

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions  
Oral History Documentation Project

Beatrice Ellis

Interviewed by Janice Walthour

October 11, 2020

At Janice Walthour's home in Lexington Park

Transcribed by REV.com on October 11, 2020

Edited by Merideth Taylor on November 29, 2024

[this interview is not logged]

Original format is MP4 from digital video recorder

44 minutes, 4 seconds

Janice Walthour: (00:00)

The historical committee of the Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions here in St. Mary's County is in the process of collecting oral recollections from local citizens to enhance the historical account of life in St. Mary's County. We will be asking questions related to the following: your childhood, family life, schooling, teenage years, adulthood, work life, religion, uh, life in St. Mary's County, uh and things that matter to you. And if there's anything you'd rather not discuss, you know just let us know. Just let me know and it would be perfectly okay.

Bea Ellis: (00:42)

All right.

Janice Walthour: (00:44)

All right. Uh, if you agree, uh, do you agree to sign a release form for the Unified committee for Afro- American Contributions?

Bea Ellis: (00:53)

Yes.

Janice Walthour: (00:53)

It won't- okay good. The form has been sent, uh, via email to Adrienne. So she has that. And, uh, so you've given us a verbal agreement today. Would you like for me to read over the verbal, uh, the agreement or can we just start? You've already- you've said yes, so...

Bea Ellis: (01:11)

Yes. You can, you can read it over. I haven't seen it but...

Janice Walthour: (01:16)

Okay.

Bea Ellis: (01:16)

I can see it after, after you finish.

Janice Walthour: (01:19)

Okay. It says, this is our, uh, standard release form for the oral history project that we do. I agree to be interviewed and photographed, video or tape recorded for the non-profit Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions Oral History project. I understand that the tape will be used only for research, educational and promotional purposes related

to the Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions, and for possible incorporations in any forthcoming books or exhibits that we do.

Janice Walthour: [\(01:55\)](#)

I understand that the resulting video tapes or audio tapes, photographs or transcripts will become the property of the Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions, and will be made available to the community for educational and research purposes only.

Janice Walthour: [\(02:13\)](#)

Uh, copies of this interview may be placed in the Lexington Park library and other appropriate libraries and repositories in the area. So, you agree to do, to do.

Bea Ellis: [\(02:27\)](#)

Yes, I do.

Janice Walthour: [\(02:28\)](#)

Yes. Thank you. Well, I'm interviewing Beatrice Wingate Ellis.

Bea Ellis: [\(02:36\)](#)

(laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(02:36\)](#)

Retired teacher from St. Mary's County public schools. The subject is known now as career technology education. Miss Ellis taught at George Washington Carver High School and Great Mills High Schools. Were there other schools that you taught in the county, where you taught in the county?

Bea Ellis: [\(02:56\)](#)

Yes. I taught in all of the high schools in St. Mary's County. (laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(03:00\)](#)

Okay. All of the high schools in St. Mary's County.

Bea Ellis: [\(03:03\)](#)

All of them.

Janice Walthour: [\(03:04\)](#)

Okay. Good. I am the interviewer, and my name is Janice Talbert Walthour. The date is October 11, 2020. I live at 20493 Partin's Lane, Lexington Park Maryland. 20653. Miss Ellis, please state your full name and the date for the record.

Bea Ellis: [\(03:28\)](#)

My name is Beatrice Wingate Ellis. And today's date is October 11th, 2020.

Janice Walthour: [\(03:39\)](#)

Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed today. And as a former student I'm so happy-

Bea Ellis: [\(03:46\)](#)

(laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(03:46\)](#)

that you're feeling better. And so grateful to be spending time with you today.

Bea Ellis: [\(03:53\)](#)

Well, it's wonderful being with you too. (laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(03:57\)](#)

So first we are going to talk about your childhood and family life. Things like where you- where and when you were born. Tell me about family. Your parents. Your brothers or sisters. And describe how you got along with your siblings. I think you had a brother. So let's hear about your family.

Bea Ellis: [\(04:20\)](#)

I was raised with my mom and dad and my brother.

Janice Walthour: [\(04:26\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(04:26\)](#)

He was 2 years older than me.

Janice Walthour: [\(04:29\)](#)

Okay.

Bea Ellis: [\(04:29\)](#)

And, um, we got along fine.

Janice Walthour: [\(04:33\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(04:34\)](#)

I wish we had some more in the family but, it didn't happen that way.

Janice Walthour: [\(04:41\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(04:42\)](#)

But, um, we got along fine.

Janice Walthour: [\(04:46\)](#)

Yes. Where were you born?

Bea Ellis: [\(04:48\)](#)

In Durham, North Carolina.

Janice Walthour: [\(04:48\)](#)

Okay.

Bea Ellis: [\(04:51\)](#)

In 1935.

Janice Walthour: [\(04:53\)](#)

Okay.

Bea Ellis: [\(04:58\)](#)

Um, and I, I went to, uh, I went to um... Our school was (laughs)

Adrienne (daughter): [\(05:12\)](#)

Hillside

Bea Ellis: [\(05:12\)](#)

Um...

