

UNIFIED COMMITTEE FOR AFRO-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS
Oral History Project

John Samuel Weiner

Interviewed by Alma Jordon, Anna Moseley, and Jeanette Kelly

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Alma Jordon ([00:03](#)):

Ready?

John Weiner ([00:06](#)):

Yes.

Alma Jordon ([00:08](#)):

Okay. Good afternoon. My name is Alma Jordon, and today is September 14th, 2022. And we are in Lexington Park, Maryland. And good afternoon to you, sir. Please give me your full name, please.

John Weiner ([00:31](#)):

Okay. John Samuel Weiner.

Alma Jordon ([00:35](#)):

And when and where were you born?

John Weiner ([00:37](#)):

I was born in Leonardtown, Maryland, October 13th, 1949.

Alma Jordon ([00:44](#)):

Okay, thank you. Tell me a little bit about your family, and growing up in St. Mary's County.

John Weiner ([00:52](#)):

Okay. My father was Joseph Weiner, my mother was Gretta Weiner. Our house was right across from the governmental center in Leonardtown, two story brick house. And that's a house I lived in until I went away to college. My father was an attorney, and for one year, he was actually a circuit court judge, and had an office in Leonardtown right across from the courthouse. And that's where I still have an office building across from the courthouse today.

([01:28](#)):

My mother originally came to St. Mary's County from the Eastern shore to teach school, and she taught four years in elementary school. First, second, third grade. And then, she started having kids. She had six kids in 11 years. After that, she was full-time housewife. Didn't go back to teaching. And I'm one of six. I'm the third child out of six. And we were all raised in that house in Leonardtown.

Alma Jordon ([02:01](#)):

This was in your grandmother's house?

John Weiner ([02:03](#)):

No, it was a house my father built.

Alma Jordon ([02:04](#)):

Oh, okay.

John Weiner ([02:04](#)):

My father actually built that house in 1946 I think. Because after he finished law school, he came back to St. Mary's County in Leonardtown to open up a law practice, which was his home. My father was born and raised in St. Inigoes. His parents came over to St. Mary's County about 1900 from Lithuania, and they settled in, as teenagers, they settled in St. Inigoes. His family had a little general store down in St. Inigoes. A general store and a post office, which they, his family. That's where he was raised down there. I have some roots go back a little ways in St. Mary's County. Didn't come over on the ark and the dove, but ...

Alma Jordon ([03:00](#)):

Well, that's very interesting.

John Weiner ([03:03](#)):

... been around for a little while. Yeah.

Alma Jordon ([03:06](#)):

That's very interesting. Yes. Was your family involved much in community and church activities here in St. Mary's County?

John Weiner ([03:18](#)):

Yes. My father was, as an attorney and practicing law, he was very involved in the community, very involved in political matters. He ran for state's attorney, and was elected twice to state's attorney 1966 and 1970. And then, in, let's see, I guess it was '72, he was appointed to be circuit court judge by Governor Mandel. And he had to run for office, and when he ran for office, he lost the election to Joe Mattingly, who became the judge. He was only a judge for less than a year.

([04:04](#)):

After I finished law school, I came back to practice with my father in Leonardtown. I guess I practiced law about 45 years, same office where my father was, until I retired a few years ago.

([04:25](#)):

My wife, Sharon, I imported her from Baltimore. Took her out of the city, and brought her to St. Mary's County. And she was a city girl, but she adjusted pretty well I think to St. Mary's County. And she had taught I guess three years in Baltimore City public schools, and then when she came to St. Mary's, she taught school here. And I think, let's see, must've been [inaudible 00:04:50] about 32 years I think. 32 years. And she was an elementary school teacher, and she became instructional resource teacher, and she actually functioned as a assistant principal, reading teacher. She had a number of different hats.

