

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

GUFFRIE SMITH

Interviewed by Merideth Taylor
July 19, 1999
At his home in Scotland Maryland
Logged by Tania Jordon on January 15, 2008
A verbatim transcript is available
Original format is one cassette tape
1 hour, 2 minutes, 31 seconds

CD 1 of 2 (Tape 1, side 1)

Track 01

0:00 Introduction

00:45 Where did you live and where were you born? His family lived in the Scotland area off of Route 5. His mother died when he was five years old. He stayed with several relatives before he moved to his uncle James' farm. He stayed with his uncle until he finished grade school. He didn't graduate from school. His uncle was a good Christian man.

2:25 How did your family live? What did you eat? They raised chickens, hogs and other animals. His uncle grew vegetables and sold them from Scotland Beach to Leonardtown. He stayed with his uncle until he went into the Army. His mother was not married to his biological father. His mother's family (Holly's) was a "right good size family".

3:55 Were times better or worse in those days? The times were worse then, but he "didn't suffer for nothing". His uncle James Holly took good care of him. He was better prepared to work on different jobs. He went into the Army in 1921 for four years. He became a barber and cut hair for years. He built a house and ran a trailer park. Most of his life, he worked for himself. There are more things to do now and more opportunities then there were before.

Track 02

5:24 What is your earliest memory? His earliest memories were when he was about six or seven and he left one family and went to another.

6:10 Describe your relationship with your siblings? He had four siblings Blanche, Llewellyn, James and William. They were older than he was and they were good to him. His sister Blanche took care of them like she was their mother until she moved to Baltimore and raised her own family. All his life he was always treated right. He never had any confrontations with anybody.

7:40 What church did you attend? He attends St. Luke's Methodist Church. He attended this church all of life.

8:10 Did you take family trips as a child? They would visit churches in the city. "My uncle and all were great church people". They were good to him and "set him up for a good life". "They never had any liquor around so he never was a drinker".

Track 03

8:59 How did your family deal with health situations? Their family doctor was Dr. Bean. "He made house calls no matter whether it was muddy, snowing or blowing". He went to the hospital for appendices before he went into the service. He was wounded in the services when he was in Italy. He was in the 92 Infantry Division called the Black Buffalos. He led a section fighting the German's. He and his friend were wounded by artillery shells. He was wounded in his right leg. He has never been to any of their infantry reunions.

The F Company went one evening and he went the next morning. They had to step over men to fight. When the Germans came over the mountain, they started shelling them while they were trying to retreat. He got hit in the back of his leg and his friend was hit in the face. They weren't far from the rear CP (headquarters). He has a Purple Heart. He was in Italy for four years but he didn't meet the enemy until close to the end of the war. He was in the last battle of the war.

His leg is still under the weather and he has a slight limp when he walks because of the muscle damage. "I thank the Lord that I made it back". "I'm 78 years old and I've been getting along fine".

Track 04

15:43 What did you like to do when you were young? He liked to follow his mother. She would shuck oysters and peel tomatoes for the local canning factories. Drury's was past Raley's store. That was where the boats came in at the time. That's where they would make a little money.

17:10 What chores did you have as a child? His uncle James Holly was a truck farmer. He bought an old jalopy to transport the vegetable all over the county. He and his brother would help his uncle until his brother got married. After his brother left, he took over the driving. They sold on the highway or directly at peoples homes.

19:10 How did you relatives treat you? They were very kind. His mother died when he was five and she lost her husband (Elek Smith) before she died. She wasn't very old when she died.

20:10 How did your uncle discipline you? His uncle was a very Christian man and his uncle didn't allow him to be unruly. He never did anything wrong to be disciplined because he was too afraid.

21:10 How did your uncle prepare you for life? His uncle prepared him well by working for himself as farmer. He did not own the land, but rented it. His uncle prepared him to work for himself.

Track 05

21:48 Tell me about your formal Schooling? He went to Scotland Elementary School and Jarboesville. Jarboesville School was on the property near the base entrance gate. The building looked like a maroon barn. Jarboesville went to the 11th grade.

23:30 Who were your favorite Teachers? What was your favorite subject in school? His favorite teachers were Miss Meyers, Miss Bennett and Mrs. Shayard. His favorite subject was arithmetic. "I wasn't the best reader and had to study hard to keep up with the rest of them".

24:40 What was the classroom like? Scotland School had a teacher named Miss Taliaferro who came from the city. She taught until Miss Bennett came to teach. Some of the bad boys would throw stones. "They didn't have much supervision at home". They had a wooden stove. The older boys (fire makers) would come to school early to start the fire. He would take a biscuit to school for lunch.

