

**METZGER:** So you had several papers to deliver each day?

**MORGAN:** Oh, yeah, every day except Sunday.

**METZGER:** You were a busy guy!

**MORGAN:** Oh, yes, I was! And you know where my newspaper station was, where we picked up papers? There's an alley right—there's Marty's. Right there—on E Street.

**METZGER:** Right next to Marty's—on the same side.

**MORGAN:** Yeah, but right across the street from Marty's there's an alley, that went right through to Ninth Street—

**METZGER:** Oh, I know that alley, that's near my house—

**MORGAN:** Well right in that alley there, in one of those garages, is where all our papers was delivered.

**METZGER:** All of them, The Daily News and the—

**MORGAN:** At that time it was just The Herald, for me. But that's what they would—a truck would bring them in the morning. Of course they had a route agent, that used to give us our papers, you know. I'd get on my bike, bag on my shoulder with 123 News, I'd be going down to Southwest. But it was pickup money, you know.

**METZGER:** Well that was important. Did you give everybody a little Christmas card, to collect tips?

**MORGAN:** No, I don't remember really. I sold box lunches at the Navy Yard, Washington Navy Yard.

**METZGER:** Who made the box lunches?

**MORGAN:** There was some company that made them, and it was a sandwich, it was like a one sandwich, apple maybe, or piece of cake, in a box, and we'd stand outside of the Navy Yard gates and—it

must have been ten or 15 of us, I'd be at the A Street Gate, another boy'd be at the Sixth Street Gate, another boy'd be at the Second Street Gate, and we'd be "box lunch," and it was like I think a quarter. But we were always hustling, trying to make a nickel.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

**METZGER:** You were just saying before the tape ran out you were always hustling trying to get some money—

**MORGAN:** Oh, yeah, you know. And when I got a little older, I guess I was maybe 12, I sold—sold, not served—I sold these papers at Seventh and Pennsylvania Avenue NW. It was a big market there, the Senate Market [ed: probably Central Market], now you know where that is, on that corner, and I used to sell papers right there on that corner, on a streetcar platform. And the traffic cop used to be in the middle of the street there and he was inside this place, and had an umbrella over him you know, and he would turn the handle like this—he would go to stop the traffic—he would turn it and the thing would say “Stop” and all the traffic would stop, and after so long he’d turn it back to “Go.” Right on that corner, and I used to sell papers on that corner. But that was it.

**METZGER:** Let me ask you again about the lunches. You brought them to the Navy Yard, these box lunches. Where did you get the lunches from?

**MORGAN:** Truck came up there, every day. Every morning. They would go from one gate to the next, because there would be one boy here, one boy here, at each gate, and they would drop off. So that’s the way it was. And if you had a couple left over, that you didn’t sell, they went home.

**METZGER:** So these box lunches had to be sold to people and you collected the money—

**MORGAN:** Oh yeah, yeah.

**METZGER:** Okay. Okay. So all this time you were going to school, you were delivering these newspapers, and you were also starting to box—

**MORGAN:** Oh yeah, you better believe it. Every day I was in that gym.

**METZGER:** Over in Northwest—

**MORGAN:** No—Southeast—Number 5 Police Boys Club.

**METZGER:** Okay. Do you remember the address—I remember you told me—where you boxed—

**MORGAN:** Yeah—it was Fifth and E SE. The Precinct is still there—and right down the stairs at the bottom is where the gym was.

**METZGER:** In the basement?

**MORGAN:** Yeah, in the basement.

**METZGER:** That's amazing. I had no idea that was there.

**MORGAN:** (overlapping) I knew all them cops over there then. They used to come see us fight too.

**METZGER:** So this is when you were a boy—you were 12 or 13—

**MORGAN:** Well no, I boxed there until I was in high school.

**METZGER:** But when did you stop boxing at Fifth and E—the basement of the police station?

**MORGAN:** Oh. I don't remember when. I was probably in my junior high school.

**METZGER:** Was it crowded? Were there a lot of other boxers there?

**MORGAN:** Oh yeah, yeah. I got pictures of the whole boxing team. And it's got the date on it, you know. 1935. Police Boys Club Boxing Team.

[Phone rings. Pause]

**METZGER:** You were saying you have pictures, 1935.

**MORGAN:** I'll show them to you some other time, I got them all packed away. But on that one picture of Police Boys Club 1935, I think there was 12 of us. And I'm the only one left. All the rest of them have passed away.

**METZGER:** You're a tough guy, Oley—

**MORGAN:** Huh? Well, I don't know. Came close this time. Boy that thing hit me it was something unbelievable. And I was fine, right till I went into Marty's. But I had been having some activity going on, because I had been to a couple of doctors. And they had offered me different ways they wanted to do it, they wanted to do an open chest on me, you know. And I said well, I've got to think about it. Finally when it hit me, there was no thinking about it.

**METZGER:** No choice.

**MORGAN:** They took me out of the restaurant in an ambulance, you know.

**METZGER:** I heard about it from John. Actually, not from John, from your daughter.

**MORGAN:** Yeah. I was lucky. They said I had just about drawn my last breath. I had that emergency operation, and I think it was only about the second or third one that had been performed. This type of

operation. Valves. And I think I was there about 18 days. Finally my surgeon said to me, well, I think you're improving. He said I think it's time to let you go home tomorrow. So I came home, I was home one day, downstairs in the library there, the nurse was over here, the visiting nurse that comes, you know, she was over here, and I was there just one night and I'm sitting down in the library and all of a sudden this nurse who was coming in there I guess to just check me over or something. She looked at me, and she pulled out her thing, and she checked me and she said to my daughter call an ambulance, he's got to go to a hospital. And they took me right back out the next day and I had the second operation.

**METZGER:** Well, you're here.

**MORGAN:** I haven't had it since. [ed: unknown reference]

**METZGER:** Well, you look terrific, you look terrific. Let me take you back a little bit again to your boxing days. So you were always an amateur—

**MORGAN:** Oh yeah.

**METZGER:** And how many times a week would you actually have a fight?

**MORGAN:** Oh, once a—not even once a week. Sometimes we'd go two or three weeks.

**METZGER:** Where did you fight? Where was the arena?

**MORGAN:** Well at different clubs. Like the Washington Boys Club was down in Northwest, Northeast Boys Club was way over in Northeast. Georgetown, Southwest—plus they would book different fights at these different clubs, like Congressional Country Club, they would have a smoker out there and they'd want to put on some fights. So they'd get together and call you, you want to go out to Congressional and box tonight? We could go to Frederick, Maryland, University Club. So that's the way it was. And I boxed all the way until I went into the Marine Corps. And then of course I boxed for four years in the Marine Corps.

