

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

ALICE CARTER THOMAS

Interviewed by Janice Walthour

Videographer: Max Smith

November 14, 2003

[unknown location]

Logged by Tania Jordon on January 5, 2008

A verbatim transcript is available

Original format is one video tape (analog)

54 minutes, 24 seconds

CD 1 of 1

(This is an audio-only version of a digital video.)

Track 01

0:00 Introduction

2:10 What were the times like when you were coming up? "They were good times". She had good health. During the fall they had to chop wood and pile up the wood and kilning. Her parents prepared her well for life. The first thing they taught them was to go to church. "Going to Mass was a must". They also taught them how to work. "When you learned to do things then, you did it with so much pleasure".

Track 02

4:23 Her brothers and sisters would play ball. When they grew up, they all went to Washington, DC to work. They stayed with her Uncle Johnny. She stay in St. Mary's because she never cared for the city. She would go up to DC on the steamboat on Sunday evenings. She and her mother would get to DC on Monday morning. She would have a good time playing with the children on the boat. The boat was integrated. All the children she played with were white. "Even around here, most of the children I played with were white. I never did know the difference". The children she played with still come back to visit her.

Track 03

6:10 **Tell me about your formal Schooling? She went to a two room country school in Able. She went through the 7th grade. She liked to read and history. She wasn't very good at arithmetic. Her father helped her with her arithmetic. When she first started school her mother was teaching Alice and her father how to write their names. "He could figure better then I could". He was a waterman. I never met a waterman that couldn't figure right in their head".**

7:45 **What did you dream of becoming as an adult? She wanted to be a nurse and wait on people who were sick. "I thought that was the greatest thing in the world, to become a nurse".**

Track 04

8:21 **As a teenager did your parents let you court? "Sort of, they were very protective of their children". Her parents always tried to lead them in the right direction. "Of course, Sally and Joe would tell you something else". We went to church dinners and society halls. The beneficial's were Sacred Heart Beneficial and one by Able school. People in the community ran the halls. They would have dinners and dances twice per year. The events were held on Labor Day and November 11th. Other people would rent the halls for their own parties. They would meet once per month and anybody could join. The dues were \$0.25 per month. The sick dues were \$3.00 per month. If you got sick they would give you \$3.00 per week. The death benefits were \$50.00 if one of the members passed. "People didn't have much book learning but they had "mother wit" (common sense)".**

Track 05

13:56 **What was it like when you first went out on your own? She would take care of children when people would come down during the summer. She did most of her baby sitting in the River Springs area. She would mainly watch the children on the waterfront when their parents were doing something else. I just watched the kids. She never let them know that she could swim or row the boat. She thought that if the kids thought she couldn't swim, they wouldn't go out to far. She was using her mother wit. She was paid \$5.00 per week. "That was good money at that time. I was on top of the world".**

Track 06

18:08 **Wedding and honeymoon: "Now you know we didn't have no honeymoon". She met Lewis at Sacred Heart Church. She didn't see him anymore until the next year. She went back to Sacred Heart the next year and met him again. They started out being friends and then they got married. They didn't have a long courtship. Lewis worked a lot. He was a**

workaholic. He worked on the farm and worked on the county and state roads. They got married September 29, 1935 at Holy Angels Church.

20:45 What was your family life like? Her husband worked a lot. They farmed part time. He worked for the county and then the state. He worked for the base for a while. He left that job and went back with the county because the benefits were better.

22:05 Describe your relationship with your children and grandchildren? She has a good relationship with her children and grandchildren. Her grandchildren had a good relationship with their grandfather because he would play with them. They would fix sandwiches and go and play or sit on the shore. The grandchildren would visit in the summertime. Sometimes, they would stay with them the whole summer.

Track 07

23:04 What part has religion played in your life? She was raised as a Catholic. She only recalls going into another denomination once or twice for a funeral.

23:35 How do you know there is a God. “How do you think this earth was made if there wasn’t a God”?

25:05 Did you participate in community activities? She went to PTA meeting and helped work at church dinners and helped raised funds. She also worked with the 4-H club, homemakers club. She belongs to Knights of Saint John and the Ladies Auxiliary. She made sure that her children went to church and went to catechism to know there is a God.

Track 08

27:16 How do you feel about life today? I don’t think life is any worse. You’ve got to prepare yourself for work and a job. You can’t throw everything away and not get an education. Now it is almost a must to get a college education. All three of her children went to college. One taught school after she graduated. Another went to St. Mary’s College and her son was drafted after he got out of college.

29:00 Are teenagers different now? It depends on how you look at it and how you talk to them and raise them. When you talk to them now and you can’t see eye to eye, you “just leave it”. You talk to them one or two more times.

30:35 How has the County changed? You can talk to [white] people and maybe they will change and maybe they won't. Sometimes if you leave them alone, they will come around to your way of thinking. She has seen some changes with race relations. She has never had any problems.

Track 09

32:18 What was segregation like? Sometime you can segregate you own self. "We knew how it started and we had to fight for our freedom". Her paternal grandfather was in the Civil War. Her paternal grandmother was a slave that was bought here from Boston. At Morris Point that was the way things were. It goes and it comes. Things work themselves out.

33:35 Have you ever seen any hate groups in your area? No she has not. She and interviewer (Janice Walthour) discuss how Janice and her Uncle Leroy Thompson, Sr. saw a Klan meeting just before Avenue on their way to Club Paradise.

Track 10

34:51 What do you think about the direction that the County is heading in? She doesn't keep up with to much in the county. She thinks that the schools in the County are doing as well as schools in other areas.

36:20 What is the most valuable thing you have done to contribute to the County? She would like to see more children registering to vote; continue their education; go to church.

37:50 My motto is to see people finish school so they can get a good job and work and they should register to vote. If you do these things, you can change things. If you don't register to vote, you're not doing anything. "All you're doing is talking and that's cheap".

39:10 Do you think there is a difference between black people and white people. She says the only difference is skin color. There are brilliant people on both sides. "Things can't be so bad if you started out way down here and ended way up here. If you use your mind, you can work and get yourself a home and get nice things. You can educate your children if you work for it. Make sure you go to church. When you open the door, let your children go in first and you come up behind them". "Pray with your children and lead them the right way. When the children grow up and the door opens they can swing either way, in or out".

Track 11

42:29 There were steamboats on Bushwood Wharf and Corpall Wharf. Corpall Wharf bought in fertilizer and shipped out tobacco. Bushwood Wharf transported people.

43:40 What did you like to do as a child? We didn't hang around with other kids. We stayed with our parents. She was with her mother a lot. Her father farmed and oystered in the winter. "He killed hogs during hog killing time". She helped by cleaning them and removing their hair. She didn't gut the hogs.

46:00 Was there a big difference in raising kids now. The kids now are strong minded and they don't listen. She keeps reminding the children to go to church. She doesn't preach to them, she just reminds them.

Track 12

48:06 Do you think it is as important or more important for black children to go to college. Black and white children need to go to college. She never could see any sense in people not liking people based on the color of their skin. She has "plenty of white friends".

St. Mary's County, Alabama, Georgia have all turned themselves around. "New York was just as bad".

51:20 Interviewer (Janice Walthour) thinks that we should live in an integrated society. During segregation leadership skills were developed and nurtured in the black schools. After integration this took a back seat for the black children. She thinks that leadership and self motivation needs to be reinforced now.

Track 13

52:45 She told a priest at Holy Angels Church that she did not need a seat. "I come to church for one purpose to go to holy communion. You can go up and kneel and get your holy communion and go on out. After that, they took the names off the pews. You can get them every time; you just have to know how to get them. If you study them for a little while, you can out wit them. You don't even have to say a word, you can turn them right around".