[\(05:13\)](#):

And then, we moved in this house 41 years ago. I built this house here in Esperanza Farms 41 years ago, and raised our three children here. Two of my sons live in St. Mary's County. They live in Hollywood. And my daughter is married to a Navy guy. She lives in Jacksonville, Florida. And I've got four grandchildren, two in St. Mary's, two in Florida.

Alma Jordon [\(05:42\)](#):

Okay. Well, tell me how it was for you and your siblings growing up in St. Mary's County.

John Weiner [\(05:52\)](#):

Boy, that's a loaded question, isn't it? We did pretty well. We always went to public schools. First at Leonardtown school, which was first through 12th, and then when Chopticon opened, went there for the high school. I think we did pretty well. There were six of us in 11 years. Actually one year, the last year that the Leonardtown school was first through 12th, all six of my siblings, we all went to the same school building. My youngest brother was in first grade, and my oldest sister was in 12th grade. We actually all rode together to school, and was a very close knit family.

[\(06:43\)](#):

And I think we all enjoyed it. It was different being in a rural area rather than being in the city. But I thought it was a good place to raise a family, because I chose to come back here to, and I got married to come back here to raise a family. I thought St. Mary's County was a good place for families. I guess I was always a country boy, and my wife, she was a city girl, but she adjusted to St. Mary's County. After she got here for a while, she just got involved with work, and with the community, and made a lot of friends. She ended up staying with me down here in St. Mary's County.

Alma Jordon [\(07:29\)](#):

You mentioned that you and your dad are both attorneys. Where did you go to law school? Where did you decide to go to law school out there?

John Weiner [\(07:38\)](#):

I had gone to undergraduate school at University of Maryland at College Park. And then for law school, I went to University of Baltimore Law School, which was the same law school my father had gone to. When he went to law school, he went right and graduated from Great Mills High School. And then, he went right from high school, he went to law school. Those days, you didn't have to go to college in between. He started practicing law. He was 21 years old, and passed the bar. Those days, it was a shortened schedule before you could go into your profession, and that's what he did.

[\(08:17\)](#):

And then, I have a younger brother, Ted Weiner, he became a lawyer also. And he moved back here to St. Mary's, and that's his wife, Shelly, who some people know from, they live over at Breton Bay. And

he's deputy state's attorney now, and he's had that job for some years. The two out of the six of us became lawyers like our father.

Alma Jordon ([08:46](#)):

Very interesting. Yes, very interesting. How do you feel about race relations in St. Mary's County?

John Weiner ([08:57](#)):

That's a big question, too. Well, my family has always felt very close to the African American community in St. Mary's County. My father told me when he grew up in St. Inigoes, I asked him, "What was St. Inigoes like?" And he said St. Inigoes at that time was 75% African American, a large majority of the people there. And he lived in that community because his parents had the general store at St. Inigoes. Everybody just walked to the store, and did business there. And so, he grew up really with a lot of African American friends.

([09:43](#)):

And when he started practicing law, he had a lot of African Americans that came to him as an attorney. And he taught me always to be fair with people. Not to be prejudiced. And this is something that we learned as little kids, and it was taught by our parents. We always had friends in the African American community. When I became a lawyer, I had a lot of clients, African American community. I always tried to be very fair, and give them the best service I could. My family's always made friends with a lot of African Americans in St. Mary's County.

([10:25](#)):

And I lived through the days when I started out in school, they were segregated schools. Then, when I was I guess when 1965, when Chopticon opened is when they integrated the schools. We started, all the children black and white went to school in the same place. That was a big change, but it was also lived during the time when everything was segregated in St. Mary's County. All the businesses, yeah, were segregated. We lived through the time, yeah, which was always seemed to be very unfair, and we lived through that time I guess in '64 when the public accommodations was done. We lived through that era. And I've always felt I've had good relationships, I have good friends in the African American community, and it was really part of the example that my father set in the way that he raised us.

Alma Jordon ([11:34](#)):

Mm-hmm. In situations that you've seen in race relations, and I'm sure that like many of us, we've seen many situations, can you share a few that you might remember, or anything like that that might be ...