Adrienne (daughter): [\(05:12\)](#)

Hillside

Bea Ellis: [\(05:15\)](#)

Hillside High School. And I graduated from Hillside High School in 1953.

Janice Walthour: [\(05:24\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(05:27\)](#)

And I went to North Carolina Central College, uh, in 1953... I graduated Central, 1957. And when I finished Central, I applied for a job in St. Mary's County teaching.

Janice Walthour: [\(05:48\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(05:52\)](#)

And I ended up getting a job at Banneker School, because I had applied for a business, job. But that job was filled. So I just took a job just to have a job. (laughs). I took a job at Banneker School teaching, um, math and one class of science.

Janice Walthour: [\(06:15\)](#)

Okay.

Bea Ellis: [\(06:19\)](#)

I was at Banneker for two years, and then I was transferred to Carve School, um, to do business, uh. And I was at Caver School until integration. Then I was sent to Great Mills High School.

Janice Walthour: [\(06:38\)](#)

Okay.

Bea Ellis: (06:38)

When I was at, um, Carver School and I taught a night class for adults, uh, shorthand and typing. And I had a wonderful class, and some of the members from that class got jobs on the base. Um, and they enjoyed it. They enjoyed the class. (laughs)

Janice Walthour: (07:13)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: (07:13)

I enjoyed them.

Janice Walthour: (07:15)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: (07:15)

Uh, but that class only last for a year. Maybe two years at the most.

Janice Walthour: (07:21)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: (07:24)

Then I went to, uh, I think I said this, I went to Great Mills. At Great Mills I taught, uh, accounting and typing.

Janice Walthour: (07:38)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: (07:38)

And I was just a teacher then, a business teacher then. And as years passed I became the chair-person of that department. Uh, when mister, uh... I forgot his name now. Um, he was the principal.

Janice Walthour: (08:05)

Raspa?

Bea Ellis: (08:05)

No.

Janice Walthour: (08:05)

Oh.

Bea Ellis: (08:05)

It was before Raspa.

Janice Walthour: (08:05)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(08:08\)](#)

Um, I was chairperson until, hmm, I don't know how many years. (laughs) I don't, I don't remember how many years but I was chairperson at Great Mills High School for a number of years.

Janice Walthour: [\(08:32\)](#)

Yeah.

Bea Ellis: [\(08:32\)](#)

And then I retired, was asked to retire. But before I retired I was, um, assistant teacher at all of the high schools. And I worked with, uh, kids who were behind in their classes. And kids who had been out of school and sick and trying to catch up with their classwork.

Janice Walthour: [\(09:03\)](#)

Hmm.

Bea Ellis: [\(09:03\)](#)

I worked with those type kids.

Janice Walthour: [\(09:06\)](#)

Was that the home hospital program?

Bea Ellis: [\(09:08\)](#)

Pardon me?

Janice Walthour: [\(09:08\)](#)

Was that the home hospital teaching program?

Bea Ellis: [\(09:12\)](#)

Yeah. And I was at the school. I wasn't at the home, but I was at school.

Janice Walthour: [\(09:14\)](#)

Okay.

Bea Ellis: [\(09:14\)](#)

Yeah.

Janice Walthour: [\(09:14\)](#)

Okay. Great.

Bea Ellis: [\(09:20\)](#)

And, um, after that, I decided to retire. I retired in...

Adrienne (daughter): [\(09:30\)](#)

'93

Bea Ellis: (09:35)

In, in '93.

Janice Walthour: (09:38)

Okay.

Bea Ellis: (09:39)

Uh... After I retired I got kind of lonesome for them. I missed teaching. (laughs) So I did substitute work. Full-time substituted at Chopticon for a teacher. Uh, for almost a year.

Janice Walthour: (09:51)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: (09:52)

That was in business. I did that for that year and I, I did additional sub work the following year. I did sub work for about 2 1/2 years. And then I decided that was enough for work for me. Um, then I... What else did I do? I came home. (laughs)

Janice Walthour: (10:35)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: (10:38)

I came home, and I took care of my mom. She was sick; she got sick after I, uh, retired. So I took care of her. She had a few strokes, and I was her caretaker. And then, uh, later she passed. And that left my dad and my brother, the three of us together.

Janice Walthour: (11:05)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: (11:05)

My brother was in Durham North Carolina. He lived in North Carolina.

Janice Walthour: (11:05)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: (11:15)

He was in the air force at first. And when he retired from the air force he lived in Durham down-

Janice Walthour: (11:17)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: (11:17)

At our home place. Um, and after my mom passed, um, my dad and me we stayed together for a while. Until he got sick. Yes, anyway he was sick and we brought him up here to Adrienne's house in Maryland. Once we got here, that was home. (laughs)

Janice Walthour: (12:08)

Yeah.

Bea Ellis: [\(12:11\)](#)

I mean, I didn't get to go back to [inaudible 00:12:12]. (laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(12:11\)](#)

Okay. Okay.

Bea Ellis: [\(12:17\)](#)

So... Uh, dad stayed here for about 3 years and then he passed.

Janice Walthour: [\(12:22\)](#)

How old was he when he passed?

Bea Ellis: [\(12:24\)](#)

He was 102.

