

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

James Brown

Interviewed by Alma Jordon

July 27, 2005

At his home in Drayden

Logged by Tania Jordon on September 11, 2005

A verbatim transcript is available

Original is digital WAV from digital audio recorder

44 minutes, 4 seconds

Audio CD 1 of 1

Track 01

- 0:00 Introduction by Alma Jordon
- 0:37 Born in Drayden, raised mostly by grandmother, who was part Indian, because mother worked out.
- 1:08 Drayden School, quit early because he wanted to go to work. Starting working at age 14 at St. Mary's Female Seminary, Mrs. Franz needed someone for 2 weeks. He was suppose to have gone to work at Rosecross (C. M. Robsen, even though his mother didn't want him to work there because Robsen had a yacht he used to take down to Florida from fall to spring and she thought it was too rough in Florida at that time.
- 2:15 George Jordan took that job, went to Florida, lasted one year and went to work in Robsen's refrigerator factory in D.C.
- 3:07 Seminary: 90 some girls, no boys allowed. Raymond Hewlett also worked there, stayed there until he was drafted (6/42), Mrs. Franz got him deferred 5 times.
- 4:18 After service came back as head cook, worked there 45 ½ years retired end of July 1974, wanted him to stay until he was 65

Track 02

- 5:32 Mother had 9 children (3 girls and 6 boys) only 3 left.
- 6:26 Formal schooling: only went to 5th grade. Did a lot of playing at school. Helped Benny Dent feed chickens before and after school, worked at Dr.

Hebb's farm with brother Frank milking 9 cows, feed cows according to weight of milk they produced.

8:23 90 some girls at school when he first started, mostly from away (NY, Philly, Eastern Shore); 2000 students when he left.

8:47 Don't remember exactly when it became coed; Judge John Slade was first and Edward Long, whose family owned laundry on Leonardtown hill was the second to attend. At first was high school, then 2 year high school/2 college, then St. Mary's College of Maryland

Track 03

10:07 Only 3 buildings at first Calvert Hall, chemical lab and music building, Howard Place and nothing else on the other side.

11:30 Drayden School: Edward Jones (a boy his aunt raised) and he were wresting and fell over stump and punctured stomach mother took him by Dorchester steamboat to Johns Hopkins Hospital (9 days there). Clarence Smith's father and uncle were in school with him

13:29 Self-taught: Lived on campus in Calvert Hall, he and James Forrest (also worked there) use to go to the library at night to get books to read. Fred Briscoe use to be the cook, Raymond Hewlett and he were waiters, cleaned brass, etc. Last year worked in kitchen (learned from Mother's cooking.

Track 04

15:03 While in service at Aberdeen was sent down to Fort Meade to Cook & Bake School, received 3 certificates; dietitian, supervisor and head cook.

16:11 Benny Dent notified Mrs. Franz when he was back, wanted him to work 2 weeks for cook, Sarah Hewlett time. He was suppose to cook at Officer's Quarters in DC

17:30 Teachers at Drayden: Mr. Stuckey was last one there and a woman before him.

18:27 Good relationship with siblings, Frank, John Vernon, Arnold, Eugene, Hazel, Mildred, Thelma

Track 05

19:07 Chores; worked at Dent's store with chickens, made whiskey with Larry Milburn (remember at age 13 loading up a '61 Cadillac)

20:20 Father worked at Dent's store and farm, mother worked there also and went to Dr. Hebb's (he lived in Baltimore) on weekends to cook (he went with her and learned to cook)

22:13 Cook & Baking School at Ft. Meade – German prisoners did the cooking and taught him cooking techniques.

Track 06

23:29 Started working at Tall Timbers Marina for the Meatyards on weekends, at Navy Boys Camp at Cherryfield (James Forrest worked too) until Hurricane Hazel destroyed it, stayed in DC with Meatyards for a year.

25:16 Meatyards: Archie was the father, son was a big lawyer (his son runs the Marina now), mother was a Hyde

26:42 Working at St Mary's: \$28 per month, had third Sunday off, lived downstairs in Calvert Hall: brought cars at Dyson's

Track 07

27:29 Religion: Always belonged to St. Mark's Church

28:34 Community involvement: Elks (initiated in Newburg) & Masons (at grand Lodge in Baltimore 1951, all 3 levels in one night.

29:35 Family; 4 daughters – Marion married Clarence Quales and lives on Hermansville Road, Joyce (has house in Washington and Tall Timbers, built daughter a house in Drayden, LaVerne (Bowie) and Charlene (Fort Washington)

31:18 Source of news: regular news papers (Sunpaper) and word of mouth

Track 08

32:02 Things were pretty rough when first coming up; in some ways they are worst now. People try to get along now without working; do a lot of cutting and shooting, people use to only use their fist. Bad influence comes from TV

34:30 Memorable moments: Got scalped while in service – described head wound, from *Screaming Mimi* (weapon), he received at Angelo Beach Head in Italy (was wearing helmet at the time) Stayed in a Naples hospital 21 days.

Track 09

36:24 War memories: remember falling between 2 dead soldiers and playing
dead in order not to be killed. Left from Texan/Fort Knox,
Kentucky/Philadelphia on Easter Saturday to go Africa
39:47 Read about the Nile and had opportunity to see it
40:00 Landed on shore in Sicily, first boat blew up: he was one of ones who did
mine sweeping.

Track 10

42:16 He and 3 other brothers: Vernon (got wounded in leg), Arnold and Eugene
were in the war at the same time: