Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

Imelda Thompson Hardy

Interviewed by Alma Jordon
July 28, 2021
In her home in Valley Lee, Maryland
Logged by Tania Jordon on March 2, 2023
a verbatim transcript is available
Original format is MP3 from digital audio recorder
46 minutes, 47 seconds

Imelda Thompson Hardy (logging) – Part 1

Time: 27:35

00:10 Introduction - Imelda Thompson Hardy was born on May 4, 1949. She was born "in a little house" on Route 249.

00:45 Earliest Memories – Chasing her brother around at her grandparents house and her aunt being ornery about it.

01:30 Family and where she was raised – She was the daughter of Turner Thompson and Roberta Campbell Thompson. Her parents had seven (7) children and one child named James Francis Thompson from a previous relationship. Her mother died when she was 15 months old. She was told that her mother wanted to place the children in good homes, because she realized that it would be difficult for her father to raise seven (7) children by himself.

Her father moved back to his parents house (Bunton and Ella Thompson) with Charles, Marguerite and herself. Her brother Turner, Jr. and sister Ellen were placed with her aunt and uncle (Ella and Chester Blackwell). Betty (Elizabeth) was placed with her aunt and uncle (Helen and Mickey Dickens). Bernard was placed with her aunt and uncle (Jeanette and Fred Talbert).

03:15 Family careers – Imelda's grandparents were teachers. Her grandmother Ella had a teaching degree, but she is not sure if her grandfather had credentials. Her father had a sixth-grade education and worked for the State Highway. Her mother died so young, she was not aware what type of work she did.

04:00 Money situation - They did not have a lot of money. Her father and aunt planted a garden and had fruit trees. They also raised animals for meat, such as hogs and chickens. They seldom bought any meat or fruits and vegetables from the store. Her aunt would make her dress from the nice, patterned cloth of feed bags. They were poor but she didn't realize it.

05:30 Sibling relationship – Imelda felt close to her siblings, but of course it was different since they all did not live together, and they did not see each other all the time. She felt like Ellen, Betty, Turner, Jr. and Bernard were more like cousins since they did not live with her in the family home. As time went on, Bernard and Turner, Jr. moved into the family home. She did have a close relationship with all of her siblings. At this time of this interview, she had lost five (5) of her siblings. Only herself, Bernard and Ellen are left. She loves her siblings.

06:45 Chores – Her Aunt Lizzie came back home after Imelda's mother passed to raise her and take care of her elderly parents. She had a lot of chores; cleaning the house, gathering vegetables and fruits for canning and freezing, feeding the chickens, watering chickens and pigs, and slopping the pigs.

07:50 Games - She played softball with her family. They did not have a ball, so they tied up a rag to make a ball. She also liked jumping rope at school. When she was home, she didn't have anyone to turn both ends of the rope at home, so her dad would tie one end to the barn, and he would turn the other end. They also played tag and duck. They also played board games like Monopoly, checkers, bingo, and Chinese Checkers.

09:30 Formal Schooling – Imelda attending St. Peter Claver from 1st through the 8th grade. She graduated from Cardinal Gibbons High School.

10:20 School transportation – She didn't walk. She rode a yellow school bus that was driven by Mr. Buck Cutchember.

11:00 Classrooms and teachers - At St. Peter Claver, there were four large classrooms. One classroom had 1st and 2nd grade; 3rd and 4th, 5th and 6th. Her teacher for 1st and 2nd grade was Sister Cornelius. Sister Robert and 4th Sister Clarice and fifth grade Sister Thomas and 6th Sister Jerrod taught third grade. Sister Paul taught the eighth grade. They were all Oblate Nuns. Her most impressive teacher was Sister Paul because she taught math and science and was the head of the basketball and track programs. When they played baseball, Sister

Paul would run around the bases and her habit would fly off. The kids thought that was hilarious. She was her favorite teacher.

13:30 Favorite Subject – Her favorite subject was reading. Her love for reading started because her Aunt Lizzie read to her all the time. On Sunday nights she would read the newspaper comics to her. One of the comics characters was deaf and dumb and really couldn't speak. Her aunt told her to use her imagination to figure out what he was doing in the pictures.

14:25 Religion – She is so grateful that her father was able to send all of them to Catholic school through the 12th grade. Attending taught us about religion and how much God has done and loves us. Religion is a big part of our lives.

16:15 Teenage years – She couldn't wait to go out. There wasn't much to do, but they did go hang out at the bars the family owned. They did not drink but danced. She would go to her Uncle Leroy's bar (editors note: Happyland) and Aunt Ella's bar (editor's note: Blackwell's) and put money in the juke box to play their favorite songs. They would also go to Morgan's Beach, which was owned by Mr. Kendal Morgan. He had a dance hall for teenagers at his business.

17:10 Community Activities – She was in the 4H Club and learned how to cook and sew. Her siblings and father entered the vegetables they raised and won ribbons. She also participated in a talent show at school.

18:30 Childhood aspirations – She wanted to be a flight attendant or stewardess because she always wanted to travel around the world. Her aunt told her "they weren't going to hire a little black girl to be a flight attendant." She loved playing school and being a teacher.

