

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

MARY MARGUERITE BARNES LANGLEY

Interviewed by Brenda Coates
December 18, 1996
Loffler Center in Great Mills, Maryland
Logged by Tania Jordon on February 21, 2008
A verbatim transcript is available
Original format is one cassette tape
44 minutes, 28 seconds

[Audio CD 1 of 1]

[Track 01]

0:00 Introduction

00:25 Where did you live and where were you born? She was born in Philadelphia, PA. She currently lives in Lexington Park. Before she moved to the trailer park, she lived in Ridge, MD. She lived on Route 235 with her grandmother across from to St. Michael's Church, near a large store and Ridge Rescue Squad.

3:00 What were times like when you were a child? Times were hard. They didn't have electricity and used oil lamps for light. They had to cut wood, clean, and wash dishes when they came home from school.

3:30 What were your parent's occupations? Her father was a waterman. "Almost everybody was a waterman until the base came". Her mother shucked oysters until she got her own business. Her mother opened the first bar in the family. It was an old country store. Later she worked on the base and moved to her next business that is now called the mix. Earliest memory. She loved to go to school and got good grades.

[Track 02]

4:58 What church did you family attend? They attended St. Peter's Catholic Church. As a child she also went to St. Luke's Methodist Church with her grandmother.

5:30 Did you take family trips as a child? She didn't take any trips with her family. She did go on school trips.

- 5:45** Did your family participate in community activities? Yes, they worked at church functions.
- 6:00** Were times better or worse in those days? “I’d rather have these times now. The ladies on the bus always talk about the good ole’ days, but I didn’t see any good ole days. I wouldn’t want my children to be bought up in those days”
- 6:30** What were your family’s health concerns? They used rubbing alcohol for their health. She remembers Dr. Bean, “he was a faithful old doctor”.
- 7:35** How were senior citizens care for in those days? At that time senior citizens had a hard time. “If you were sick you were just sick. You had to get by on home remedies”.
- 8:15** How did black folks get news/information when you were growing up? She didn’t remember having a radio as a child. Most of the information was word of mouth.
- 8:50** What types of things did you do as a child? They play ball most of the time. They also played hopscotch, checkers, and dominos.
- 9:25** What chores did you have as a child? They would fill in the holes in the walls with newspaper. She also scrubbed floors.
- 9:55** Her grandmother was fortunate for those days. She raised chicken, cows, ducks and horses. Her grandmother also had a new 1924 Ford car that had removable plastic windows. They also had to feed the livestock.

[Track 3]

- 10:42** Describe your relationship with your siblings? She got along fine with her brother and sister.
- 11:00** How did your parents treat you? “Alright, we got along very well as a family.”
- 11:10** What is you best memory of how your parents treated you? On Saturday evenings, they would bring the children toys, candy or cookies.
- 11:45** How did your parents discipline you? You obey your parents and didn’t talk back. She was a good girl because she knew her Mom worked hard and she was afraid.

- 12:25** Do you think your parents prepared you well for life? Yes, they did the best they could.
- 12:45** Describe your formal Schooling? She went to Ridge School on Benet Road. St. Peter's Catholic School, and Jarboesville after St. Peter's closed. Ridge School was a one room school house. She went there through the fifth grade. She remembers Mrs. Springs. "She was tiny and strict. She would crack your fingers in a minute." She had Mrs. Meyers and Mr. and Mrs. Waters in high school.
- 14:35** What was your favorite subject in school? History
What was you least favorite subject in school? Religion
- 15:00** What did you dream of becoming as an adult? "At that time you didn't have may choices. But her mother wanted her to be a teacher."
- 15:40** As a teenager, where did your parents approve of you going? There wasn't much to choose from at the time. When she started dating, she went to the fair.
- 16:10** What was it like when you first went out on your own? It wasn't hard because she married when she was young.
- 16:40** How did you meet your husband? He was a neighbor. They also went to school together. She was 22 when she got married. She got married in 1941. She got married because it was hard for her mother to take care three children. So she got married to help relieve her mother of the burden for taking care of her.

[Track 04]

- 18:27** What kind of work have you done to support yourself? She did day work and did civil service work for a while. She worked for good people. The work kept her busy while her husband was away in the service. She made \$3.00 per week. When she started working for Mr. Sleuth, they paid her \$7.00 per day because they came from Washington and they did believe in paying the lower wage. She still has their pictures hanging in her living room. The Sleuth's were lifesaver to her.
- 20:30** What do you remember about your wedding? Alice and Robert Benet were their maid of honor and best man. After the wedding, they all went to DC for the day. They had a good time at the Zoo and shopping.