**METZGER:** You were 18 when you went into the Marines?

**MORGAN:** Well, let's see. No I was older than 18. Oh, no. I was 18 when I graduated from high school, 1937. I went in the Marine Corps in '42. Beginning of World War II. And I was in there until 1946. But the four years I was in the Marine Corps I got on the boxing team. I was sent up to Philadelphia, stationed in Philly, and I boxed up there, oh I don't know how many times. We would box Navy, guys in the Navy, and Army. You know. They had different teams.

**METZGER:** What weight class did you fight?

**MORGAN:** Let's see I fought at 135 and then I fought at 147, I was a welterweight. And I stayed at 147 I guess for four, five years. Then I went up to 160. I was fighting middleweight. And that's what I fought my four years in the Marine Corps.

**METZGER:** You fought middleweight?

**MORGAN:** Yeah. (Pause) It was good. I have a picture over there, just me and this one guy, I think it's the second one up there. See me and that one guy? I tell you a funny story about him. His name Dominick Nicosi (sp?), he was a professional from New York City, and he was down here for some reason in Washington. And he had gone into the Army. He and I became good friends. So we started training together. He would call me and ask me, "Hey Oley, we're having a Company party, Fort Myer, Fort Myer. We'll put on a little exhibition for the boys."

So I says, "Okay, Nick. "

But anyway, he got discharged, and he and I trained together for years. He got trained, and he went back to New York where he lived, and he got a job driving a cab. And he had the worst set of cauliflower ears on him that you'd ever want to see, I mean they were big. Thick. The minute you looked at him you could tell he was a fighter. So he's driving a cab, and they had a private lot for the cab drivers to park at Times Square, where they drop the ball on New Year's Eve. And he said the cabdrivers would pull in there and wait for customers, you know. So he said he was in the entrance there, waiting for somebody, one of the drivers, to pull out and he was going to pull into their place. And this other guy comes in behind him. So as soon as this guy pulls out this other guy pulls in ahead of Nico. And Nico pulls up beside and he says, "Hey Buddy. You know I was waiting for that spot. You saw me waiting here to get in that spot, and you jumped ahead of me." You know what the guy said to him? He said "look, don't give me a hard time, because I used to be a fighter. See this nose?" And Nico says, "Is that right?" He said "well look at these—I didn't get them from answering telephones!" (Chuckles). He told that guy off.

**METZGER:** The Marines—where were you stationed?

**MORGAN:** Philadelphia.

**METZGER:** The whole time?

**MORGAN:** Yeah.

**METZGER:** Okay.

**MORGAN:** Oh, I was at Parris Island, I was at Camp Lejeune.

**METZGER:** During the war you were in Philadelphia—

**MORGAN:** Yeah, I was.

**METZGER:** Did you continue to box after you left the Marines?

**MORGAN:** Oh, no, I was finished. That was it. That's the last time I put gloves on.

**METZGER:** Okay. What did you actually wind up doing after you left the Marines?

**MORGAN:** Oh, I went back to my job. See I was a machinist on the Washington Times Herald. That's where I learned my trade.

**METZGER:** At the Times Herald?

**MORGAN:** Yeah. I worked at the Times Herald, I worked at the Evening Star. I never worked at The Post. I started working at the Times Herald 1937. Right when I got out of high school. Incidentally, that picture—

**METZGER:** (Interrupting) So you were 20 years old then—

**MORGAN:** Let's see—

**METZGER:** You were born in 1917—

**MORGAN:** Yeah.

**METZGER:** I'm sorry—

**MORGAN:** See that boxing picture up there? That's Police Boys Club. That's downstairs in the bottom of the precinct there. Number 5.

**METZGER:** Did you have many cops come down to watch you?

**MORGAN:** Oh, yeah, yeah. I knew all the policemen, you know. We had a captain of police there at Number 5, and his name was Morgan. Captain Morgan. And I used to go by him and he'd say, "How are you this morning Mr. Morgan?" I'd say, "I'm fine Mr. Morgan, how are you?" (Chuckles)

(a little overlapping, unintelligible here)

It was good. I had a good boyhood. Interesting.

**METZGER:** You had a lively one, anyway.

**MORGAN:** I met a lot of characters too.

**METZGER:** On the Hill?

**MORGAN:** Oh, yeah. Lot of fighters. I knew every business, all the way up Eighth Street. I knew every place there were.

**METZGER:** What was Eighth Street like?

**MORGAN:** Like? Well, there was a big bowling alley right there in that same block, where Marty's is. Close to Pennsylvania Avenue.

**METZGER:** On the same side?

**MORGAN:** Same side. And then right two doors up from Marty's was a theater, you know.

**METZGER:** It's still there.

**MORGAN:** The Academy.

**METZGER:** The Academy Theater. It's a church.

(overlapping)

**MORGAN:** It's closed now I think.

**METZGER:** But the theater is still intact.

**MORGAN:** Yeah, the building is still there.

**METZGER:** And actually, the seats are still there.

**MORGAN:** Yeah, yeah.

**METZGER:** It's a beautiful place.

**MORGAN:** Oh, is it? Well, I've been in it many times, when I was you know—

**METZGER:** What was it, a movie theater?

**MORGAN:** Yeah, it was movies then. When I went to it. Yeah. And right before you get to the Academy was Brinkley's (sp?) restaurant. And next to Brinkley's restaurant is where Marty's is now. Used to be a poolroom. And then Marty's, they turned it into—

**METZGER:** So Brinkley's Restaurant was between the Academy Theater and Marty's, where Marty's is now.

**MORGAN:** Brinkley's. It was right next door to the Academy. And then Marty's was right next door to that.

**METZGER:** And Brinkley's was what—a general restaurant?

**MORGAN:** A general restaurant—but they had a little dance floor in the back, and they had a band that came in every night, you know, and played. Like a little five piece band, you know. All the girls from all over the city used to go there, boy. I used to be there dancing all the time.

