

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions  
Oral History Documentation Project

**ALICE REBECCA BISCOE BENNETT**

Interviewed by Brenda Coates  
September 5, 1996  
At her home in Ridge Maryland  
Logged on August 9, 2005  
A verbatim transcript is available  
Original format is two cassette tapes  
1 hour, 44 minutes, 0 seconds

DISK ONE [1:02:47]

TRACK 01

0:00 Introduction, members of the household, diet, crabs and salted fish, hogs, where she lives - St. Jerome's Neck on St. Jerome's Creek

TRACK 02

4:15 Financial and social changes in County during her life

5:23 'Run Ins' = entertainment, get-togethers, house parties and fund- raisers for St. Peter Claver Church

TRACK 03

7:47 Early memory of mother dying and aunt teaching her to dance.

9:50 Family relationship – Getting along with sister, father leaving to work in D.C., other members of household. Aunt and Uncle raised her. Attended St. Peter's Catholic Church.

14:14 As a child, traveling outside of St. Mary's - to D. C.: Ms. Marshall (Daniel Barnes daughter) had a store/restaurant in D. C.

TRACK 04

15:34 Care of senior citizens - poor facilities, most people stayed home and family took care of them

16:00 Health Concerns: home remedies, measles, typhoid fever and first contact with a doctor, armadillo.

## TRACK 05

21:35 Activities: playing ball, dancing (whined-up gramophone with cylinders).

23:05 Chores and time spent getting to school

24:50 Discipline in family/ preparing children for life

## TRACT 06

27:43 Formal schooling: Difficulties in walking 9 miles to St. Peter Claver Elementary, determining which students can ride the bus, attitude and teaching ability of nuns, night school at Cardinal Gibbons

29:15 taking the boat to get to school, holes in shoes, getting stranded at aunt's house due to heavy snowfall "we didn't rate the bus"

## TRACK 07

31:54 [start second side on tape one] continues with busing (or the lack of)

35:25 going to school - two rooms, favorite teacher Mother Damien (??), what it was like at school, Sister Helena, favorite subject was geography, wanted to be a nurse

## TRACK 08

40:15 Courting at age 18, other friends

42:39 Working: Cooking at St. Michael's for \$5 per week(1939), janitorial work, Father Kirk, cooked breakfast and dinner

## TRACK 09

49:37 Marriage, met husband in school on Bennett Drive, first black schoolhouse was over by Ann & Tony's store, influence priest and nuns had in couple's life, Father McKenna, no honeymoon, got along well, husband was Robert Bennett

## TRACK 10

56:55 raising relative's children, Geraldine from 8 until graduated from Cardinal Gibbons, Barbara from 5 until graduated from Greta Mills HS, Pamela for two years, Jeanie for three years, church a big influence in her life

## TRACK 11

- 1:00:15 Community involvement – Knights of St. Jerome, helped out at St. Peter Claver Church
- 1:02:07 Drum & Bugle Corps (Sister Cornelius): Initial disinterest of parents, priest and other nuns

DISK TWO [0:41:09]

TRACK 01

- 0:00 Drum & Bugle Corp continued, '51 Chevrolet 2-door, parents helped, teaching driving

TRACK 02

- 6:36 Life in St. Mary's: Changes and what caused them, less socializing, TV, how people are different now versus then, anybody could discipline the children, more independence today, everyone has their own transportation, then only Mr. Gant and Mr. Guffrie had cars

TRACK 03

- 10:58 Race relations: years ago people all knew how to get along - now they don't even try, lessons learned about saving for a rainy day
- 14:28 Race relations now versus then, name calling, segregation

TRACK 04

- 16:23 Living in St. Mary's: didn't like the city (DC), didn't like the smell, got sick on the subway, contact with newcomers and residents of other districts of County, newcomers worked harder, talking to outsiders and newcomers was informative, only travel was in the county

TRACK 05

- 22:07 Contributions to community, carried and still carries people to the doctor from time to time
- 23:31 Home is most valuable possession, has met her aspirations, looking back she would have liked to have spent less of her money on the home and built up more credit and borrowed more

TRACK 06

26:00 Influence of Naval Base

28:05 [side one of tape two ends]

TRACK 07

28:37 Getting news: subscribed to the newspapers-- *The Enterprise* and the *Beacon*, word-of-mouth, listening to radio at neighbor's house

30:40 Entertainment: horse and buggy transportation, games and horse tournaments at St. Peter Claver Church, Aunt had a dancing party every Saturday night - next to (and at?) Allen's Park

TRACK 08

35:28 Band majorettes, photographs, first performance

TRACK 09

38:27 Biographic Information [read by interviewer]

41:09 [end of side two, tape two]

END OF DISK TWO