21:40 What was your family life like? It was somewhat hard because her husband was sick when he got home from the service and he later had an accident. He was in the hospital until about five years ago. Life is better now.

22:50 What part has religion played in your life? “I am not really religious, but I pray a lot. I am a good Catholic.”

23:10 Do you participate in churches activities? She does participate.

23:50 Do you participate in other churches activities? “No, I can barely keep up with my churches activities.”

[Track 05]

24:14 Do you participate in community activities? She is not active, but she will go to dinners and dances. In the past she was always the president of the committees.

25:00 How do you feel about life today? Fine, I love it. St. Mary’s is more modern and there are more things to do. The quality of life is 100% better. “We had rough lives when we were young.”

26:15 Are people different from the way they use to be? Yes, people are not cooperative now. Now people will just pass by without trying to help you and nobody shares anything. Hospitality is not like it was.

26:45 Are teenagers different now then when you were young? Now teenagers are hard to discipline. “In the old days, if your teacher didn’t beat you, your parents would.”

27:15 Are race relations different in the county? “They are hard in some places. It probably isn’t as bad as it use to be because they won’t go for it. Mr. Carter who is the Administrator at the Loffler Center will not go for any segregation.”

28:00 What was segregation like? It was rough when she was coming along but it was worse when her grandparents were younger.

28:30 Where you ever afraid of any group or person practicing hate? She never had any problems, but knows that there were problems in the 7th district.

[Track 06]

28:50 How do you feel about living in the county? I never liked living in the city. “I’m just a country girl and I love St. Mary’s County.”

- 29:30** Do you feel there is a difference between county people and outsiders? Yes, the outsiders seem to be warmer. It may be that they are trying to meet people when they move to the county.
- 30:35** How do you interact with outsiders? “It doesn’t bother me at all.”
- 30:55** She lived in New Jersey in 1930 to find work before the base opened.
- 31:35** Do you interact with people from different sections of the county? She goes all over the county with her children.
- 32:00** Do you think people are different in different sections of the county? “I don’t know.”
- 32:10** What do you feel has been the biggest changes in this county in your lifetime? There is more work since the base was opened. More people have homes, cars and education is better.
- 32:45** What are your feelings about the Navy Base? “I love it because it made things more progressive in the county.” People think differently because of the influx of people from other areas.
- 33:40** Where people in the county hostile towards the base land acquisition? Yes, the Bells and other lost their land. Some were so upset that they were hostile towards the people who worked on the base.

[Track 07]

- 34:03** What are your feelings about the new growth on the base? I like it because everything is so different. People have more privileges now.
- 34:40** What do you think of the current direction of the county? The county will become more urban.
- 35:10** How have you contributed to the county? Her wonderful children.
- 35:45** What do you consider the most valuable thing that you have ever had? Her husband, married life and business.
- 36:15** When you got married where did you live? She lived on St. Jerome’s Creek with the Langley family (in-laws). She moved north on 235 and got her own barbershop near Robinson Barnes Club. Her husband cut hair.
- 37:45** Have you done everything in life that you wanted or planned to? “No, I planned to do a little more myself.”

38:25 If you lived your life again what would you have changed? She would have tried to stay in school and get a better education and get a good job.

[Track 08]

38:44 What was life like for your parents? They had a hard life. They ran their own store.

39:45 The “Mix” as it is today was started by whom? It was started by her grandmother Annie Lee. It started out near the area of St. Michael’s Church. When her grandmother died, her two daughters (Minet and Belinda) started their own bars. Minet was married to Robinson Barnes and they had the Robinson Barnes bar. Belinda (Mary’s mother) built a bar closer to the base called the Mix.

[Track 09]

Biographical Data

Mary Margaret Barnes Langley

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DOB 2/28/1920 – Philadelphia, PA

Education - She attended Ridge Elementary School, St. Peter Claver Elementary and Jarboesville High School. She completed the 12th grade.

Work – Day Work

Husband – Joseph E. Langley

Maternal Grandparents – Annie Grennell Lee & Ignatius Lee

Paternal Grandparents - Edward & Isabel Barnes (maiden name was Barnes too)

Mother – Belinda Lee Barnes

Father – Emery Barnes

Siblings (+ self)

Mary Margaret Barnes Langley

James Barnes

Helen Barnes Dowsey

Children (grandchildren)

Loretta Dove (Francine, Frankie & Monique)

Pamela Langley (Tameka)