**METZGER:** Meeting all those girls—

**MORGAN:** Oh I loved them—I loved to dance too. Like I said, I had a lot of fun. I've lived my 88 years pretty good.

**METZGER:** Sorry?

**MORGAN:** I say I've lived my 88 years pretty good—

**METZGER:** I'm sure you have, Oley. Life to the fullest—

**MORGAN:** Yeah. Now right down the street from Marty's you know, was the Mohawk A.C. That's where the top professional fighters used to train.

**METZGER:** Mohawk A.C. Where was that located?

**MORGAN:** That was about three doors down from Marty's, on the same side.

**METZGER:** Toward Pennsylvania Avenue?

**MORGAN:** Yeah. Going toward—and right next to it was the bowling alley. And Mohawk was upstairs. And Donald [unintelligible] who I knew very well, fought Joe Louis the world's champion. And Joe Louis knocked him out in the third round. (chuckles) I knew all the trainers up there. Patsy Donovan was a fight trainer, you know, and Fats Cornell, he was another fight trainer, who owned a restaurant right there at First and Pennsylvania SE, right behind his office.

**METZGER:** So we were talking about when you were at Brinkley's, and—

**MORGAN:** What?

**METZGER:** We're talking about the 1930s? You were maybe 15, 20 years old?

**MORGAN:** Yeah, oh yeah. Well, I was 18 in '37 when I got out of high school, and I fought for six years before that I guess. Started boxing round 12 or 13, you know.

**METZGER:** Was Eighth Street—same question as earlier, I guess—was Eighth Street segregated?

**MORGAN:** Oh. Yeah.

**METZGER:** No blacks on the street?

**MORGAN:** No. I mean, they would come up, but they didn't come in the restaurants or anything. No. They didn't. They had their own place. They had their own neighborhoods and all.

**METZGER:** So Eighth Street at night was a very lively place.

**MORGAN:** Oh, it was. It sure was. Between the Washington Navy Yard, the sailors, and the Marine Barracks on Eighth and I on the other corner. That was a combination! (chuckles) They used to have a lot of activity going on. Those boys would drink a little too much beer, and get out there—a lot of action. (chuckles) But that's the way it was.

I met a lot of nice people right in that neighborhood over the years, you know. Good people. You didn't hear the violence they have today. Every day you pick up a newspaper there's a murder or shootings. Kids shooting each other in school, shit like that.

**METZGER:** So your mother didn't really worry about you being out on the street—

**MORGAN:** When?

**METZGER:** Your mother didn't have to worry about that—

**MORGAN:** Oh, no, no, no. Aw hell no. I used to leave that club, what I was saying—Brinkley's—which was next to the Academy—they would close 1 o'clock, 1:30, nobody ever bothered me. And I used to live on Fourth Street NE then. Nobody ever bothered me.

[Knock on door.]

Yes, come in— [tape turned off]

**METZGER:** Ok, so we had talked about Eighth Street being a very lively street, and safe at night. Did you guys go to church?

**MORGAN:** Oh, yeah, went to St. Peter's. I was married in St. Peter's, Third and C—Second and C—

**METZGER:** Were you living on the Hill when you were married?

**MORGAN:** I was living on Ninth Street.

**METZGER:** You were married after the Marines?

**MORGAN:** Oh, no, I was married before the Marine Corps. Oh yeah. I was married in 19—I'm just trying to think—it was right at the end of '41 or '42. I think 1942.

**METZGER:** About a year or so before you went into the Marines—

**MORGAN:** I got married in January, I think it was January of '42, and I went in the Marine Corps two months later. And I was in there till '46.

**METZGER:** What impelled you to go into the Marines—because you didn't want to get drafted into the Army?

**MORGAN:** No, I was always—my dad was a Marine. My son was a Marine after me. That's where I enlisted, at the Marine Eighth and I Barracks.

**METZGER:** (overlapping) You could just walk over there, to the Barracks—

**MORGAN:** Oh yeah, Eighth and I, yeah. I used to go down there to the reviews that they would have, you know. I was just kind of sold on the military, I liked it. Because when I was in high school I was a cadet, high school cadets. All high schools had their own cadets. And we would have a final exhibition, I guess you would call it, at the end of school season, at Griffith Stadium, all the high schools, and we would compete, you know. My mother couldn't wait to get me in high school and put that uniform on me. My mother loved uniforms.

**METZGER:** The girl you married, did she live on the Hill?

**MORGAN:** She lived on the Hill too, on Pennsylvania Avenue SE. 1200 block of Pennsylvania.

**METZGER:** How did you two meet?

**MORGAN:** Through high school. I was in high school, she was in junior high school.

**METZGER:** So you were at Eastern, and she was at Hine?

[repeated]

**MORGAN:** She was at Hine, yeah. (Pause) I was only about a year ahead of her. (Pause). So.

**METZGER:** So you two would go dancing at Brinkley's?

**MORGAN:** Oh, Lord, yeah. Many, many times.

**METZGER:** I guess you weren't at home that much—I was going to ask after you married you continued to live on Ninth Street, the two of you?

**MORGAN:** No, then I moved to Pennsylvania Avenue. But it was only for a short while, two, two and half months, then I went in the Marine Corps.

(Overlapping)

**METZGER:** And your wife stayed—

**MORGAN:** Because World War II—

**METZGER:** And you wife stayed—

**MORGAN:** Yeah, she stayed with her parents.

**METZGER:** Okay.

**MORGAN:** That was right after the war broke out, you know.

**METZGER:** What was Pennsylvania Avenue like in those days?

**MORGAN:** Oh it was nice, nice. Nice houses. All the way down to the bridge. And couple small restaurants here and there, you know. But other than that, it was a nice avenue. (Pause). And the trolleys they ran all the way down to the Circle at 17th, Barney Circle. That's at the Bridge, you know

**METZGER:** And then they ran—

**MORGAN:** They ran all the way into Georgetown. And you know you could buy a streetcar pass for a dollar. That'd take you seven days, go anywhere you want with that streetcar pass.

**METZGER:** Which you did—

**MORGAN:** Oh, yeah, yeah.

**METZGER:** When you a boy playing on the Capitol grounds and that, what kind of games did you play? Was it stickball, punch ball—

**MORGAN:** Oh yeah, we used to play—we had softball too you know. And as we got older, we would play it at Garfield too—we would play cards, checkers—things like that. And they were good checkers players, some of them good. One boy, Danny Petro, he was a fighter too. He was a good one. But I bet you—I played checkers against that boy, I bet you I played for three years, and I don't think I ever beat him one time. He was so good! He's passed away too.

