

UNIFIED COMMITTEE FOR AFRO-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS
Oral History Documentation Project

JOSEPH MASON CURTIS

April 9, 1997

Interviewed by Brenda Coates
at Ms. Coates home in Lexington Park Maryland

Logged by unknown

A verbatim transcript is available

Original format is cassette tape

1 hour, 0 minutes, 15 seconds

Audio CD 1 of 1

Track 01

0:00 Introduction

0:30 Location of residences

3:56 Father was a sharecropper and the mother a housewife; they had 11 children.
When younger the boys caught and sold crabs for \$2 per dozen to make money.

Track 02

6:12 Born & raised Catholic, attended church in Medley's Neck

Track 03

10:10 Home remedies; Epsom salt, kerosene & sugar

14:00 Games/ chores – The family was given most of their clothes and games by the
Sharecroppers. Kids carried water from a mile away at Sharecropper's house.
Caught water from the roof when it rained.

Track 04

15:50 School; Left school at 6th grade to help raise the others. Attended 1-room
schoolhouse in Medley's Neck (Auline Hayward) was his teacher, Banneker for 1
year (walked 3 miles to catch the bus) and Jarboesville.

Track 05

19:55 Aspirations = business owner/ Talked to brother Vincent about going into a business

22:10 As teenagers parents didn't approve of them going many places; attended church festivals. Tricked father into taking them out when he went to play cards.

Track 06

23:56 Went out on own at 17, bought car at 20, worked construction (water boy) for \$70 per week.

Track 07

27:57 Courtship/ marriage: Met wife (Betty) at work (laundry at Navy Exchange), dated girl from up-county who could only go out on week-ends and Betty who had to attend church on week-ends. Richard Portee (disc jockey) mentioned this fact on the radio, married at 23, changed religions and attended Methodist church in Scotland (wife's church). Married Caroline (2nd wife) at Bethesda Church, jumped over broom at ceremony.

Track 08

34:45 Religion/ reasons for conversion: Methodist (Mr. Kent) visited other churches and also had a singing group (Methodist Men) that he joined (liked to sing). Bought personal van to transport church members when visiting other churches.

39:20 Life in general: struggled with his business – made a success because believed that if you are nice to people, you can make it.
In business for 32 years.

Track 09

39:48 Race relations – knows he could not have made it in business without the white community

40:56 Are people different now? Children say anything and everything now. Driving school bus and dealing with the kids language and attitudes.

43:11 Natives vs. newcomers

Track 10

45:43 Changes in county because of Navy Base etc./ Reasons people want to live in this county

48:30 Loves to travel, but not on airplane

Track 11

50:13 Family worked tobacco all year, sold it and may make a profit of \$40

52:08 Locations of businesses/ offer made by Mac's Used Cars (\$7000) to back out of buying present location/ building apartments.

Track 12

56:40 Biographical data