Janice Walthour: [\(12:25\)](#)

Wow...

Bea Ellis: [\(12:25\)](#)

One hundred and two years old.

Janice Walthour: [\(12:27\)](#)

Amazing.

Bea Ellis: [\(12:30\)](#)

He was right in 3 months from being 103. So, your dad, your dad and my dad were friends. (laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(12:42\)](#)

Yes they were. Very good friends.

Bea Ellis: [\(12:43\)](#)

Yeah, they were close friends.

Janice Walthour: [\(12:45\)](#)

Yes, they were. Uh, when you were talking about teaching, uh, I know you worked in the segregated system and the integrated system. So-

Bea Ellis: [\(12:57\)](#)

Yes I did.

Janice Walthour: [\(12:57\)](#)

I know you did a lot with the students in helping them to get jobs on the base and taking the civil service test.

Bea Ellis: [\(13:06\)](#)

Yes.

Janice Walthour: [\(13:08\)](#)

What is do you feel was your greatest accomplishment as a teacher?

Bea Ellis: [\(13:17\)](#)

Oh that was, that was a great accomplishment. Because I have students now who have, who have retired from their jobs that they got when they were in high school. They have retired now. And, um, they got government jobs. I had a recruiter from the Department of Education and, um, the CIA to come to the school and talk to the kids. And after they talked to the kids they would test them. And once they gave them their test, if the kids passed their test they got a job. In DC.

Bea Ellis: [\(14:11\)](#)

But I was wondering about that, because I thought I sent those kids to DC. They didn't know anything about DC.

Janice Walthour: [\(14:19\)](#)

(laughs)

Bea Ellis: [\(14:22\)](#)

They didn't know (laughs)... They didn't know anything about nothing. Catching the subway, getting back and forth to work. I worried about that.

Janice Walthour: [\(14:31\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(14:31\)](#)

But they did fine. They really did fine. So, um, one of my students retired, uh, a couple of weeks ago from off the base at Patuxent.

Janice Walthour: [\(14:43\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(14:54\)](#)

Uh, and some of the kids taught Steve Thurman. I taught Steve Thurman and he said he would be typing, just typing. And they would come to him and ask him, say "Why are you typing. Where did you get all those typing skills from?" He said, I had a teacher. But I had a hard teacher (laughs)...

Janice Walthour: [\(15:10\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(15:10\)](#)

who made me type. He said, he was doing fine. He said, but, thank you for making me type and for doing the hard work. It was hard for them because it was new.

Janice Walthour: [\(15:25\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(15:26\)](#)

But, um, they got along fine.

Janice Walthour: [\(15:29\)](#)

Yeah. Uh, during desegregation, I know, uh, at Carver that you, you were very involved in getting the CIA and the government, uh, agencies to come to the school. Was that just something that was done in the segregated schools?

Bea Ellis: [\(15:50\)](#)

No. That was done in the business department, uh, from St. Mary's **County**. We decided to do that. The teachers, the business teachers got together and that's what we decided to do. And the people would come to Great Mills, uh, Chopticon and Leonardtown.

Janice Walthour: [\(16:15\)](#)

Okay. Okay.

Bea Ellis: [\(16:15\)](#)

And they would, they would test the kids. And, uh... But at first they would stop at Chopticon. (laughs). Then they stopped at Leonardtown. (laughs) And then they come to Great Mills.

Janice Walthour: [\(16:32\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(16:41\)](#)

But soon I had to stop that. (laughs) I had to stop that. I said it's two roads that come down in St. Mary's County.

Janice Walthour: [\(16:44\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(16:48\)](#)

5 and 235. And you can take 235, to come to Great Mills High School. Then go to Leonardtown, and then on your way out you go to Chopticon.

Janice Walthour: [\(16:57\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(17:01\)](#)

And, I had my own meeting one afternoon, one after school. And I told my supervisor. And the business representative of why I was having that meeting. I called a meeting and I told them I that I was there for a meeting. And, and we weren't leaving until we finished that meeting.

Janice Walthour: [\(17:26\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(17:26\)](#)

That was the way that meeting went. And we decided to do Great Mills sometimes first, then Leonardtown and then

Chopticon.

Adrienne (daughter): ([17:41](#))

Great Mills.

Janice Walthour: ([17:42](#))

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Adrienne Dillahunt: ([17:42](#))

Great Mills.

Janice Walthour: ([17:42](#))

Great Mills. Yes.

Bea Ellis: ([17:42](#))

Great Mills.

Janice Walthour: ([17:43](#))

First, yeah. So-

Bea Ellis: ([17:44](#))

Great Mills.

Janice Walthour: ([17:45](#))

When did they stop that program? Do you remember?

Bea Ellis: ([17:47](#))

Oh boy.

Janice Walthour: ([17:48](#))

When did they stop going?

Bea Ellis: ([17:52](#))

[crosstalk 00:17:52] It was after, it was after you had your, uh, courses.

Janice Walthour: ([17:58](#))

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: ([18:00](#))

Um, it was shortly after then.

Janice Walthour: ([18:04](#))

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: ([18:05](#))

And we did that for about four years. And then that, you know, it kinda faded out.