**METZGER:** I meant to ask you earlier, there was Finley's Gym—it was a boxing gym. Guy named Finley had it, and it was on 11<sup>th</sup> Street.

**MORGAN:** What was the name?

**METZGER:** Finley.

**MORGAN:** Finley? I heard that name.

**METZGER:** Actually he was one of the people—I don't know if he was interviewed—I think he was interviewed actually, about this gym. And it was kind of a no-nonsense, very clean gym, over a garage. It was in an alley off 11<sup>th</sup> Street. I just wondered. But you never heard of it.

**MORGAN:** I've heard of that name.

**METZGER:** But you never boxed there.

**MORGAN:** No, no. I worked out for several years at the Apollo Gym. Which was H Street NE. I worked out at that Gym. I'd get off of work at 2:30 in the afternoon, and I'd shoot right to work out at the Apollo. They had some good fighters came there too, lot of pro fighters. Matter of fact, I think I was one of the only amateurs that was in there training. But that was good, because I used to train with the big boys, you know.

**METZGER:** Was there a reason you decided not to go professional?

**MORGAN:** No, no. Because I had—I stayed as an amateur until I got out of the Marine Corps, and when I got out of the Marine Corps it was time for me to close down. So I said I'm going back to work and work. Course I had a good job to go back to. See I worked on newspapers all my life. For 50 years I was a member of the union. I started 1937, and I retired in '81.

**METZGER:** From which newspaper?

**MORGAN:** When I retired, I retired from the Wall Street Journal. See the Times Herald sold out, to Washington Post—which I never worked on The Post, I worked on The Evening Star—and then I went to

work on the Wall Street Journal when they opened up that plant here. And I got a good job, I was a chief machinist. And I was there for, oh for years. And I retired from there in '81. As a matter of fact, I just got this. My daughter made a copy of this. I didn't even know that I had one.

**METZGER:** Let me turn off the tape. [pause]

**METZGER:** You say you worked as a machinist until they went to computer type setting.

**MORGAN:** Oh, yeah, that was it. They got rid of what they call hot metal and they went to cold type.

**METZGER:** So at that point you retired?

**MORGAN:** That's when I retired.

**METZGER:** Did you work at the plant at Virginia Avenue, is that where they had it?

**MORGAN:** No that was the Star. I worked at the Star when they were on 11<sup>th</sup> and [unintelligible]. [ed: the old Washington Star building is at Pennsylvania Avenue and 10th Street NW.]

**METZGER:** Where was the Times Herald plant?

**MORGAN:** Times Herald was at 1317 H. Northwest.

**METZGER:** I'm asking you a lot of questions—

**MORGAN:** That's all right, all right.

**METZGER:** You're a gentleman. Your son mentioned you had lots of stories. Do you have any particular favorite stories of growing up on Capitol Hill that you want to make sure you'd like to talk about? You had lots of adventures on the Hill, lots of interesting things happened to you, you had a lot of fun—

**MORGAN:** Yeah. Well, I don't really know.

**METZGER:** What were the classrooms like?

**MORGAN:** [repeats]. Oh, great. They were great. Eastern High School, every lunch hour, we had like a little three piece band, drummer, piano player, you know, at lunch hour down in the Armory, we could dance. And I danced every lunch hour, man. I didn't worry about eating too much, I wanted to dance with them girls, you know!

They were just enjoyable years that I had. Met a lot of nice boys, nice guys. A few of them got stray, went astray. I had one guy that had a real bad reputation. Everybody all over town knew him. This guy. He used to travel around with a couple of his buddies, he would go to all these dances, like we would have at night. Like at Buchanan School, every Thursday night for years, kids from all over Northwest, Southwest, girls and fellas used to go to Buchanan for the dance. Well this guy, Charlie Donahue, is one that had a bad reputation. And he and two or three of his punk friends, you know, they would stay outside of these dances wherever you know, and they would make wisecracks if you was with a girlfriend, you know, this and that. And every intermission—there was no drinking, no beers—we would go across the street, especially at Buchanan—and there was a little Jewish delicatessen there. We'd go in and get a coke or something. So I'm coming out of there one evening with—the girl that I was married to—

**METZGER:** Were you married by then?

**MORGAN:** Oh, no I was in high school. And everybody knew about this Georgie Teeter (?) bad guy, so as I come out of this little store, this punk—and his friends were outside—and there was a screen door—and I opened it to let Gerri (?) get out, and as I went out this guy took the screen door, shoved it against me like this, you know—I just looked at him, you know.

**METZGER:** Did he hurt you?

**MORGAN:** No, it didn't hurt me, just slammed up against me. I looked at him, you know, but I didn't want to fight him, because he was really—he had a bad reputation as being a tough guy. And he was with two or three of his guys. But anyway, years later, years later—I'm at Marty's. Marty's was at that time not a restaurant, was a poolroom. And I had been—my mother had given me \$.50 or something to go get my cadet uniform from the cleaner's, because the next day we were going to have what they call a regimental drill up at Central High School. So I went to the Cleaners and I got my cadet uniform on a hangar, and I may have had 10, 15 cents change from that—

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

TAPE 2/SIDE 1

**METZGER:** You were telling me about this incident in the poolroom—

**MORGAN:** Yeah—so I went in there to shoot a game of 8-ball—they only charged a nickel for a game of 8-ball then—this is a long time—and I'm in high school. I was in pretty good shape. But I knew about this guy Georgie T and Charlie Donahue. So anyway I'm shooting pool with this boy. And all of a sudden I look up and here comes this guy with two of his friends. They come walking into the poolroom, they

walk on back—there was five tables—and they got right back to the table where we were shooting pool, this boy and I, and as he came along he took his hand and pushed the balls all this way! Our game! Which is—and I said to him, “Eh, leave those balls alone,” I said—”We’re not bothering you.”

He said “Don’t you like it?”

I said “No, I don’t like it.” “OK, I’ll take you outside.” I said “Okay, I guess so.” I put the stick up in the rack. And I said “Let’s go.”

So we went. As we went outside, walking through the poolroom, out the door, he said to me “When you get your foot across the street”—it’s that alley right there—He said “you better start swinging.”

I was really kind of scared. But, I knew how to fight, you know. So anyway, all these older guys, I guess 20 years old or so forth, they were all in the front of the poolroom on the tables up there. And they heard all this bullshit, see. And they knew me. They knew me because I used to box. So they all came outside, to see what was going to go on.