John Weiner ([11:56](#)):

Well, I remember growing up in Leonardtown, there are African Americans that lived in Leonardtown, but the businesses were segregated. Everything was segregated. The Catholic church in Leonardtown was segregated. I remember when we were young kids, we had an African American lady who used to babysit us, and name was Ella Butler. And she lived in Leonardtown, in the house, and her job was she cleaned for the priest. She was a very good Catholic priest.

([12:35](#)):

Sometimes when we were little, she was babysitting us, she was very religious, she would take us to the church, the old St. Aloysius Church. And I remember that when she took us in the church, she took us, I

went upstairs with her, myself, my sisters, and she had to sit in the balcony. She couldn't sit down on the main floor with the white parishioners.

(12:59):

And of course, we always thought that was the best seat in the house with being in the balcony. But when you went to the movie theater in Leonardtown, it was the same story. African Americans could buy a ticket, walk in, and they had to sit in the balcony. Couldn't sit on main floor. Again, it was actually probably a better seat, especially if some of the young people wanted to get sweet with their girlfriend or something, a little more private up there.

(13:29):

But it was same thing at the lunch counter, lunch counter where the pharmacy was, that it was in the back of the pharmacy, African American. And I had friend Harry Mason, I remember he could go in there and buy a sandwich, but he couldn't sit down at the table, and eat the sandwich. He could go out back and take a sandwich, but he couldn't sit down. And always thought that that was so ridiculous, and so unfair, and it was wrong.

(14:06):

And so eventually, I guess after '64, Lyndon Johnson was president. He got the civil rights all passed, and that changed, so it made the situation better. But that's some of the ... And it was always noteworthy that in Leonardtown, where you have the memorial to the deceased soldiers from World War I, they have one side that says white, one side that says colored. And so, it was very segregated.

(14:48):

And of course, the schools were black schools, white schools, [inaudible 00:14:52]. And I say even among the parochial schools, there were white schools for the white Catholics, and there were black schools for black Catholics. And it was pretty rigid, but of course in the day to day life, you got to know other people, and became friends. But that's of course the big change that I saw growing up in St. Mary's County, when things became integrated, it really changed the whole nature of the county.

Alma Jordon (15:22):

Do you feel that things are better, much better, or ...

John Weiner (15:31):

I think they're much better.

Alma Jordon (15:32):

Okay.

John Weiner (15:35):

I remember when the schools were integrated, everybody thought, "Oh, there's going to be terrible trouble, and every day there's going to be fights in the hall." And it turned out there were a few fights, but then any school's got a few fights, but it wasn't so terrible as older generation thought. The younger people seemed to be able to work it out and get along, and I think that's true generally today. Yeah, it's just it's a world of difference today. And the opportunity certainly for employment, and in businesses, and everything has certainly changed for the better since I grew up here.

Alma Jordon (16:20):

That was my next question to you. How do you feel about the changes? You felt that changes are positive?

John Weiner ([16:34](#)):

I think, yes, I think they're positive. Yes. Definitely, definitely. Definitely better. I think there's more opportunities for everybody to participate in the community, and get an education. Want to go into business, go into business, or whatever. And of course, a lot of influences because of the Navy base, which is sitting right over there, has made employment opportunities so broad for a lot of people that can ...

([17:02](#)):

When I graduated from Chopticon, there was a saying, and this was 1967, "When you graduate from Chopticon, we're going to give you two pieces of paper. One is your high school diploma. Two is a one way ticket out of St. Mary's County." Bus ticket out of St. Mary's County. The reason they said that was if you wanted a good job, you'd have to go up to DC. You weren't going to get it in St. Mary's County.

([17:27](#)):

Well, what's happened now with the expansion of the jobs on the base, and the civil contractors, that's all changed. The employment situation is so much better for young people. If they graduate from school down here, they want to stay in St. Mary's County because they like the lifestyle, want to raise their families here, they can get good paying jobs, which is a big change that I've seen. I say when I graduated, and a lot of my classmates, soon as they graduated, they got jobs off in DC, and they moved out of the county. And that was a big change, but they don't have to do that anymore because of the job opportunities are better down here.