Janice Walthour: [\(18:12\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(18:15\)](#)

I guess the cost of employment.

Janice Walthour: [\(18:19\)](#)

Yeah, yeah.

Bea Ellis: [\(18:19\)](#)

But... With people retiring. So we didn't have the people come down.

Janice Walthour: [\(18:27\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(18:28\)](#)

But I know they don't come down now at all.

Janice Walthour: [\(18:29\)](#)

Yeah. That's what I was wondering if they still did that. But, yeah.

Bea Ellis: [\(18:33\)](#)

They don't do that anymore.

Janice Walthour: [\(18:36\)](#)

They don't do that type of process anymore.

Bea Ellis: [\(18:38\)](#)

Yeah, the kids have to find their own jobs. They have to get out and do the hard work.

Janice Walthour: [\(18:46\)](#)

Yeah.

Bea Ellis: [\(18:46\)](#)

To get a job.

Janice Walthour: [\(18:48\)](#)

What was teaching like going from the segregated school to the integrated school, what was that like for you? Or the desegregated school. What was that like for you?

Bea Ellis: [\(19:00\)](#)

It wasn't bad because, being military I was used to... Being around certain people. And see I taught the adults, and they were all ages and all colors.

Janice Walthour: [\(19:21\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(19:22\)](#)

And, um, that didn't bother me at all. We got along fine. I taught at the, um, community college also at night.

Janice Walthour: [\(19:46\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(19:46\)](#)

So, I've done my duty-

Janice Walthour: [\(19:49\)](#)

You sure did (laughs).

Bea Ellis: [\(19:52\)](#)

Of teaching. (laughs) And I also taught in the summer. (laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(19:53\)](#)

In the summer?

Bea Ellis: [\(19:53\)](#)

I taught, I taught, um, students that wanted to come to school during the summer.

Janice Walthour: [\(19:54\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(19:54\)](#)

I taught those kids how to, um, catch up on math work. I worked with those kids.

Janice Walthour: [\(20:03\)](#)

Okay.

Bea Ellis: [\(20:03\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Janice Walthour: [\(20:06\)](#)

Are there are any other successes that you want to share about your work?

Bea Ellis: [\(20:13\)](#)

Um...

Janice Walthour: [\(20:18\)](#)

Or life in general? (laughs)

Bea Ellis: [\(20:25\)](#)

Not usually, not really. I don't remember just...

Adrienne Dillahunt: [\(20:26\)](#)

Mom...

Bea Ellis: [\(20:36\)](#)

No.

Janice Walthour: [\(20:37\)](#)

Okay. Well then tell me more about your family. I know you, um, once you, you moved here to St. Mary's County when you graduated from college. So let's talk a little bit more about, um... I know your mom and dad, uh, were here. Your dad was here first, or...

Bea Ellis: [\(20:55\)](#)

My dad was here first. He worked on the base as a fireman.

Janice Walthour: [\(21:00\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(21:01\)](#)

Um, then I came. And then I ended up bringing my mom up here.

Janice Walthour: [\(21:07\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(21:08\)](#)

So the three (laughs), so the three of us was here. Uh, I guess until, what? Until the end.

Janice Walthour: [\(21:18\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(21:18\)](#)

Was 'til almost the end.

Janice Walthour: [\(21:18\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(21:29\)](#)

Uh... I had, um, two, or my mother had two sisters, um, and I loved both of them. One could really bake cakes. (laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(21:44\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(21:47\)](#)

So I loved her the most. (laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(21:50\)](#)

(laughs)

Bea Ellis: [\(21:51\)](#)

Every time I, she stayed in town. And every time I would go home from Lexington Park, I would always go over to her house where she would always have me a cake. (laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(21:59\)](#)

Oh wow.

Bea Ellis: [\(21:59\)](#)

So she had spoiled me. They all spoiled me.

Janice Walthour: [\(22:06\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(22:08\)](#)

Yeah.

Janice Walthour: [\(22:08\)](#)

I know that in Lexington Park that you attended church.

Bea Ellis: [\(22:16\)](#)

Yeah. I, I-

Janice Walthour: [\(22:16\)](#)

Tell us?

Bea Ellis: [\(22:19\)](#)

I joined, uh, First Baptist church. Reverend Chambers was the pastor when I joined.

Janice Walthour: [\(22:25\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(22:26\)](#)

And, um, I worked with the, on Sunday afternoons, I worked with the, uh, youth. It was a youth group that I worked with. Um, and I sang in the choir. And that's about it. I participated and whatever they needed me to do at church, I did it.

Janice Walthour: [\(22:54\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(22:59\)](#)

And I used, I used to help my mom. They were, uh, missionaries. And they used to set up for the communion, and I used to help them do that.

Janice Walthour: [\(23:09\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative). So what about your marriage? I know you..

Bea Ellis: [\(23:15\)](#)

I was getting [crosstalk 00:23:15] (laughs) ready to get to that.

Janice Walthour: [\(23:15\)](#)

Your marriage and your children.