And he walks across the street with his two friends. And I was one step behind him, and as he stepped up right there at that alley, when he stepped up on that alley, I hit that man. And he hit the ground, and I thought he was dead. I mean he was gone. And I was so scared. His two friends took off. I ran back to the poolroom and I got my cadet uniform. And I came running across the street and right through that alley—because that’s where I lived, on Ninth Street right there. And as I went back, through that alley after I got my cadet uniform, he was still on that ground. I thought I had killed him. But the next day—I don’t know how the word ever got out—I went to school at Eastern and I don’t think I was in class an hour and it must have been four or five guys came up—”Hey Oley, we heard all about you last night. You knocked out Charlie Donahue, didn’t ya?”

**METZGER:** They knew your reputation—

**MORGAN:** (Laughs) Yeah. I said “Yeah.”

**METZGER:** He never bothered you again?

**MORGAN:** No, no. As a matter of fact I never heard of him anymore. But I thought I’d killed him.

**METZGER:** Well, you followed his own rules. As soon as you get the foot on the sidewalk it was go.

**MORGAN:** Oh, boy.

**METZGER:** Did you have many fights on the Hill like that?

**MORGAN:** No, no. I don't like to street fight. But you know every once in awhile you run into these bullies, you know.

(Pause)

I stepped my mouth into it one night in Brinkley's, right next to the Academy. I was sitting in there with a girlfriend, and some fight started, and these—they had this one guy down in the booth, like this, laying there—and this guy punching him, wouldn't let him up—and this guy's friend is standing right there watching him. And I said to him, I said "Hey"—and it wasn't my business—I leaned over and said "Hey, why don't you give your friend a hand there man?"

And he looked at me and said "I'll take you outside."

I was sitting there with a girlfriend. I said "You what?"

He said "I'll take you outside." So that fight started, he said "Let's go" to me. So I got outside of the booth—this girl that was with me said "If I were you I wouldn't go out with him," she said. "He's a boxer. From Maryland University."

**METZGER:** Was she talking about you?

**MORGAN:** No, talking about him. She was telling me I shouldn't go outside with him. She was with this guy see. I said "Is that so?"

So we went outside, walked outside, and soon as this guy was out the door, right next to it, where Marty's was, now was a door—like this—and half of it was glass. And when I walked outside I just backed up against that door. And finally he comes out. Nice looking guy, he was a nice looking guy. And all of sudden he gets right in front of me and Bup! He throws a punch at me. And all I did was move. And his arm went right through that glass. And boy, he cut himself something awful. And he had a white coat. It was red—man they took him across the street—he got in a car, and I guess they took him to the hospital or doctor. I didn't throw the first punch! But he was a smart aleck, see. But other than street fights—I never had had them. I hated them. I don't want them.

But they used to have a few of them down there. The sailors and the marines and the soldiers and all. Those guys would get drinking and all—I didn't even drink then, when I was a kid.

**METZGER:** I imagine on occasion there was brawling on Eighth Street.

**MORGAN:** Oh yeah, yeah. Matter of fact, I don't drink much now. Drink a beer here and now. Are you married?

[the following is overlapping]

**METZGER:** Yeah.

**MORGAN:** Are you? And you live in Southeast, huh?

**METZGER:** I live on Capitol Hill, Southeast.

**MORGAN:** Capitol Hill.

**METZGER:** I know the neighborhood you're talking about.

**MORGAN:** Oh, I bet you do—

**METZGER:** We go to Marty's quite often actually.

**MORGAN:** The food is really good in there. And—what's his name—

**METZGER:** John Boyle—

**MORGAN:** John Boyle. And he lives here in Virginia.

**METZGER:** I knew he lived in Virginia, I don't know where.

**MORGAN:** And he lives in the same building, I think, where my son lives, right now.

**METZGER:** John's a terrific guy.

**MORGAN:** He's a hell of a nice guy.

**METZGER:** I had a surprise birthday party for my wife in Marty's.

**MORGAN:** Did you?

**METZGER:** On the second floor, we took it over. It was great.

Oley, I'm going to stop now, I expect at some point to come back and ask you more questions.

**MORGAN:** Fine. And I'll get the stuff together.

END OF INTERVIEW ONE

INTERVIEW TWO  
(approximately in middle of TAPE 2/SIDE 1)

[Preliminary identification]

**METZGER:** The date is October 27, 2005 [ed: October 25, 2007]. And it's about a quarter after eleven, in his home.

**MORGAN:** 11:15.

**METZGER:** Oley, nice seeing you.

**MORGAN:** Nice seeing you.

**METZGER:** Oley, I just want to follow up on a couple of things that we talked about last time. One is—we talked a little bit about the alley that ran between Eighth Street and Ninth Street, which you used a lot. It was on the sidewalk outside that alley that you cold cocked that guy—

**MORGAN:** Right.

**METZGER:** What I want to know is what do you remember about that alley. Did it have a name do you remember?

**MORGAN:** No. But right on the corner of that alley was Green's Oyster House. And they sold the best fried oysters and oyster stew in the city. But I lived at the other end of that alley, two doors over. I lived at 519 Ninth Street. I could almost stand at Marty's and throw a ball and land it in my backyard.

**METZGER:** You probably could. You're were in such shape, and you still are—a few little physical problems but that doesn't seem to stop you at all. The Oyster House as you face the alley from the Eighth Street was it on the right or the left?

**MORGAN:** The Oyster House faced Marty's, because it was right on the corner of that alley.

**METZGER:** But what I'm wondering is, as you face from Eighth Street to Ninth Street, down the alley, was the Oyster House on the right or the left?

**MORGAN:** On the right.

**METZGER:** So you went there quite a bit?

**MORGAN:** Oh yeah, oh, yeah—well, we were right around the corner you know. That's when my mother and my brother—I was there about eight or ten years. At that house that we moved.

**METZGER:** So you spent time at the Oyster House?

**MORGAN:** Huh?

**METZGER:** Was it too pricey? Did it cost too much to go to the Oyster House?

**MORGAN:** Oh, yeah, we'd go there you know a lot a times like on a Friday evening, that was always a fish day for my mother and us, you know.

