

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

EVERLYN LOUISE SWALES HOLLAND

Interviewed by Merideth Taylor
November 20, 1996 (Second Interview)
At her home in Hollywood Maryland.
Logged by Tania Jordon on February 14, 2008
A verbatim Transcript is available
Original format is two cassette tapes
1 hour, 7 minutes, 21 seconds

Note: This is the second of three interviews of Ms. Holland that were held on November 16, 1996; November 20, 1996; and May 5, 1997. These are dealt with as separate interviews.

Audio CD 1 of 1

Track 01

00:00 Introduction

00:30 How do you feel about life today? She thinks that people are not as close today. There are more things to distract people. People get more attached to material things.

2:10 Are teenagers different today? No, I think they want to grow up, be free, looking for answers, want to explore and want someone to protect them. I think they have the same goals and aspiration that I had when I was growing up. These days' people talk about kids and drugs when I was growing up the drug of choice was alcohol.

3:25 How are race relations? Race relations are different in the fact that some things that were structured under the law are now illegal. She doesn't feel that things have changed philosophically and culturally. Things have been legislated to make changes. The climate in St. Mary's County hasn't changed.

Track 02

4:47 What was your experience with segregation? Were you ever afraid of a group or person practicing hate? People would yell at you from cars on the street, "look at that nigger girl." Men would try to pick you up on the road. Segregated schools with outdated books discarded from the majority schools. At that time you had

excellent caring teachers. Now the black students have better material but the teachers are not caring or of the same quality?

6:30 Do you feel that the white students now are receiving a different quality education? Yes, she has some documentation on this issue. Black males will raise their hand to answer a question and the teacher will ignore them. "It is a spirit killer." They stop aspiring to anything or raising their hand. By the time they reach 5th grade the kid is lost. This is not as visible as the old style physical segregation. This is segregation of the mind.

08:47 Her husband's theory was that most of the time the teachers are white females in the lower grades. These teachers see them as competition for their sons in the future work environment. This "mind segregation" is a tool used to destroy their self confidence.

Track 03

10:25 The library, hospital and restaurants were segregated. You could go to the counter to get your prescription filled, but you couldn't eat at the drug store lunch counters. During the public accommodation bill, her mother and several other people went to J. Frank Raley about the public accommodation bill. He did support the bill when he was up for re-election.

13:09 Voter's rights. Their research showed that when they look at the voting roles, they found dead people on the roles that were still listed as currently voting. The blacks had to become very active in order to get laws changed. People were activity pushing for changes in the county.

Track 04

14:05 There was a case on the naval base regarding a friend. He was not promoted and passed over by white employees with fewer qualifications. He had to fill a lawsuit through Juanita Jackson Mitchell of the Baltimore NAACP. Racism was rampant in the religious institutions, public institution, health care, schools, and legal system and throughout every phase of your life.

The majority was in control of the minority's worth and value.

16:22 Were and are African Americans passive about their rights? People who are in their 40's and younger feel that the NAACP and similar agencies are obsolete. They don't try to take the bones of the structure to make it work for the 90's and make it work for the current generation. Young people are not willing to invest in this. They want everything right now. Their association with the majority has kept them away from the black cohesiveness.

Track 05

20:19 African Americans have to work together, they must remain a collective force for their civil rights. Generally today, folks come to the NAACP only when they need help.

22:00 Do you feel that people in the African American community are passive because they have come from people that were enslaved and were agricultural? The slaves that came to St. Mary's County were captured from many different tribes. People that gathered and/or warring faction so no one can say for certain based on a particular culture. It was more on the way they were socialized and treated after they arrived here.

23:47 The difference that was made deliberately between the house laborers (slaves?) and field laborers make division in loyalty. This racism survives today in St. Mary's County. There are blacks accepted in the white community as leaders that are not viewed as leaders in the black community. "He is in essence a modern day house nigger." This is how you get control and maintain it over generations.

Track 06

26:08 How do you feel about living in the county? She likes living in the country because it's quiet. She likes to be able to have a garden. She has lived in New York, New Rochelle and Washington, D.C. You can always go to the city for plays and entertainment and then returns to peace and quiet.