Bea Ellis: [\(23:20\)](#)

I got married, um, the year before I went to Carver school. Uh, I married a, a young man that we, well he was a friend of mine, because we were friends before I married him. Um, he had, he had been married. His wife had died when his first child was two weeks old the mother died. And, uh, I knew this guy. And I, when we used to go down in, in the summer to my grandparents in Lamont, South Carolina. And, uh, I would spend at least two weeks with them. My mom would let me spend no longer than two weeks. So (laughs)-

Janice Walthour: [\(24:34\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(24:37\)](#)

I'd stay weeks with my grandparents. And my, my grandfather had 8 boys and 1 girl.

Janice Walthour: [\(24:38\)](#)

Wow. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(24:40\)](#)

He needed the boys do the farm. He had a farm of 150 acres, so that kept them busy. And I learned a lot by going down on the farm, and it's a great experience. And I wish a lot of students could have that experience. You learn how to cook, you learn how to clean, you learn how to be patient. (laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(25:07\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(25:08\)](#)

And you can, and you learn how to work with adults. And, um, we had to learn the animals. The animal life.

Janice Walthour: [\(25:21\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(25:22\)](#)

Huh?

Bea Ellis: [\(25:25\)](#)

Again, that's where my husband, he had four girls. And I had no, nobody. Um, (laughs), I wasn't, I wasn't married then. And we used, we talked. He used to call me. We would miss calls, each other. Then he decided to bring the kids down. Kids came to Lexington Park and they didn't want to go back home.

Janice Walthour: [\(25:59\)](#)

(laughs)

Bea Ellis: [\(25:59\)](#)

They had wanted to stay, but he had to take them back. He was in the air force now. They cried, they cried. So he had to take them back. He was there with his sister. But, um, eventually we ended up getting married. And people got after me me for marrying this man with four kids. "Your parents didn't send you to school to marry somebody with four kids." But see, I knew him. It wasn't a fellow that I didn't know. I knew him in advance. But if I didn't know him in advance, I'd probably not have married him. But we had a successful life.

Janice Walthour: [\(26:52\)](#)

Yeah. What was his name?

Bea Ellis: [\(26:55\)](#)

Charles. Charles Laverne Ellis.

Janice Walthour: [\(27:00\)](#)

Okay.

Bea Ellis: [\(27:00\)](#)

Got a, then he end up, he got a job, uh, at a, uh... What's the name of the place?

Bea Ellis: [\(27:10\)](#)

[Harry Lundenberg 00:27:10].

Janice Walthour: [\(27:10\)](#)

Okay.

Bea Ellis: [\(27:10\)](#)

They have all uh-

Janice Walthour: [\(27:10\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(27:16\)](#)

Until he got sick. And he had a stroke.

Janice Walthour: [\(27:22\)](#)

Oh.

Bea Ellis: [\(27:25\)](#)

And he ended up dying.

Janice Walthour: [\(27:25\)](#)

Okay.

Bea Ellis: [\(27:26\)](#)

But, we had a good life. And the kids are all grown now and-

Adrienne (daughter): [\(27:30\)](#)

You forgot you had me, right?

Bea Ellis: [\(27:30\)](#)

They're working and a couple of them have retired. And, one died a year to go, Joyce, she had stomach cancer. So, uh, she left us. But, uh, the other three-

Adrienne (daughter): [\(28:08\)](#)

Four.

Bea Ellis: [\(28:08\)](#)

I'm not counting Adrienne or, I'm not counting Adrienne (laughs) Of course that, of course that was my daughter. Uh, I count three of them. I'm talking about the girls now.

Janice Walthour: [\(28:11\)](#)

Who are the girls? And [crosstalk 00:28:13].

Bea Ellis: [\(28:13\)](#)

The three girls. But they were all my, my children.

Janice Walthour: [\(28:14\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(28:18\)](#)

They were all my children. I had Adrienne in '71-

Adrienne [\(28:19\)](#)

1

Bea Ellis: [\(28:19\)](#)

1.

Janice Walthour: [\(28:19\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(28:24\)](#)

She was born in Virginia.

Janice Walthour: [\(28:27\)](#)

Okay.

Bea Ellis: [\(28:27\)](#)

Hampton, Virginia.

Janice Walthour: [\(28:30\)](#)

Okay. So you had four, five girls.

Bea Ellis: [\(28:33\)](#)

I had five girls.

Janice Walthour: [\(28:33\)](#)

Great.

Bea Ellis: [\(28:37\)](#)

And, and, and then, I didn't train them by myself. I had company. My aunt, my aunt Mary, she did help- she wasn't working at the time, so she left Durham and came and stayed with me. I was living in Washington then. She came and stayed with me to help me out with the girls. My mom and dad, they helped me out with the girls. So, I had plenty of help.

Janice Walthour: [\(29:05\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(29:08\)](#)

It was not all me having to raise these girls. I didn't do that on my own. I could not have done that alone.

Janice Walthour: [\(29:21\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative). How long were you married?

Bea Ellis: [\(29:23\)](#)

17 years.

Janice Walthour: [\(29:28\)](#)

Okay.

Bea Ellis: [\(29:29\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Janice Walthour: [\(29:29\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(29:29\)](#)

17 years.

Janice Walthour: [\(29:30\)](#)

Okay. So is there anything we missed in our conversation? Um, uh, about your life and anything that mattered to you that you wanted to share in this interview that we didn't discuss?

