

**UNIFIED COMMITTEE FOR AFRO-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS**  
Oral History Documentation Project  
The St. Joseph Parish Housing Project

Helene A. Holt & John Armstrong

March 16, 2006 at 10:00 AM  
Interviewed by Michael McCauley  
at their home in Clements Maryland  
Logged by Michael McCauley  
A verbatim transcript is available  
Original format is digital audio  
36 minutes, 3 seconds

Audio CD 1 of 1

Track 01

00:00 The discussion is related to the St. Joseph's Project in Oakville. Mrs. Holt heard about the project through her father and Father Cavanaugh. She was living in Baltimore at the time because her husband was in the Service. She and his sister (Mary Armstrong) applied for a home through the project.

She had to put up money for the house. Her husband and other men from the community went to Fort Meade to bring back the house. Ames Ruskin, Joe Smith and other people helped put the house back together. They added a porch and seconded level to the original house. The house had running water when the house was built.

Track 02

04:10 Her father gave all his children two acres of land to build their homes. She was the only one from Clements who got a barracks house. Most of the people in her area go to a church in Chaptico. She was so excited to get her own house that she lost her wedding ring.

Mr. Armstrong said the black people were so happy to have their own houses. He came down on weekends to help work on the houses. He moved back to St. Mary's in 1958.

Mrs. Holt's father was president of the project organization.

She lived in the Morganza area for a long time before she got her house in Clements. The land her father gave her was his heir property from his father. Although she moved to another area, she still went to St. Joseph Church.

#### Track 03

8:50 She and her father had total respect for Father Cavanaugh. He was sweet and caring man. Her father was one of the first black man to drive a school bus. He was helped by Frank Bailey. Her father was a “forward man” (progressive). Her father was stubborn. He didn’t back off.

He got upset with some of the people who didn’t come up with the deposit they needed to get the house. Her father talked about the project all the time.

Her mother was a teacher. She taught at St. Joseph School.

12:20 Some people who put their names on the list to get a barracks house didn’t have the deposit or the land when it was their turn to get a house. Father Cavanaugh worked hard to get money together for people. Times were hard back then.

13:30 She never went to help build the houses because she was afraid of snakes.

14:00 Her father had two sisters that were nuns.

#### Track 04

14:42 Elizabeth Forbes, Joseph and Genevieve Carter, Mary Catherine Wallace and Anna Payne all received houses from the project.

18:20 Her sister sold the family land two or three years ago.

#### Track 05

20:13 In those days’ people lived with their family or in-laws. There were 3 boys and 11 girls in her family. The girls worked hard in the fields while their father was away working on the project.

#### Track 06

23:45 Mr. and Mrs. Oakley, Mr. & Mrs. Dickerson, Leroy Butler, John Berry, Doe Doe Chase, Gab Young, Wallace Austin, Frank Carter, Phillip Fenwick, Bernard Bankins and George Chase all had barracks houses.

#### Track 07

28:41 Anna King bought a barrack house from someone.

29:30 Joe Smith and James Rustin who helped build the house is deceased.

30:10 The bus carried a lot of men up to Fort Meade to dismantle the houses while the women worked in the fields like men.

Track 08

31:58 Mr. Armstrong was stationed in Italy for a while and lived in Washington, DC when he returned. He came home and got married and helped support his parents. He worked in the CC Camp at Fort Meade when he was a young man.

34:00 She and her sister drove school buses. She bought the bus from her father in 1966. Children on the bus now are so bad.

35:30 Her mother died in 1973 and her father in 1974.