

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

ROBERT (BOBBY) GANT

Interviewed by Carol Locke-Endy and Mel Endy

November 16, 1996

At his home in Drayden Maryland

Logged by Tania Jordon on September 11, 2005

A verbatim transcript is available

Original format is one cassette tape

25 minutes, 47 seconds

Audio CD 1 of 1

Track 01

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| 0:00 | Introduction by Carol |
| 0:13 | Established a political connection with George Aud (County Commissioner)- Aud came to Knights of St. Jerome's for Black support for re-election |
| 1:25 | Learned connections to get his kids in the 'Summer Jobs' program |
| 2:10 | Participated in campaigns for George Aud, Walter Dorsey |
| 2:20 | Knights of St. Jerome; changed it from strictly religious to more community minded organization through political forums, etc. Beginning term as president; bank balance was \$200, ending balance after 7 ½ years was \$17,000 plus \$9,000 worth of repairs on building |
| 3:50 | A lot of older members quit because of his methods and taking religion out of the organization. 15 th of August Affair used to be only event and cleared maybe \$200/ under him cleared over \$1500. |

4:15 President didn't want him to join; Uncle and Vice waited until president was absent to swear him in, advised him to sit back and keep mouth closed.

Track 02

5:20 Father Walsh helped him to change some of the old leadership's practices. He helped put the organization on a new course. Gives scholarships etc.

7:00 Helen Young proposed him for president; he won over long time president Aloysius Butler who never attended another meeting.

8:00 15th of August affair, everything else was religion

Track 03

8:55 The 60's: The time of the Civil Rights movement, presidents Kennedy and Johnson, were the best time in St. Mary's for Blacks until Reagan got into office

9:57 Race relations: Ridge is one of the worst beds of racism. Most of these guys come out twice a year –Election and Easter mass at St. Michael's. Working at an election recently in Ridge and intentionally being allowed to over hear a 'joke' about a store owner in the 7th District telling a black man he wasn't allowed in store; when questioned about why he was allowed in the day before the owner indicated that on that day he needed the black man's vote.

12:18 Other indications of racism within the older population. In some ways things are going backwards

Track 04

13:04 Grandson attends St. Michael's Catholic School and some of the kids' parents are uncomfortable about their kids visiting his

grandson's home. These parents are surprised that he lives as they live.

14:27 Stereotyping/racism is still out there –the younger generation is trying to change it: Grew up with the Damons, Upers and others and was never afraid because of race.

16:15 Baltimore Blacks vs. St. Mary's Blacks: The neighborhood he lived in around Pennsylvania Ave. was black, downtown Baltimore and around the Harbor was white; you didn't go down there.

17:35 Why Black men got more respect in the 60's – was it fear?

Track 05

18:07 Remembers watching Martin Luther King's March on Washington on TV; thinking what was needed was Divine Intervention–there has been progress but still the white man rules:

20:00 George Wallace, David Dukes, people with that core support: Race relations after the March on Washington: KKK activities

21:00 Racism: St. Mary's vs. Deep South/ Influences on racism: Navy Base brought in a lot of people from the outside with different ideas; Conservatism and Catholic Churches in St. Mary's County

22:00 Lack of progress by Blacks/ Dr. King's Dream/ Last School Board election

Track 06

22:53 Looking back: Volunteering to help others/ to bring them along and worrying about others – wished he had spent more time looking out for himself.

24:23 Being active and knowing people made it easier for his children to get jobs (Sheriff's Dept./ Freeze on Base/ State's Attorney's Office)