19:15 Education and career – She graduated from Bowie University and taught for 30 years. When Imelda moved back to St. Mary's she thought she didn't want to teach anymore, but loved teaching, so she substituted at Piney Point Elementary School from 2007 through 2017. She also taught Sunday School at church (editors note: St. George Catholic Church). She initially started teaching third grade at a school in District Heights, Prince Georges County. She went on maternity leave for a year and went back and taught another six (6) before going out on maternity leave again. Her husband's job transferred him to the Chicago suburbs. After her baby Brian got a little older, she returned to teaching.

Imelda Thompson Hardy (logging) – Part 2

Interviewers: Alma Jordon

Location: Imelda Thompson Hardy's Home, Valley Lee, Maryland

Date: July 28, 2021

Time: 24:47

00:00 Education and career (continued from part 1) – They moved to Evansville, Indiana in 1984. Imelda began her Indiana teaching career teaching second grade at Howard Roosa Elementary School. She taught for 22 years before she retired in 2006.

02:10 Race relations – She had good principles and they treated her fairly. Race relations have changed since she was younger. As a child when she went to St. George Catholic Church, they had to sit in pews at the back of the church. When they made their First Holy Communion, it was segregated. The order or communion was white girls, white boys, black girls and black boys. One day in the late 1950's her brother and his friend decided they were not going to sit in the back. The went and sat in the front pews and the priest, Father Smith cooperated. Some of the white perishers did not like it and left the church and started attending different churches. As a result of her brother and his friends actions, people started to sit where they wanted to in the church.

05:10 When she was a child her aunt took her to a clothing store in Leonardtown to buy a coat. When they came into the store, they thought the lady was coming to greet them. Her greeting was, "we don't served colored people in this store."

05:50 She remembered her father told her that when he had a young family, sometimes he was short on money and would buy items at the store on credit. He always paid his debt off. One time he paid off his debt and did not get a receipt, and the store owner said he still owed him money. After that bad experience, he told them to always get a receipt.

06:50 Feelings from your store experience – As a little girl she didn't know how to feel. But she saw that her aunt was angry, so she got angry.

07:20 Desegregation of the church – Her 2nd oldest brother Charles was about 18 or 19 years old when he and his friend Vincent Briscoe sat in the front pews. At that time they saw a lot of mistreatment of black people and they had had enough.

08:45 Race relations now – It's better now, but there are still problems. Racism in more subtle now. There are still problems with the police, but maybe there will be some changes since they have to wear cameras.

10:00 Did you complete your childhood plans? – Imelda has been to or travelled to all the states except four. They have travelled to France, Italy, Mexico, Canada and taken Caribbean cruises.

11:45 Children – She is immensely proud of her children. Her oldest Carla Milton is CEO and vice president of her company. She works for a hospital in Clovis, California. Her oldest son Kalon played college football and graduated from Fresno State University. He also has a master's degree. Her other son Kendall is on a full ride scholarship at the University of Georgia.

Her second child is Kevin Lamont Hardy, was a professional football player. He played for the Jacksonville Jaguars, Cincinnati Bengals and Dallas Cowboys. His oldest son Langston, just completed high school and is attending the University of Connecticut on a full ride football scholarship. His other son is in the 11th grade and was playing baseball, but has switched to football.

Her third child Brian Hardy has four children. His oldest Peyton is in the Air Force. She got married and has her first great grandchild, a little boy. She is married to Anthony Wallace. Brian's second child, Dominic, is in high school and has a beautiful singing voice. His third child Cambree likes playing softball. His fourth child Kensley likes playing softball and riding horses.

16:30 Daddy – Her father Turner Thomas Thompson was the middle child (number 6) of 11. After her mother died, her father, Charles, Marguerite, and herself moved to her grandparents' house. Her Aunt Lizzie became her surrogate Mom. She was strict but taught her a great deal. When Aunt Lizzie went to Bowie, it was a normal school. She told her in those days they had to feed the chickens and gather vegetables at Bowie. She was a fantastic cook and taught her how to cook. She tried to teach her to sew but she couldn't get the hang of it. She made plenty of outfits.

Her father was a huge amount of fun and had a lot of energy. She used to like to run and would challenge him to run. They would race to the house and he would win 9 out of 10 races in his 50's. "He was too old to be winning those races." He would also take them to the drive-in theater on Route 235. At the time the cost wad $1 per car no matter how many people were in the car. They would see most of their friends at the snack bar. He had a good memory and would recite poems and was a great story teller.

He loved his children very much. He worked hard raising tobacco and working on the highway to send them all to Catholic school and her to college. She was the only one of his seven children to go to college and he paid for it. Her final year of college she wanted to get married and he paid for her wedding too. As a young person you don't realize how much things cost. She will always be grateful to him for paying for her college education and wedding.

He loved people and helped others in the community. She thinks about him often and will always love him.

22:50 Mother – She is grateful that her mother made the decision about putting the children in good homes and that they all turned out all right. They had a few pictures of her, but they weren't clear. Unfortunately, the pictures were burned up when her sister Betty's trailer caught fire. When Imelda leaves this world, she will be able to see her Mom. "But as Christian's we believe that one day we will be reunited with the people we love the most. "