

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

NANNY THERESA YOUNG

Interviewed by Bob Lewis
November 2, 2003
At her home in Leonardtown Maryland
Logged by Tania Jordon on January 18, 2008
A verbatim transcript is available
Original format is one cassette tape
1 hour, 35 minutes, 21 seconds

CD 1 of 2 (Tape 1, side 1)

Track 1

0:00 Introduction

0:55 Born 6/6/21 in Leonardtown, MD. Parents are Jane Francis and Frank Swales. Youngest of 19 children. Two sisters living are Harriett Forrest and Eleanor Butler.

2:28 Grandmother was a slave on the Blackstone Plantation at the current location of the St. Mary's Academy. Grandmother had brothers and her mother was Clara. Her mistress was from Charles County. Grandmother had to tend to the cows all day. Mother was watched by one slave lady who took care of all the slave children. Grandmother got married left and worked for Quakers in Pittsburgh. Mother was born in Pittsburgh. Mother was christened in Baltimore in a Catholic Church. Grandmother died when she was 91. She was gentle and loving. She never learned to read or write. Wanted her children to go to school. Slept in one room shack of slave quarters with dirt floor. Grandmother used oyster shells for eating utensils. One-room schools.

Track 2

8:29 Mother married young because she wanted her own home. Her sisters went to the city to work. Brother fought in WWI. Grandmother's brothers fought in the Civil War and never returned to the County. They went to Ohio.

9:15 Her life was spent in the heart of Leonardtown. Remembers segregation but doesn't hold on to the pass. Look forward to making it better for yourself and who ever is coming behind you. Get educated and do your best.

Track 3

12:52 **Mother** always told her that just because somebody called you out of your name, you don't have to be that name. You can rise above that and become a better person. I instill these same values to my grandchildren.

14:52 **Grandfather:** Mother never knew her father. She remembers her mother and lady who raised the slave children.

Track 4

16:15 **Mother:** Born in Pittsburgh. Her father was James Francis Mack Williams. Hard working and help neighbors. Always believed in achieving. Ran a black hotel in Leonardtown behind Bell Motor Company. Kind and gentle. Sewed and played piano. Active in community organizations. Was registered to vote. St. Aloysius Beneficial Society was started in her house.

20:05 **Hotel:** Mother rented hotel and rented rooms to locals, school teachers and salesman.

Track 5

21:37 **School:** St. Aloysius Beneficial Hall had a one-room school house for 1st through 3rd grade on the back of building. One-room school for 4th through 6th or 7th grade was across from St. Aloysius Cemetery. There were no high schools for black children at that time. You had to go to the city to finish your education. High school came after black organization with Mr. Bunton Thompson, Mr. John Shelton, Mr. Herbert Blackstone, and other members mortgaged their homes to buy the land for Benjamin Banneker. They cut the lumber and had it milled to build the first two-room Banneker. In order for it to become a certified high school, it had to be given to the Board of Education. This was the first black high school in St. Mary's County. Ms. Taliaferro was one of the first teachers from Morgan State.

CD 1 of 2 (Tape 1, side 2)

Track 6

28:19 **Steamboats:** Steamboats and floating theaters would come to the Leonardtown Wharf when I was a very young child. Tobacco was transported to Baltimore via steamboat. Adams family bought floating theater to Leonardtown. They would float theater up and down the Mississippi River until season was over and then come to Leonardtown at the end of the season. Mr. Johnson had a store on the wharf.

Track 7

33:10 There was an A&P store in the location of the First National Bank in Leonardtown. Most items were canned. No fresh meat because there was no refrigeration. Most people had kerosene lamps and very few had electric or an ice box. There was an ice house on Leonardtown Wharf. Cook and ironed on a wood stove.

37:42 Hotel: Catered to traveling salesman, homeless, people who were traveling, people who got on the wrong bus and circus people.

Track 8

42:00 Steamboats would leave Leonardtown and go to Medleys Neck and then to St. Mary's City. Loved her childhood.

44:40 Stuff Ham was created during slavery or just after. Slaves were given certain parts of the ham and they stuffed them. Mr. Aloysius King's mother was one of the first people to stuff ham.

Track 9

49:51 Lived and stayed at hotel. Some of her siblings grew up and moved to Washington, DC.

51:00 Work for Citizen for Progress. Was founded by Dr. Brandywine, Edna Hall and Mamie Young. Helped start housing projects (Oakville and Norris Road) and other organizations

Track 10

53:53 Prejudice: Heard her mother talking about people being hung. Ben Hanson was hung in Compton because he helped a white girl walking through the woods carry a bucket over a fence. The women said that he helped her but they hung him anyway. The next time the black men got together to prevent someone else from getting hung. Another man was falsely accused of killing a white man and served life in prison. The real murder was a white man who confessed it on his death bed. The black man had died in prison by this time.

CD 2 of 2 (Tape 2, side 1)

Track 01

58:02 Family: Oldest daughter is Alice Swales (not her husband's child) work for Giant Food for 30 years. James moved to Washington, married and works for the District Government. Daughter Francis works for Prince Georges County Government. Maxine works for the Martin Luther King Library in Washington, DC. George worked for federal government and moved to Indiana then to California. Bertha didn't finish high school and bought a trailer in Lexington Park. Marilyn works for Navy Investigative Service. Barbara died when she was 31. Husband died when Barbara was 10 years old. Bought land when her mother died.

Track 02

1:07:35 Mr. Young lived in Leonardtown. He had a hard childhood. Went to junior high and high school in Washington. He was a hardworking man. Work in a print shop for Frank Guy. Printed articles, magazines and yearbooks. Was drafted in WWII for two years. Went to work at Navy base in the transportation department until he died. Loved movies and went to Leonardtown theater everyday.

Track 03

1:13:31 When Mr. Young's daughters were called "Nigga Girls", he went right to the source and got them straight. He defended his family's dignity. Demanded mutual respect.

1:15:37 Religion: Was important coming from Africa. Always sang by calling on Jesus. Mother always insisted that everybody in her house went to church on Sundays. Grandmother wasn't religious but was a very kind person. I was a Catholic as long as her mother was living. Wasn't encouraged to read the bible because service and bible was in Latin. Started reading bible at age 48. After reading realized that some of the things that she was taught in church were not true. No longer goes to Catholic Church but reads the bible faithfully. Goes to Prison Fellowship Ministry

Track 04

1:25:20 Only difference between whites and blacks is the color of your skin. Difference in opinions and perspectives.

1:27:57 People are different today then when I grew up. People were raised and believed different.

Track 05

1:32:57 The one thing that has meant the most to me is how my mom and dad raised me.