Alma Jordon ([18:04](#)):

Right. You went right into my next question about how do you feel about the base in St. Mary's County? Because some people were displaced because of the base, and so that would've been a different thing than it is now, but a lot of those people have passed on.

John Weiner ([18:28](#)):

Right. You mean people who lived on that property? Yeah, yeah. That was unfortunate. However, they were paid. It wasn't taken without compensation. They were paid for the land. And it was necessary to do that because that was during World War II, and necessary to ... Yeah. It's a shame, yeah, that people have some properties there, but people were paid for it.

([18:55](#)):

And to me, it's been a positive having that base there because it's opened up the opportunities for young people to get jobs. And they have their choice. If they want to go up to DC, and get a job, that's fine, but if they don't, if they like St. Mary's County, and they want to stay here, they can still get a good job here. They'll have to drive an hour and a half up to the city, which a lot of people, young people at that time were doing, commuting up to DC because they could get better jobs there. I'm in favor of it because I think it's made more opportunities for young people in the county who want to stay in the county.

Alma Jordon ([19:40](#)):

Right. Well, that's definitely understandable. Yes. We talked a little bit about your family, and the community, and your growing up, and your education. Is there anything else that you'd like to share in your experiences with people and folks here in St. Mary's County?

John Weiner ([20:11](#)):

Well, I can say this, I've enjoyed living in St. Mary's County. When I was growing up, I felt a little bit, maybe it was a little bit too rural. There weren't enough things to do here, and you didn't always get a wide spectrum of people, like you would have more experiences up in the city. But we were always close enough to Washington and to Baltimore that we could drive up to the city if we wanted to go to the museum, or professional sports, or whatever. We could always do that.

([20:52](#)):

But I think my wife and I, we chose to live in St. Mary's County because we thought it was a good place to raise a family. And cities are fine, too. They have a lot of opportunity. Sometimes, I don't know. I don't want to be so crowded. I don't want there to be so much traffic on the road when I go places.

([21:14](#)):

And I like the idea that you walk to the post office, and you bump into people you know, and you can speak to and be friendly, unlike the city where you're not going to bump into people. That's just the way I am. I enjoyed that aspect of St. Mary's County, being smaller and friendlier, and that to me was an advantage. And certainly, I thought it was a nice place to raise children. They were safer to be honest with you down here than being in the city where they could maybe get into some kind of trouble more so.

Alma Jordon ([21:57](#)):

One thing before we get into anything else, I wanted to mention how nice it was. A couple of times I've gone out to breakfast in Leonardtown, and I've seen you there with a couple, Mr. and Mrs. Mason. And it was so nice to see you bringing them to breakfast, and sharing with them, and everything. And I know that there is a special closeness with you and that family.

John Weiner ([22:34](#)):

Yes, there is.

Alma Jordon ([22:34](#)):

Would you want to elaborate on that at all?

John Weiner ([22:37](#)):

Sure. Sure. Harry and Kathy have been friends of my family my entire life. Kathy Mason, when we were young kids, she worked for my mother as a housekeeper in Leonardtown. And there was plenty for her to do because there were six kids in the household. And she's a very dear person, a very special person. She's very kind. And she never had any children herself, she and Harry never had any children herself, but she just thought of as the Weiner family as her family. And just fantastic person.

([23:21](#)):

Actually, when my wife and I had children, she came to work for us as a housekeeper, and she helped with my three children. It was a long term relationship. And of course, Harry was always with Kathy, so

they spent a lot of time in our house. When Kathy was babysitting, my parents were out somewhere, Harry would come over, he'd eat dinner with us. Felt very close to him, too.

[\(23:54\)](#):

And he kept a connection. When my daughter played sports at Great Mills High School, she used to see Harry all the time because he'd drive the bus to the sporting events, so she was able to keep that contact. And we just kept in touch with Kathy because she was such a special person. And I was the person who gave the eulogy for Kathy at her funeral at St. Aloysius. The family asked me to do that, and I was happy to do that because she was such a special person.

[\(24:28\)](#):

And again, it was just the way we were brought up. My parents thought the world of Kathy. They'd go out of town, and she was in charge of us. And she always respected my parents because they had given her so much responsibility. There's no more bigger responsibility than caring for somebody's children. And it's just fortunately, I was able to, even when she was certainly no longer working for the family, able to keep that friendship. And it was one of my dearest friendships with Kathy and Harry Mason. And God bless Harry, still in there kicking.

Speaker 3 [\(25:12\)](#):

Still [inaudible 00:25:13]. Still [inaudible 00:25:15].

Alma Jordon [\(25:16\)](#):

Yes. Well, you've talked about a few things that you wanted to share with us. A few historical events that we can't wait to hear, and be able to share within the future. We're interested to hear what else you have to share with us.

John Weiner [\(25:40\)](#):

Okay. One thing, the story that was told to me by Senator Paul Bailey, and it's a story of when Thurgood Marshall came to visit St. Mary's County. And it was something that always impressed me, because Thurgood Marshall became the great Supreme Court justice. And as an attorney, I always thought, he was one of the outstanding attorneys in the whole country, and a very famous historic figure. And now, they've named the airport up in Baltimore, they named it after him.

[\(26:15\)](#):

But when I heard this story from Paul Bailey, it just piqued my interest. And I wanted to tell that story as he told it to me. I'm not a direct eyewitness, because this is how it happened long before I was around, but I wanted to have the story on record. Because I never heard anybody else tell this story, and I don't know that anybody's ever done any research on it.

[\(26:38\)](#):

And I think I've done a little bit of research about the subject matter, but what happened was that Thurgood Marshall was the attorney for the NAACP, and he was starting out establishing his record for civil rights. And his first involvement in, or one of the first involvements in Maryland was he sued to integrate the University of Maryland Law School. They didn't allow blacks to attend the law school at University of Maryland. And he filed a lawsuit, and I think the first person who ended up attending was Taran Mitchell, who was a congressman from Baltimore City. Only got to attend because of the lawsuit of Thurgood Marshall.

[\(27:32\)](#):

After that, he turned to Thurgood Marshall, and this is a book I'm recommending, this is called Young Thurgood by Larry Gibson, and it talks about the early life of Thurgood Marshall. And he established, Thurgood Marshall really established his reputation as a leading civil rights lawyer with education matters. And there was a practice, and I'm giving some of the ... This is background I've learned really from reading this book, and then I'll get into the specifics of it. I'm just giving a little bit of background.

[\(28:21\)](#):

Thurgood Marshall on behalf of the NAACP started a campaign to provide, it was at that time, the African American public school teachers were paid half the salary of the white teachers. And I've given in those papers, if you pull out the one there that's a chart, which I'm giving to you.

[\(28:48\)](#):

Yeah. This is [inaudible 00:28:50]. Yeah, this is [inaudible 00:28:52]. I'm giving you, I don't know why I'm holding it up like this. There's no picture there. Anyway, this is a chart, and this is the background of it. And this comes from the Marshall book, and it shows, it's very interesting, but it shows in 1932 what the salaries were for white teachers, for African American teachers. And lo and behold, it's about half. African American teachers were paid half of the salary of white teachers.

[\(29:29\)](#):

And it was so unfair because they were doing the exact same job. They were teaching in public schools. Of course, there were two public school systems, right? White and black. And they each taught in their own. But the black teachers had all the same education level. It wasn't like they were high school. They were all had gone to state teachers college. And there were several black state teachers college, and there were white state teachers.

[\(29:58\)](#):

And so, they had the same education, did the same job, except they were paid half the salary. It was obviously something that was unfair, and that was the issue that Thurgood Marshall on behalf of the NAACP took upon to try to see what they could do. And that information is what I've got from reading this book.

[\(30:27\)](#):

And I guess, well, I guess I'm leading up to my St. Mary's County story. Maybe it's too much history, but I love the history of it, and that's what you guys do, right? You obviously have an interest in it also. But he started out in Montgomery County, and this is 1937, and Thurgood Marshall got a lawsuit against Montgomery County for this issue about the inequality of the salaries for the public school teachers. And he won the case in Montgomery County.

[\(31:09\)](#):

Then, he went to Calvert County, and sued Calvert County, and won the case there. And what happened was once he won the first case, he would go to another county, and he wouldn't even necessarily have to sue them, he'd have to threaten to sue them. Said, "Listen, if you don't fix this, I've already won the case here, and we're going to ..." And he'd go ahead and sue here.

[\(31:33\)](#):

That's the background. And then, according to Mr. Gibson, in 1941, the state of Maryland, after pressure from these lawsuits, and what was going on, passed a law saying you had to pay the same salary. It was a four year period between '37 and '41 where this campaign to try to equalize the salaries went on.

[\(32:02\)](#):

The story that I'm telling about him coming to St. Mary's County, I have to assume, I don't know, but I have to assume that somewhere between 1937 and 1941 is when Thurgood Marshall came to St. Mary's County. He came to St. Mary's County, and he was part of the campaign to equalize the salaries. He met with two people. One was Lettie Dent. Lettie Dent was the superintendent of St. Mary's County schools. She was noteworthy because she was the first female superintendent of the whole state of Maryland. She happened to be the superintendent of schools.

[\(32:41\)](#):

And he met with her, and then Philip Dorsey. Philip Dorsey was an attorney. He later became Judge Dorsey, but at the time, he was still just an attorney. And they met with Thurgood Marshall, and I think this story originally comes through Phil Dorsey. Phil Dorsey told it to Paul Bailey, and Paul Bailey told it to me. And perhaps somebody can do some research to see if there's any documentation of this meeting. Something on the Board of Education records, or whatever.

[\(33:18\)](#):

But I think it's true because it's what it sounds like, it's the same thing that I read about in this book, and it sounds like it's true. Thurgood Marshall, he came, he met with Lettie Dent, and Phil Dorsey, and told them, said, "Look what you're doing. Look at this, how unfair it is you're not paying the equal salaries. And if you don't pay them, we're going to sue you." Well, good lawyers a lot of times don't have to sue somebody, they just threaten to sue them, and they get what they want.

[\(33:59\)](#):

Got it. I think I should take a message. Thurgood Marshall met with Lettie Dent, Phil Dorsey, and told them that if they didn't fix that, he was going to sue. Well, when Paul Bailey ... Is it still on?

Alma Jordon [\(34:20\)](#):

Mm-hmm.

John Weiner [\(34:21\)](#):

Yeah. As Paul Bailey tells the story, he actually gets into the voice of Phil Dorsey. And I can't do it justice, but what he said, "Now Miss Lettie, you're going to have to find the money to pay equal pay to the black teachers, same as the white teachers. You guys still going to have to look in your budget, Miss Lettie, and you have to find the money."

[\(34:49\)](#):

That's my imitation of Paul Bailey doing Phil Dorsey. That's how he talked. And it did sound like how Phil Dorsey talked.

[\(34:57\)](#):

And sure enough, Miss Lettie went back to the budget, and she found the money, and she did it. That was how the situation was resolved. And I said I always thought it was a remarkable story because such a famous person had stepped foot in little St. Mary's County had made a difference here. And certainly, part of I think the mission of this group about the history of St. Mary's County.

[\(35:27\)](#):

And I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Gibson. He has family here in St. Mary's County, and he was down here. And I remember that story, I thought it was a remarkable story, but when I read this book, I said, "That sounds like it's a true story." Yeah. And I was able to fix the time, which I think was somewhere between '37 and '41 when that happened.