Track 06

26:30 What did you dream of becoming as an adult? He wasn't sure what he wanted to be. "It takes a little time to settle on one thing". "My uncle us to work them so that we didn't have time to think about other things". All he thought about was planting vegetable and eating good food. His aunt Ada Holly was a good cook.

28:05 Did your folks allow you to court? They had promenade dances that were chaperoned. They met people at school. He didn't remember how old he was when he met his wife. He's older than his wife and never saw her at school. They got married in 1921.

29:20 How did you meet your wife? He asked his wife, "did you meet me or did I meet you?" They didn't meet at school, she was coming in (starting school) and he was going out. He was out on his own before he met his wife. They went out on promenades. "Just catch her on her hand and shuffle along". Her parents and his uncle had positions at St. Luke's Church. They would visit at each others homes.

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Track 07

31:14 Wife makes good cake.

31:50 He worked for Ms. Adele Franz at St. Mary's College after he left home. He was a waiter. He was born in the 1920's. He worked at the college before the war. He went to war around 1942. He has a hard time remembering dates. They got married in 1942 right before he went to war.

35:00 What was the money situation like when you worked at the college? There wasn't much money then. It was one of the better jobs at that time. It was a good place to work. You carried the food into the students, and cleaned up the area.

36:00 He started working on the base when he returned from the war. He drove the bused for 47 years. He drove the bus on the base and "fired the boiler on the base". "That's how I made my money to build my house". He sold wood, drove the bus and fired the boilers. He had three different jobs on the base. He was able to purchase three different properties by working three jobs. Later he started the barber shop. He can't remember everything since he had a stroke.

Track 08

38:08 Where did you get married? They got married at the parsonage by Reverend Medley. How old was your wife? "She was about 40". "No she was 18 and I was 21".

39:05 Why did you decide to get married? “You know why, for the usual reasons, Bambino coming”.

39:25 Did you have a honeymoon? “In the bed”. “No it was war time, everybody was thinking about going in the service”.

Track 09

40:00 What part has religion played in your life? “It means everything. My uncle (James Holly) had a position in church all of his life, he was a Christian man. I never heard him say nothing or do nothing unbecoming to a man and he meant what he said”. Church has been the center of his life. He is at St. Luke’s Church every Sunday. “If you take God’s guidance, you’ll live a long time”.

41:25 Did you participate in community activities? He was a 4-H leader. He sings in the church choir. He sung in the quartet as a boy. He was also president of the PTA.

42:50 How do you feel about life today in St. Mary’s County? He has never had any direct confrontation with people. He has always tried to treat people right. It has helped him get along.

“There are more people in the county now and that means more money. That means people can live better. You can make more money to satisfy your family and to start or finish a home”.

People seem to be more pleasant now that they make more money. Back in the 1930’s people had it hard. When he grew up on a farm they didn’t have any place to put the potatoes from the field so they had to put pine shaft over them to keep them over the winter. They grew all types of vegetables.

Track 10

46:24 What do you feel has the biggest changes in this county in your lifetime? The base really helped. People got more jobs and made more money and were able to build homes. Everybody seems to be happy.

47:05 Has race relations change in the county. It is a little different. He never had any problem getting along. His children went to integrated schools

49:10 How did black folks get news/information when you were growing up? They got their news from the radio. His uncle also got the newspaper.

“His aunt Ada read so well”. He reads the Washington Post and the Enterprise.

50:50 How were citizens treated when you were young? “When they got to old to take care of themselves, they died”. Their relatives would take care of them or they’d go to the poor house in Leonardtown. People didn’t like the poor house but it was the best they could do.

Track 11

52:30 How have you contributed to the county? He has gotten certificates, trophies and a Purple Heart. Most are from the school bus and PTA. He has helped a lot with transportation.

54:35 He has had some very successful children. His current home was given to him from his son Tubby Smith.

55:05 What do you consider to be the most valuable thing you have ever had? His wife is his most valuable thing.

55:40 Have you done everything in life that you wanted or planned do? He has been satisfied. He never expected to have what he has now.

56:45 The worst time in his life was before the war. He had plenty to eat and a place to sleep. He always wanted something better in life. His Uncle James and Aunt Ada kept him on track. “I don’t have no regrets now”.

58:05 Have you ever lived outside the county except when you were in the service? No

58:15 He has taken trips everywhere within 300 miles for churches and schools. He just sold the bus to Wendy. He was an independent bus contractor with the schools for 47 years.

Track 12

59:08 Are teenagers different today? They are more enlightened by the way they live. Their parents are able to buy them things so they don’t steal like they use to. “The world is in better shape now”.

1:00:45 Have you ever been a victim of a hate crime? No. “Mostly with my colored people”.

1:01:55 How do you feel about the way you were treated in the service? I was treated fine, I was a Staff Sergeant. I could have gotten another promotion, but I had even after I got wounded”.