27:35 Do you feel that there is a difference between county people and outsiders? The difference is that people come to St. Mary's County with an agenda. They feel like they need to come to the county to change the county. I need to save those people from themselves. They feel that local people have no skills, no brain, ignorant, crass and uncouth. This is true of all people at some place and sometime.

Local people can be closed minded and prejudice against outsiders. Everybody needs to realize that everyone brings something good to the table.

29:50 How do you interact with outsiders living in the county? She interacts with locals and outsiders very well.

30:35 Why were you living in other places outside the county. She lived in New York because her husband was from New York. She lived in Washington for employment opportunity. She lived in North Carolina for educational purposes.

Track 07

31:09 There is room for growth in any area. The developers, planning and zoning don't seem to consider what is in the best interest of the majority. There seems to be

favoritism for certain people. It is a form of financial, racial, and social economic discrimination.

- 33:44 Tells the story of a black man who cannot get a permit to build so he sells his land and the white buyer immediately gets a permit. Her mother has similar situation but Ms. Holland insists that it is the responsibility of government to grant permits equality.

Track 08

- 35:52 She thinks that St. Mary's County needs a better financial base. The property taxes are too high. If the taxes go up to high then it will force out a lot of the poor people. The property taxes on the waterfront property is high to eliminate a lot of poor people. A lot of the wells in the McIntosh area were condemned to make the project eligible for federal funded sewer lines. All of the wells weren't tested before they were condemned.

Track 09

- 39:56 How have you contributed to the county? She has always held a job and paid taxes. She belongs to the NAACP. She was one of the founding members of the Women's Commission. She belongs to the Democratic Club and a member at-large of the Democratic Central Committee. She belongs to the Community Affairs Committee which did an investigation of the employment practices of St. Mary's County. She has membership with Library Board, Social Services Board and many other boards and commissions. She was an honoree (1995) for the Women's Commission from the Delacardo's. She has received numerous awards and certificates. She is not big on awards, certificates and pins. They are not important to her.
- 43:48 What was the most valuable thing that you have ever had in your lifetime? Her mother's support is the most valuable thing. Material things are not essential to her being.

Track 10

- 45:01 Have you done everything in life that you wanted or planned do? If you could go back in you life, what would you change? She has not reached all her goals. If she had to do it all over again, she would have completed a college education.
- 46:15 What do you feel has the biggest changes in this county in your lifetime? Integration of the schools and the base changing the county from its rural background. There is a different way of life with the influx of new technology.
- 48:45 Can you share old stores about what life was like for your parents? Life was about working, earning a living and raising a family. Trying not to be in too

much debt. Her mother talked about her life in North Carolina and South Carolina. She talked about making soap, cleaning and picking penny royal herbs for the drug companies.

Track 11

51:07 How did black folks get news/information when you were growing up? They listened to a battery operated radio. The local news was from word of mouth. In the late 1940's Mr. Steven Young would bring the Afro-American Newspaper from Baltimore. They also had a local paper called the Beacon.

53:22 They listened to WPTX. In the 1960's Mr. Richard Portee was a disc jockey. Most people get their news now through the radio, Enterprise and St. Mary's Today Newspaper. Elmer Brown use to publish a newspaper called the Focus. Dr. Jarboe also had a paper called the Afternoon Delight.

55:40 The local newspaper have never served the total community as a whole. She is not sure that this entirely possible. They can't serve the interest of everyone. People can also get information from Channel 10.

Track 12

57:23 What do you think about the UCAC project. She thinks it is a worthwhile project. The collective thoughts have not been done. Most of the time you get a third person with an objective view. Oral history is a valid and accurate way of getting what people did or how they feel. Maybe the information can be used to help people move forward.

59:45 What do you know about the integration of the movie theater? It was a major push by the NAACP and local community base groups. After Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, there was some concern. There use to be a White Citizen's Counsel in St. Mary's County. Black people knew a lot about white people and the things they did, but white people didn't know much about blacks because they were invisible and they didn't care to know about them.

Track 13

1:03:28 She thinks the White Citizen's Counsel still exist but have a different name with the same agenda. Some of these people have a financial stake in the community. Getting ahead by taking away from another.