**METZGER:** So about once a week you were at the Oyster House.

**MORGAN:** I'd say, yeah.

**METZGER:** Do you remember anything else about the alley? What was in it? Were there homes, houses in the alley?

**MORGAN:** In the alley? Back when I was about 16, right in the middle of that alley, there were a couple of—I'd guess you'd call them houses—but they were the colored lived in there. And they were small places. And in that same alley on the right hand side, was where the newspapers used to be delivered, and all of us boys that had routes, newspaper routes, we'd go there in the morning and get our papers. Then we'd go out on our routes and deliver.

**METZGER:** Ok, so that's where you picked up the newspapers, in the alley. But you don't remember if the alley had a name?

**MORGAN:** No, no. It didn't have a name.

**METZGER:** What else was on that side?

**MORGAN:** On that side of the street? Oh, yeah, I remember everything down there. Next door to the Oyster House was Nally's Funeral Home [spells name]. Next door to Nally's Funeral Home was Harry the shoemaker. And next to Harry the Shoemaker—was Mr. Grits. He ran the Army Navy store. And next to Mr. Grits was the bank. It's still on that corner there. That's the end of that portion of the street.

Now going left—to the other side where that restaurant is—used to be called Johnny's. John Nosetti [sp?] but he sold. But it's that large restaurant right on the corner of Eighth and E.

**METZGER:** On the same block? You say Johnny Osetti's—how do spell it?

**MORGAN:** Nosetti? I don't know, but I got his picture right here. He's passed away now. [Looks on back of picture—name is not there] But it's on one of my other copies that I've got tucked away somewhere. You want to look at these? All of these boys are passed away except me.

**METZGER:** Okay. This is a picture I'm looking at—

**MORGAN:** You want to know who John Nosetti was? He's this one right here, on the corner.

**METZGER:** Okay, so as I'm looking at the picture here—

**MORGAN:** I can give you the names of all of them.

**METZGER:** Which one is you? This one?

**MORGAN:** Yeah, right there.

**METZGER:** This is the 1935 Boxing Team of the Police Boys Club—

**MORGAN:** Number 5 Police Boys Club.

**METZGER:** Can I take this?

**MORGAN:** Oh, sure. But you got to get copies made.

Now this is all the boys on Eighth Street, in the neighborhood. And one of those boys owned the poolroom where Marty's is now. And every one of those boys is passed away except me.

**METZGER:** Wow. Which one is you?

**MORGAN:** I am right in here.

**METZGER:** Okay, let me record—Oley's pointing to, going from the right side, the second figure on the left from the right side. Has kind of a black t-shirt on, and looking very tough. And so sandwiched between two other people. Do you have any idea when this was taken?

**MORGAN:** Let's see—this was taken about 1940?

**METZGER:** So before you went in the Marine Corps.

**MORGAN:** Before I went in the Marine Corps. So all these boys are gone except me, and the last boy that passed away was this boy right here, and I went to his—they had a tribute to him at the American Legion. And this has only been six months ago.

And I went there and left there and went to Marty's and had a heart attack—

**METZGER:** Oh, yeah, I heard about that.

Let me just say that Oley was pointing to a figure front row lower left.

**MORGAN:** Charles Higgs, his name was.

**METZGER:** So this was taken about 1940s.

**MORGAN:** It could have been '41—

**METZGER:** I'll make some copies of these. I'll probably have to come out and take some pictures, because I forgot to do that—but I will do that.

**MORGAN:** There's a boxing picture there on the top of that ledge—but it's in a frame, hard frame.

**METZGER:** No, I'll come out and take some pictures. Not to worry about it.

**MORGAN:** I had a lot of pictures. But they're all stowed away in boxes. Because I've only been here now, well I've been with my daughter now almost four years. But I've only been in this house a year, I guess.

**METZGER:** Okay. Well if you have a chance to look for more pictures, that would be great.

**MORGAN:** Oh, I sure will. If I can find more.

**METZGER:** Like I say, I'll probably try to come out maybe next week some time, briefly, just to take some pictures. I just forgot my camera.

Anything else about the alley that you remember, that you want to talk about?

**MORGAN:** No, not about the alley, but there's a pretty good story about that one with all of us on that boat.

**METZGER:** OK, you're on the boat here?

**MORGAN:** See, we rented a Chris Craft down at Chesapeake Beach. And a lot of these boys they had quite a bit of money, you know. So we rented this Chris Craft boat, we were all out on this boat, at night, and a storm came up. And we didn't know where we were. We were out in the middle of that bay. And finally we looked around and we saw a light shining—so we headed for it. And we pull right up to a—in front of a—small restaurant, beer joint. So we tied that Chris Craft up, and all of us, all of us, 15 of us, went into this restaurant. Stood at the bar, and we were all having a beer, and right at that bar where we were standing there was a platter, a round platter, like this big. Crab cakes. Stacked up all over. Delicious

crab cakes. And all of a sudden lightning struck, and all the lights went out. And when the lights went out, we dove into those crab cakes. See everything is dark. Well, finally, when the power came back on the bartender said, “Oh my Lord,” he said, “They run me about of business! Where are my crab cakes?”

And we all laughed you know. And the boys, they really had quite a few dollars, and they paid the bartender off, plus a tip. But that was a great story.

They used to have that Planet in the poolroom where Marty’s place is. Was a poolroom, you know. But they were all good boys, and they were all from Southeast.

**METZGER:** I notice, no girls in this picture.

**MORGAN:** Oh, no. No girls in that one.

**METZGER:** All right. They came later.

The second thing I wanted to talk to you about was your work. Because we touched on it but we didn’t really go into specifics. Now you worked as a mechanic—

**MORGAN:** Machinist. I served my apprenticeship as a machinist.

**METZGER:** This was at which newspaper?

**MORGAN:** I started at the Washington Times Herald. And I worked there from 1937, when I got out of Eastern High School, 1937 and I was there till ‘41. Just before the war. ‘42 I was out of my time. And of course, ‘42 when they hit Pearl Harbor, I went down and I joined the Marine Corps.

**METZGER:** When you say out of your time, I’m not sure what you mean.

**MORGAN:** I was like—apprenticeship was completed. See I served a five-year apprenticeship—

**METZGER:** As a machinist—

**MORGAN:** As a machinist.

**METZGER:** Where was the plant?

**MORGAN:** 13<sup>th</sup> and H, and New York Avenue. You know where the church is there?

**METZGER:** Yeah.

**MORGAN:** The capitol garage and all is there?

**METZGER:** Is this Northeast?

**MORGAN:** You remember that place?

**METZGER:** Not really.

**MORGAN:** Do you remember—that church is still there, right in that triangle.

**METZGER:** Oh, yes.

**MORGAN:** 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> on H.

**METZGER:** Northeast or Northwest?

**MORGAN:** Northwest.

**METZGER:** Yeah, I know where that is.

**MORGAN:** So I went into the Marine Corps—right after I ran out of my time and war was declared, I joined the Marines. I was in four years, and when I came out I went back to my job on the Times Herald.