[\(35:53\)](#):

They said, and reading this book, it's a wonderful book, they said that what he did, what Thurgood Marshall did in Maryland, including what he did in St. Mary's County, it spread throughout the entire South. And it established, the NAACP, established their reputation as a leading civil rights organization. Because here, they were able to do something with it. Some people may think it's not a big deal, but it was a big deal. Especially if you were a teacher during the same time, it was so unfair.

[\(36:30\)](#):

And they said it reverberated throughout really the whole South, this movement of trying to be fair and equal. And I always thought it was interesting that St. Mary's County has a little bit of connection to what happened in connection to Thurgood Marshall, such a famous person. But I hope that someone who can actually maybe do some research. I don't know if there's records, that the Board of Education has records of that meeting? Maybe. Maybe not. I don't know if they go back that far.

[\(37:02\)](#):

But I don't think there's anybody I wanted to put on record, because I don't know that anybody else really knows that story. And I just know it because Paul Bailey and Phil Dorsey were my father's best friends. In fact, I have a brother named Philip, and one brother who has a middle named Paul, because they were named after these two gentlemen, because they were my father's best friends. And so, that's how I knew it. I heard it when I was a young kid, I heard this story. But that would be the story I would like to put on record.

Alma Jordon [\(37:41\)](#):

And I see, Mr. Weiner, you had some additional historical information that you talked about in the past, and you wanted to share some of that.

John Weiner [\(37:54\)](#):

Yes. The other item that I wanted to talk about is when the first African Americans were pointed to public office in St. Mary's County, and I understand that one of them was your father ... Is that right?

Alma Jordon [\(38:10\)](#):

Yes.

John Weiner [\(38:12\)](#):

He was Leroy, right?

Alma Jordon [\(38:13\)](#):

Right.

John Weiner [\(38:14\)](#):

Yes. Okay. In the early 1950s, Theodore McKeldin was the governor of Maryland, and he was a Republican. In those days, the Republicans were the more progressive party, and they were more for civil rights than the Democrats, who tended to be in this county Southern Democrats. And they were not as progressive on civil rights as actually the Republicans were back in the 1950s. Things have changed since then, but they were different at that time.

[\(38:49\)](#):

And my father, Joseph Weiner, was, he led the Republican Central Committee at that time. And the custom was when the governor would make appointments, he would look to the Republican Central Committee, the central committee of his party, which was Republican, to get their advice on making appointments. In the early 1950s, the Republican party, or the Republican Central Committee made recommendations to Governor McKeldin about appointments. And according to the information I have, there were five African Americans that were appointed to jobs and public jobs in the early 1950s. One was Robinson Barnes, and here's a list here. I made a list, copy for you to keep so you don't have to necessarily write them down. Robinson Barnes was appointed to the Board of Education. Leroy Thompson was appointed supervisor, but I was board of education. Leroy Thompson was appointed supervisor of elections. And then, there were three Justice of the Peace appointed, Owen Baldwin, Irvin Shobrooks, and Clem Dyson. And I talked to my father about that, and of course it was the fair thing to do. Why shouldn't some of the African Americans in the community get some of these jobs and appointments, same as white?

[\(40:24\)](#):

But one interesting thing so, "John, it also was good politics." Because at that time, most of the African Americans actually belonged to the Republican party back in 1950s. Still the party of Lincoln way back historically. That's what you do. People, you're a supporter, that's who you give appointments to.

[\(40:50\)](#):

One thing that's interesting to me is that there was competition for the African American votes, and after Republicans were ahead. And they were rewarding the people that were supporting them, and giving them their jobs. But during the 1950s, to me, it's remarkable that this happened in 1950s. Where St. Mary's County was still very segregated. African Americans were still treated as second class citizens. They couldn't get eat a sandwich at the drug store. And that whole, there's still schools were segregated, and businesses were segregated, but yet there were these gentlemen who I know, I recognize some of these names, were outstanding members of the community were given the opportunity to serve, in these positions.