Bea Ellis: [\(29:52\)](#)

Anything, Adrienne?

Adrienne (daughter): [\(29:56\)](#)

You wanted to encourage everyone to vote.

Bea Ellis: [\(30:00\)](#)

Huh?

Adrienne (daughter): [\(30:00\)](#)

You wanted to encourage everyone to vote. To vote? Remember you said you wanted to encourage [crosstalk 00:30:05].

Bea Ellis: [\(30:04\)](#)

Oh yeah. We, we are, I wanted to encourage [crosstalk 00:30:07], I'm encouraging people to vote. Yeah it's time (laughs) each year vote each year we've encouraged them to vote. And I would sometimes work with the voting group. Encourage them.

Bea Ellis: [\(30:25\)](#)

And, uh, at that time we had, um, PTA meetings. And I was involved with that.

Janice Walthour: [\(30:45\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(30:45\)](#)

And uh...

Adrienne (daughter): [\(30:45\)](#)

Delicados.

Bea Ellis: [\(30:45\)](#)

Huh?

Adrienne (daughter): [\(30:45\)](#)

Delicados.

Bea Ellis: [\(30:46\)](#)

I was involved with a group called Delicados.

Janice Walthour: [\(30:47\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(30:47\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative). That was a community group. And they're still going on. Still going on.

Janice Walthour: [\(30:52\)](#)

Yeah.

Bea Ellis: [\(30:52\)](#)

Uh, and I guess that's about it. I, I wasn't a child that did a lot of visiting. You know, going to clubs and (laughs). I would go to a show, a production show once in a while.

Janice Walthour: [\(31:22\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(31:25\)](#)

But, I wasn't a child that liked to stay in the streets, what you called it. Like a lot of people did. I was a home child (laughs). I was a, I was a child that stayed at home. I kind of loved home. I stayed home.

Janice Walthour: [\(31:40\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(31:41\)](#)

Lots of time. Yeah.

Janice Walthour: [\(31:49\)](#)

That's good. Do- [inaudible 00:31:52], you have any questions?

Bea Ellis: [\(31:55\)](#)

No. What are you all gonna do with this, this interview?

Janice Walthour: [\(32:02\)](#)

Well we have an oral history project, as I was reading to you.

Bea Ellis: [\(32:07\)](#)

Uh-huh.

Janice Walthour: [\(32:08\)](#)

We take interviews, we interview people in the community. And, uh, what we do is we're recording it now, so that it will be transcribed-

Bea Ellis: [\(32:17\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Janice Walthour: [\(32:18\)](#)

So we use it and we send it out. We have our interviews at the library and we also have some at St. Mary's College.

Bea Ellis: [\(32:27\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Janice Walthour: [\(32:27\)](#)

So if people are doing research and they want to know about people. You know, lifestyles and, so people can check it out and listen to it.

Bea Ellis: [\(32:37\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Janice Walthour: [\(32:38\)](#)

Uh, so it's just a way to document African American history is our primary goal. Not that we wouldn't record, you know, and interview others.

Bea Ellis: [\(32:47\)](#)

Oh.

Janice Walthour: [\(32:47\)](#)

But our goal is documenting African American history. And we, uh, wanted to interview you of course because of your work in St. Mary's County and all that you did to, uh, support the, uh, the actual students getting jobs and becoming, uh, economically sufficient. You know, being able to have jobs and raise their families and, uh, use their skills. So, uh, we kind of highlighted that. But we also wanted to know more about personally. You know, how you grew up. And things that you did and your family and, you've shared all of that with us. So that's of course all in this taped interview. And people can check it out and there's a record of it now.

Bea Ellis: [\(33:35\)](#)

For how long have you all been doing this?

Janice Walthour: [\(33:38\)](#)

Oh, for years.

Bea Ellis: [\(33:40\)](#)

Really?

Janice Walthour: [\(33:41\)](#)

Yes. Yes. For years.

Bea Ellis: [\(33:42\)](#)

If hadn't known it before now. (laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(33:46\)](#)

It's the Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions. UCAC. We have the African American monument. We have the monument to the United States Colored Troops.

Bea Ellis: [\(34:00\)](#)

Yeah, I know about the monument.

Janice Walthour: [\(34:03\)](#)

And we have a book In Relentless Pursuit-

Bea Ellis: [\(34:05\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Janice Walthour: [\(34:06\)](#)

Of Education. I think you have- you know about that book.

Bea Ellis: [\(34:09\)](#)

Yeah. Yeah.

Janice Walthour: [\(34:11\)](#)

So yeah we, we have been doing that. I will send Adrienne more information so she can go online and check out the, uh, interviews.

Bea Ellis: [\(34:21\)](#)

Oh, okay.

Janice Walthour: [\(34:22\)](#)

Yeah. We have a website. Ucaonline.org. I think I might have sent it to her, but-

Adrienne Dillahunt: [\(34:28\)](#)

You did.

Bea Ellis: [\(34:28\)](#)

Yes, she has them. Yes, I saw them. Yeah.

