

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

Harriett Ann Swales Forrest

Interviewed by Alma Jordon

July 14, 2005

At her home in Leonardtown

Logged by Tania Jordon on September 27, 2005

A verbatim transcript available

Original format is one cassette tape

13 minutes, 30 seconds

Audio CD 1 of 1

Track 01

- 0:00 Introduction by Alma
- 0:30 Biographical Information: Lives [redacted address]. in Leonardtown
- 0:56 Schooling and experiences: Started school at age 6 at the St. Aloysius Society Hall (1 room) along with 2 brothers and a sister; moved to DC in 3rd grade (?), attended St. Augustine School on 15th St. for 2 years; moved back to Leonardtown (3rd or 4th grade) and attended the old Leonardtown School (where the St. Aloysius graveyard is). The teacher, Ms. Cora King came from the city to teach; finished 6th or 7th grade there.
- 2:50 While attending Leonardtown School, she was hired by Board of Education to do janitorial work; sweep classroom and build fire before class started.
- 3:25 Mrs. Cora King taught her about saving – took her to the bank to deposit check from School Board

Track 02

- 4:28 She and 6 or 7 other children attended St. Joseph's Catholic School (more religious teaching) for 7th grade: her brother use to provide the transportation to St. Joseph's School
- 5:20 Nuns at the school were very active- played ball with the children. 17/18 students in the 7th grade class
- 5:39 After 7th grade, only 2 options - either go to work or go away to school. Some of the Somerville children went to the city to finish high school and go on to college – she finished school in 7th grade

6:00 Cora King as mentor; bank account

6:30 St. Joseph's School: made prayer books, using ordinary tablets, performed school concerts at the Hall; nuns taught them how to manage

Track 03

7:32 Nuns: Sister Charles taught 5th to 7th grades; Sister Mary Alma taught 1st to 3rd. Priest would come on Friday to hear confession

8:25 One schoolmate, Mary Holt is an Oblate nun in Baltimore. Has seen her at St. Peter's several times.

9:36 All of kids raised up with and went to school with at St Joseph's have died - the last one, Vernetta Fredericks died in March

Track 04

10:13 Her brothers provided transportation to St. Joseph's: Children in area would walk to Swales home to catch the ride, on the way to school would pick up others (sometimes ending up sitting on each others laps)

11:25 Wanted to learn more about English; was good with the times tables (multiplication and division), problem with fractions; taught multiplication to her children when they went to school.

12:55 Struggled, sacrificed and mortgaged to make sure her children got a good education.