**METZGER:** But not as an apprentice.

**MORGAN:** No, no, I was a machinist then. And finally they came over to me, the superintendent, and he said “Mr. Hawk is getting ready to retire,”—who was the chief machinist—and he said “We want you.”

So I got the job as the chief machinist. And I worked there for oh—several years, couple years, three years—and finally I get a phone call. And it was a machinist that had worked with me on the Times Herald, who had got the job on the Evening Star. I went to the phone—I was at work—I went to the phone and it was a boy George Berg (?) and he said to me, “Oley, you ever think about making a change?”

I said, “Well, no, I’ve never entertained that thought.” But, I said, “What’s on your mind?”

He said “Well, we’re going to have an opening down here at the Evening Star, and it’s a pretty good job.”

I said “Well, I’ve got a good job.” Because I was getting \$50 a week over the scale, the machinist scale. I had five men other than myself that worked for me. So I said, “I’ll be down and talk to you.”

I went down to the Star, and I talked to the head machinist down there, and the reason they were going to put a job out was one of their men was retiring. So I looked it over and I said, they had better hours to offer me, so I said, “Yeah, I think I might make that change.” And I was giving up quite a bit.

**METZGER:** You got more money out of it?

**MORGAN:** Oh, yeah, they paid me more. So I went down there, and I worked there I guess two years, and that was right down from the restaurant where this place is on 11<sup>th</sup> Street no, you know—

**METZGER:** That's where the plant of the Evening Star is?

**MORGAN:** No, the Evening Star was on Pennsylvania, 11<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania. Right on that corner. We were up on the top floor.

**METZGER:** So you worked there—

**MORGAN:** I worked there a couple of years. And finally I got a call from my old foreman on the Times Herald. The Times Herald was getting ready to close. They were selling to the Washington Post. And I had never worked on the Post. But the foreman on the Times Herald knew me from the time I was an apprentice. He was much older than me. He said, "Oley, Dow Jones, Wall Street Journal, got in touch with me. You know, we got to get out of here. The Post is buying this place." And he said, "I got a call from the Wall Street Journal wanting me to take the job as foreman of the composing room." And he said, "I'm going to take that job." And he said, "How 'bout if I said I tell you I would like you to be head machinist, chief machinist?" He said, "Well, we'll make it interesting."

So I said "Okay." And I decided I was going to the Evening Star—I worked there—I worked at the Wall Street Journal—from the Star I went to the Wall Street Journal, and I stayed at the Journal till 1982. Because I got out of the Marine Corps in '46, and then I went to the Star, then I went to the Journal. But I stayed at the Journal until 1982 and I retired.

**METZGER:** OK, so after you got out of the Marines in '46 you were three years at the Times Herald, and then you went to the Dow Jones [ed: Wall Street Journal], and you were there until you retired.

**MORGAN:** Yeah, yeah. I got a big picture of me over there of me repairing a machine—

**METZGER:** Is that a picture we can borrow?

**MORGAN:** Oh, let me get it—

**METZGER:** Oh, we can get it later, after we finish. Because I have to unhook you [ed: from the microphone] there.

**MORGAN:** I'm in the Marines and I'm in Philadelphia, they sent me up to Philadelphia, right the peak of the war, and they have a big press room up there. They did all the printing for the Navy, Marine Corps, and they made all the stuff. So they needed a machinist.

**METZGER:** Couldn't get anybody better—

**MORGAN:** And I got the job. And I'm working on this one machine one day, and we had, that day we had been awarded the Army and Navy E, for production I guess. And I'm working on this machine, and finally the commandant, the commandant of the Marine Corps comes through, and he's inspecting, looking at everything. And [unintelligible]. So he comes through and he stops, right where I am, where I'm working. And he says to me, "Sergeant, he said, what kind of machine is that you're working on?"

I said, "It's a linotype, General."

He said, "It's quite complicated." And he turned and walked away. But they took a picture. Perfect picture. I got it right here.

**METZGER:** Okay, I'd love to see that. All right, so, when you were in the Marines you were on the boxing team, but you also worked as a machinist.

(overlapping)

**MORGAN:** Yeah, yeah, I started boxing in the Marine Corps—

**METZGER:** We talked about that—

**MORGAN:** But I boxed way before the Marines—

**METZGER:** We talked a lot about that—let me ask you to go back a little bit. Machinists [sic] involves keeping the printing presses repaired and things of that sort—

**MORGAN:** Oh, yeah, oh yeah, oil the presses. Oil the linotype machines. Oil typesetting machines. When I say casting—lead. Each machine had lead [type].

**METZGER:** When you retired is when hot metal type was going out, and it was changing a lot.

**MORGAN:** I've got in a letter in here—I think it was on my 85<sup>th</sup> birthday—I was retired and a machinist that worked for me—who was a great machinist—his name was Klaus Hoppensack, from Germany.

**METZGER:** Do you know how to spell that?

**MORGAN:** Hoppensack? (spells). Anyway Klaus worked with me. So on my 85<sup>th</sup> birthday he was one of the people invited to my birthday party. And he wrote, which I didn't know he was capable, but I've got it in here—he wrote a thing on me of when they went from hot metal to cold type. And they talk about me—and we all bring in crates of machinery—and everybody was standing around, and they didn't know

what to do, didn't know what to do, and he says "until Mr. Morgan walked down the street," and he said, "he saw it, and we all watched him. He just put that [unintelligible]." I got the letter here. Beautiful.

[ed: see "Ode to Oley" attached to the end of the transcript]

**METZGER:** Wonderful. That's wonderful.

**MORGAN:** But, you know, if I hadn't broken my hip, I would work today. As a matter of fact I liked it so much I could practically go work for nothing. I went to many a outside shop while I had my job. People, different places would call me, ask me if I would come over and fix their machine.