[\(41:43\)](#):

I guess this was about 2000, organization known as the Knights of Saint Jerome, which is located in St. Inigoes. And they're a civic organization, and they've done a lot of work in giving scholarships for education purposes for the gentleman by the name of Bobby Gant, who was the leader. He was always in the office all the time. He was always selling tickets for everything.

[\(42:12\)](#):

He was funny. Every time you saw Bobby come, "Oh, what ticket are you selling for?" At a lot of events. And he had come up with the idea, let's honor Joseph Weiner because of his part in helping to promote these positions for the African Americans. We had, he organized and other people help organize it, and they had an event. And this, I'm going to give this to you, this is the proclamation where the Knights of Saint Jerome honored my father. They made him an honorary member of the Knights of Saint Jerome. And it's signed by the people who were I guess involved with that organization. And they had a dinner for him down at the seaside down there. I guess that's Ridge. Had a dinner for him, and honored him, and because he had his part in helping that to take place. And it was a nice event that the organization had did.

Alma Jordon [\(43:23\)](#):

Would you like to read this for us, please?

John Weiner ([43:24](#)):

Oh, okay. All right, sure. I'm reading from the framed plaque that was done by the Knights of Saint Jerome. It says, "Be it here by known that Judge Joseph D. Weiner is an honorary member of the Knights of Saint Jerome of St. Ingoes, Maryland, and is hereby entitled to all the rights and privileges of the society."

([43:52](#)):

You want me to read the names on the sign? Okay. And this is signed by Vincent Bisco, Ida Bisco, Mary Carroll, Carl Carroll, Agnes Crafton, Theresa Cassagnol, Arthur Crowfoot, Angie Crowfoot, Patricia Railey, and Robert Gant, who we knew as Bobby Gant. And I wanted to present that to your organization. You may want to keep that at your museum. But again, to me, that's really that's history. And you don't take note of history. People forget about it.

([44:34](#)):

And today, people think that when they see, they have no idea that back in the 1950s that these gentlemen were getting appointed to public jobs. They said, "Oh yeah, you're the first this, first ..." They think you're the first on this. No, you weren't the first. Look back here. Look back here in 1950s.

([44:58](#)):

And again, to me it's remarkable. It was something that was right, and the fair thing to do. And I was always proud that my father had a helping hand in doing that. As I said, he opened the doors for some other people, and that was important. And that's the example, really a personal example that my father and mother, they both agree, set for us growing up is to extend a helping hand to other people.

Alma Jordon ([45:29](#)):

Well, this has been an amazing story, and a lot of history that you've shared with us to be able to share with others. Does anyone else have any questions?

([45:45](#)):

Mr. Weiner, is there anything else? I don't want to leave out anything that you'd like to share.

John Weiner ([45:52](#)):

No. I just want to thank you for coming over today, and doing this, and letting me talk a little bit. I'm glad to have company these days, because I'm not getting, due to health, I'm not getting out much, so I'm always happy for people to come over and visit.

([46:09](#)):

But I just want to compliment you on the work that you're doing. I think it's-

Alma Jordon ([46:12](#)):

Thank you.

John Weiner ([46:14](#)):

... it's so important to preserve the history, especially the African American history, because it could be lost if people don't take note of it. And certainly, all the people who remember it are going to be dying off unless you somehow preserve it. And I think it's outstanding that you're recording this, because I know that's how you do these oral histories, and that's how the information gets passed on. Sometimes the younger people are not so interested in history. You get more interested in the history I think as you

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get older. You have time to do the research. But I think what your organization is doing is just excellent, and I'm glad I could help you out.

Alma Jordon ([47:03](#)):

Thank you very much.

Speaker 3 ([47:03](#)):

Thank you. Thanks.

Alma Jordon ([47:07](#)):

Thank you very much. We so appreciate your being involved with us on this project.