Janice Walthour: [\(34:30\)](#)

With all those interviews. Um, I know Alma's on here. Alma, you have anything else? Alma? Adrienne?

Janice Walthour: [\(34:47\)](#)

Okay. There they are.

Adrienne Dillahunt: [\(34:48\)](#)

Adrienne.

Alma: [\(34:49\)](#)

This is Alma. Yes, I was on mute. So, a very nice and interesting interview. I'm really enjoying it. Um, I just wanted to ask a question that we ask often when we interview as to what, uh, what is your earliest memory as a child?

Bea Ellis: [\(35:12\)](#)

(laughs) I guess I was about 12 years old. And I was a little stout girl. (laughs)

Alma: [\(35:12\)](#)

(laughs)

Bea Ellis: [\(35:27\)](#)

At that time I was a little stout girl. And I used to love to be in the kitchen with my mom. And that was about it. (laughs)

Alma: [\(35:41\)](#)

Oh, okay. So do you- you have a ...

Bea Ellis: (35:43)

[crosstalk 00:35:43] But I guess after, after having lessons, you know, you lose that stoutness. (laughs)

Alma: (35:47)

(laughs) So you-

Bea Ellis: (35:47)

I didn't use as much sweets. (laughs)

Alma: (35:54)

So do you have that picture of you and your mom when you were a little scout girl?

Bea Ellis: (35:58)

No, I don't have that picture. Uh, we, you know, in moving around you lose a lot. I've lost a lot of my pictures and information by moving from place to place. But, I do have a vis- a very few pictures. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alma: (36:22)

One, one other question. You, um, mentioned that you taught night school to adults.

Bea Ellis: (36:27)

Yes.

Alma: (36:27)

Um, things, things like, uh, typing and shorthand.

Bea Ellis: (36:32)

Yes.

Alma: (36:33)

Um, do you remember if any of them were able to get positions in the government-

Bea Ellis: (36:39)

Yes.

Alma: (36:39)

Due to that?

Bea Ellis: (36:40)

Some of them were, uh, they were adults and I would push them. I said, come on. Let's take this test because you can get a job. And they took test and they got a job on the base.

Alma: (37:00)

Interesting. Very interesting.

Alma: (37:05)

Well thank you for all your work in helping, uh, folks in St. Mary's County, [crosstalk 00:37:12] especially African

Americans.

Bea Ellis: [\(37:14\)](#)

I've done a lot in St. Mary's County. Because when I first got to St. Mary's County I was ready to turn around and go back to Durham. (laughs)

Alma: [\(37:19\)](#)

(laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(37:19\)](#)

(laughs)

Bea Ellis: [\(37:19\)](#)

It was so country, you know. Had one highway. (laughs) Um, but the people was, were nice. The people were nice. And, uh, I had no problems. I would volunteer doing a lot. That's why I used to volunteer. And do a lot to keep busy.

Janice Walthour: [\(37:50\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alma: [\(37:50\)](#)

Wonderful. Well thank you.

Bea Ellis: [\(37:54\)](#)

Oh, you're quite welcome. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Janice Walthour: [\(37:55\)](#)

Okay.

Bea Ellis: [\(37:55\)](#)

And Adrienne looks the same. Little Adrienne.

Adrienne Dillahunt: [\(38:02\)](#)

Yes, yes.

Bea Ellis: [\(38:03\)](#)

She's done wonderful work I understand.

Adrienne Dillahunt: [\(38:08\)](#)

Oh, thank you. Yes, yes. I did have a question for you.

Janice Walthour: [\(38:12\)](#)

Yes, please.

Adrienne Dillahunt: [\(38:13\)](#)

Um, it is going back to the de-segregation of, uh, of schools. And you had mentioned that, um, you were at Carver and then, um, when de-segregation happened you went to Great Mills High School. I'm interested in what the selection

process was. Was it, um, you know, you know how were teachers integrated into Great Mills High School? Was it something that was voluntary? Or were there specific people that were chosen?

Bea Ellis: [\(38:44\)](#)

No. If you wanted to go to the, go to, go to the, uh, integrated school you could go to the, the integrated school. But some people didn't want to participate in the integrated schools, so they did not go. They went someplace else. But, um, the business teachers... Well there was only one business teacher at Carver.

Adrienne Dillahunt: [\(39:11\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(39:11\)](#)

So the one business teacher was transferred to Great Mills High School. And that's how I got to Great Mills High School. I agreed to go.

Adrienne Dillahunt: [\(39:32\)](#)

Okay.

Alma: [\(39:34\)](#)

Good. Good.

Adrienne Dillahunt: [\(39:35\)](#)

Yes. Well I, I, um, I met you. I, I haven't seen you in years-

Bea Ellis: [\(39:41\)](#)

(laughs)

Adrienne Dillahunt: [\(39:41\)](#)

So it was wonderful seeing you. And, um, I thank you for, um, you know, you know, being the trailblazer that you are in education and community involvement. And I just appreciate you taking the time to, um, you know with us for this interview. So thank you.

Bea Ellis: [\(39:59\)](#)

Oh, you're quite welcome. It was an experience for me. (laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(40:05\)](#)

And I kind attest to again, uh, the work that you did because I was one of those students, uh, in the night class.