**METZGER:** I've got a few things in my house need fixing, I'll get you over there.

**MORGAN:** Oh, yeah?

**METZGER:** How did you become a machinist, how did you go into that trade?

**MORGAN:** Because my uncle, Pete Murphy—have you heard of Murphy Funeral Home?

**METZGER:** No. But anyway.

**MORGAN:** One of the biggest—here in Falls Church. But anyway, one of the brothers was my uncle. And my grandmother had just passed away and I had just gotten out of high school, and Pete Murphy was there at my grandmother's—and my uncle said to him, "Pete, Oley has just got out of school. Finished school. Do you have any jobs open up there?"

And he said, "I got a boy who's just getting ready to go to his time." [ed: maybe his five-year apprenticeship]. "You send Oley up and I'll put him to work." And I went up there, started my apprenticeship.

**METZGER:** It was a five-year apprenticeship?

**MORGAN:** Five years. And I had to do all my lessons pertaining to my trade, one every month, and I had to send that to the International. And they kept a record.

**METZGER:** International?

**MORGAN:** International Union. International Typographical Union. The oldest labor union in the country.

**METZGER:** So they ran the apprenticeship program? The union ran the program?

**MORGAN:** Yeah. And I stayed there until I retired. You know how many years I had with the union? 50.

**METZGER:** Wow. Wow.

**MORGAN:** From 1937 to 1982.

**METZGER:** You mentioned John Nosetti? Can you spell that?

**MORGAN:** I don't know.

**METZGER:** Is it N?

**MORGAN:** It's Nocenti, I think.

**METZGER:** Well, that's close enough.

**MORGAN:** And everybody would know him. From Southeast. Because he was a good boxer, and also he had a beautiful restaurant at Eighth and E. And he and his wife ran that for a couple few years. I was surprised when I went by there and it had been sold.

**METZGER:** Is that where the Subway is, the Subway sandwich shop on the corner?

**MORGAN:** That's not a Subway?

**METZGER:** Banana Café?

**MORGAN:** Banana Café?

**METZGER:** Well, I'm trying to locate where the restaurant was.

**MORGAN:** You know across the street where Marty's is, you stay on that sidewalk, and you walk right down to the corner.

**METZGER:** To E Street.

**MORGAN:** That's it. That restaurant is right there.

**METZGER:** Okay, I've got it.

**MORGAN:** They'd have a lot of tables out on the sidewalk when the weather was—

**METZGER:** Was the firehouse there at the time you were there?

**MORGAN:** That was the next block. Oh, yeah.

**METZGER:** I think I'm done.

You were going to tell me another story before we finished the interview. It could be a rough neighborhood, or rough people came into the neighborhood.

**MORGAN:** Rough people came in every once in a while.

**METZGER:** And is there a particular story that you—

**MORGAN:** The particular story that I'm talking was this character was not from Southeast, he was from Northwest.

END OF TAPE 2/SIDE 1

TAPE 2/SIDE 2

[ed: this repeats a previous story so is not completely transcribed]

**MORGAN:** He had a helluva reputation. He would go around to all of the dances that we would have, and we would have a lot of dances. Especially one at 13<sup>th</sup> and E SE, Buchanan School? They've got a big hall. And every Thursday night we went there for dances. It was all high school kids you know.

I was single, but I was boxing all the time, then. I had been boxing for several years before then. Anyway, this character, he—a couple of his cronies would come—they would never come into the dance, but they would wait as we would go in and make wisecracks with the girl you were with, you know, and at intermission, they would be right back again, and we would all go across the street to get a Coke. Nothing to drink, you know. And we would take our girlfriends with us. And they would be there. And they would make all kind of cracks and your girlfriend, and holler.

So I knew he was a bad character. One night, one day or evening, my mother gave me a half dollar to go get my cadet uniform pressed...

The next morning I went to class at Eastern High School. And as soon as I walk in the class, when class was over I walk in the hall, must have been 25 guys that come over "we heard about you! You knocked out Charlie Donahue last night, didn't you?" [NOTE: this was spelled Charlie Donahue above.]

I said, "Yes, and I did."

**METZGER:** It's a great story. Donahue lived through this, I guess.

**MORGAN:** I cured his medicine. I never had no more problems. But see, I knew a little bit about boxing.

But that was a good neighborhood down there. I was just thinking with my grandson yesterday, he took me up to the doctor. I said “We used to go through this neighborhood, Danny. My grandmother never put a key in the door. Never locked a door.”

My mother would take us over to the library at night when it was real hot in the summer we didn't have a fan, and put a blanket down in the grass and we would go to sleep there. And finally when my mother felt the room had cooled down in the house, she'd wake my sister and I up and take us across the street, we only lived across the street. But nobody ever bothered you. You couldn't go to the Library of Congress now and lay on that lawn—somebody's going to kill you. Or rob you. It was such a beautiful neighborhood. And it's still—it's got a lot of beautiful neighborhoods in there.

**METZGER:** It's a great place to live, but people lock their doors now.

**MORGAN:** You better believe it. And even the blacks they got the bars up.

END OF INTERVIEW

### Ode to Oley

It was '55 in the Summer  
And what do you say, I  
started to work At  
fourteenth and "K".

There was plenty to learn  
And this is no "Hype" I  
had never before Seen a  
Linotype.

I helped to erect some  
Searched crates for the parts  
I learned what I could, It  
sure tested my "smarts".

Then came Mister Morgan He  
could handle the chore I knew  
right away He had seen  
"Linos" before.

He knew what to do  
Without hurting my feeling When he  
bought our coffee I found him  
appealing.

We kept on producing For  
years on end Then packed  
up and moved Into  
Maryland.

We started to gamble  
Played Poker at lunch  
Some of us won Some  
lost quite a bunch

Oley was lucky I think  
sometimes he cheated When  
lunchtime was over And we all  
left depleted.

We worked many years  
Kept machin'ry in use  
Set the type, did the printing  
Then came the bad news.

No more Linos or slugs  
No more lead in the kettle  
Starting right then  
They changed to "Cold Metal".

It was the beginning Of  
the end for us all The  
change of technique  
Created our Fall

After years with Dow-Jones  
You got out when you could  
To enjoy life a little  
As we all knew, you would.

You have done just that Since  
you left the "Rat Race" Plenty  
has changed You slowed down  
your pace

I wish you good luck Happy  
Birthday, stay healthy To enjoy  
life and have friends In a way,  
makes you wealthy.

Good Luck and Best Wishes

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Klaus".