Bea Ellis: [\(40:13\)](#)

I know. Your daddy used to bring you-

Janice Walthour: [\(40:14\)](#)

I got- yes, my dad would bring me.

Bea Ellis: [\(40:18\)](#)

Aren't you glad you took my class?

Janice Walthour: [\(40:21\)](#)

I know, yeah. I'm so happy because as a result of that class, that night class, I continue to study, to do, uh, the work with you during the day, the school day during the 7th period to get in more practice.

Janice Walthour: [\(40:37\)](#)

And I got a job in the summer. I took that civil service test and got a job in the summertime, all during the, uh, my time in college.

Bea Ellis: [\(40:47\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Janice Walthour: [\(40:47\)](#)

I worked, uh, in the civil service because I had that training through, uh, through you and, uh, in the commercial department we called it then.

Bea Ellis: [\(40:58\)](#)

Now [crosstalk 00:40:59] let me ask you, let me ask you a question.

Janice Walthour: [\(41:02\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bea Ellis: [\(41:04\)](#)

Was I a hard teacher?

Janice Walthour: [\(41:05\)](#)

No, not to me.

Bea Ellis: [\(41:10\)](#)

(laughs) Some of my students said you, like they used to call me Meany. Because I would not let them out of class. I said, "You signed up for this class so you're in here for the rest of the year. I'm not letting you out. You need this class." So I kept them in class. I wouldn't let them get out of my class.

Janice Walthour: [\(41:32\)](#)

Yeah. But you see, I loved it so I was eager to be there. So...

Bea Ellis: [\(41:35\)](#)

Yes you, you were there.

Janice Walthour: [\(41:36\)](#)

I was eager to learn how to type.

Bea Ellis: [\(41:39\)](#)

And you were a good student. (laughs) And I know your sister was jealous of you for taking that class, because she's not getting involved in it. (laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(41:51\)](#)

(laughs) She didn't do it. She, she, she missed that opportunity.

Bea Ellis: [\(41:54\)](#)

Yes she sure did miss out on that. (laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(41:58\)](#)

Because it was quite an opportunity for all the students that you were involved with. So if there are no other questions, um, I would just want to, um, thank Adrienne Dillahunt, Adrienne Mathis Dillahunt for hosting the Zoom interview today. And she's gonna take a picture of you, Miss Ellis. Um, a Zoom picture. She's gonna do that. And, um, and thanks for coordinating- for Adrienne, your daughter. Adrienne? I know she's back there somewhere thanks for coordinating this interview with your mom. And, and your sisters.

Janice Walthour: [\(42:34\)](#)

And then of course, um, Adrienne, you are going to take the picture once we stop recording? Or... Can you hear me?

Adrienne Dillahunt: [\(42:47\)](#)

Yes, I can hear you.

Janice Walthour: [\(42:48\)](#)

Okay.

Adrienne Dillahunt: [\(42:49\)](#)

We take it, um, when- whenever you're ready.

Janice Walthour: [\(42:52\)](#)

Okay.

Bea Ellis: [\(42:52\)](#)

(laughs)

Janice Walthour: [\(42:53\)](#)

So let's take the picture and then I have one final statement.

Adrienne Dillahunt: [\(42:57\)](#)

All right.

Janice Walthour: [\(42:59\)](#)

Adrienne, we all need to stop our, stop our Zoo- Zoom?

Adrienne Dillahunt: [\(43:02\)](#)

Is that- do you want everybody in the picture?

Janice Walthour: [\(43:04\)](#)

Uh, just Ms. Ellis.

Adrienne Dillahunt: [\(43:06\)](#)

Oh. Okay.

Janice Walthour: [\(43:07\)](#)

We can have a group picture, but I especially want to get a picture of her.

Adrienne Dillahunt: [\(43:11\)](#)

And did you want to stop the recording?

Janice Walthour: [\(43:13\)](#)

Okay. So, we'll stop the recording then we'll take the picture. So, just a final statement. Um, Mrs. Ellis?

Bea Ellis: [\(43:20\)](#)

Yes?

Janice Walthour: [\(43:22\)](#)

African American woman, teacher and citizens, we thank you so much for your monumental contributions to the history and development of St. Mary's County. Your devotion to your family and to the education of the children of St. Mary's County are now documented as part of the history of the county in this oral history interview. This concludes our interview and we will take pictures.

Bea Ellis: [\(43:52\)](#)

Well, thank you so much.

Janice Walthour: [\(43:54\)](#)

You are so welcome.

Bea Ellis: [\(43:58\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Adrienne (daughter): [\(43:58\)](#)

Mom, she's taking pictures.

Bea Ellis: [\(43:58\)](#)

Hmm?

Janice Walthour: [\(43:59\)](#)

She's gonna take some pictures.

Bea Ellis: [\(44:02\)](#)

[crosstalk 00:44:02] Gonna take the picture? Yeah.

Adrienne (daughter): [\(44:02\)](#)

Smile.

Bea Ellis: [\(44:04\)](#)

Yeah.

Adrienne (daughter): ([44:04](#))

Smile.

Bea Ellis: ([44:04](#))

Now?