

UNIFIED COMMITTEE FOR AFRO-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS
Oral History Documentation Project

Georgia Marie Barnes Milburn

September 26, 1996

Interviewed by Brenda Coates

At her home on St. George Island Maryland

Transcribed by Bob Lewis on December 13, 2001

Logged by Tania Jordon on December 12, 2007

Original format is one cassette tape

51 minutes, 58 seconds

Audio CD 1 of 1

Track 01

0:00 Introduction

0:32 She was born on St. Georges Island. Her house was located “on the left side going up.” They had a home that was located across from Evan’s Seafood that was washed away in the 1933 flood.

1:35 Times were good when she was growing up. “It was cheap times, you could go to the store and pay \$0.05 for sugar, corn meal, floor, and molasses were also cheap.” As they got older they would crab and fish for food. There was always plenty to eat. They had a garden and raised hogs and chickens. They lived mainly off their land. During the fall her father would go to the mill and buy floor or corn meal by the barrel and lard by the can. This would last most of the winter.

3:33 Her father was a waterman and a caretaker of a home on Piney Point Beach and the Odell home for many years until they died.

Track 02

3:57 What is your earliest memory? She remembers the 1933 flood.

4:40 She got along well with her brothers and sisters. “We’d better had cuz mama and daddy would have killed us.” They would roll tires, jump rope, play tag, and ball. They would roll up some old socks to make a ball and a stick was the bat.

5:40 She attended a church that was on the island, but they always belonged to St. Luke’s in Piney Point. She doesn’t remember the name of the church on the island. They were not able to get off the island during the flood. Her family

(including herself, Uncle Oscar, mother, father, grandmother, and Rudolph) waded to the church and stayed there for about three weeks after the flood. The water was chest high on the adults. Her father carried Rudolph and her Uncle Oscar carried her on their shoulders. Different people bought them food after the flood. This church was integrated.

Track 03

8:12 They were not able to get off the island because the bridge washed away. Her family home was washed away. All the land on the other side of the road was about the amount of land that is currently equal to what is left now. The other side had been eroding before the storm. The flood took the remaining land away. Before the storm there were houses on the other side of the island and a farm that grew corn.

10:10 The rocks that stopped the erosion were installed about 10 years ago. She can only remember leaving the island one other time since the flood of 1933. The water came to the chimney.

Track 04

12:12 When she was growing up she attended St. Luke's but now attends St. Georges Catholic Church in Valley Lee.

12:47 Did you take family trips as a child? They always would take boat trips in the summertime. They would catch an oyster boat (boats that would buy oysters from the waterman and carry them to other locations) from Swan's and go to Virginia.

14:00 Senior Citizens were cared for in the homes.

14:20 Health: Their family doctors were, Dr. Brown and Dr. Lynch, they made house calls. Her mother used home remedies such onion syrup and mutton talor on their chest for colds. She doesn't recall any medical facilities.

15:40 They went to church functions and camp meetings as a child. Her favorite thing to do was eat.

Track 05

16:16 What chores did you have as a child? Wash dishes and chopping wood for the stove. She started catching crabs and fish at 8 or 9 years old. They would catch these to eat. If they had extra seafood, they would sell it.

17:20 How did your parents discipline you? Parents treated her fine. She came from a loving family. If they did something wrong, her parents would whip her butts.

Worse whippings were for talking back. “You’d better not talk back or they’d knock you mouth off”.

- 18:10 Her parents always treating them nicely and gave them a place to stay. They didn’t have time to play games with them because her parents always worked. They lived with her grandmother.

Track 06

- 19:12 Tell me about your formal Schooling? She went to Piney Point Elementary, which was located at the site of St. Luke’s Church Hall. They walked to school. After Piney Point they attended Valley Lee School House #1. They would walk to Swan’s to catch the bus for the Valley Lee School. After a couple of years, the bus would pick them up on St. George’s Island. She went to Piney Point from 1st to 3rd and to Valley Lee from 4th to the 7th grade. She went to the Old Jarboesville School for high school. Piney Point Elementary was one big room from 1st to 7th grade with one teacher. There were about 45 to 50 students. Her teachers at Piney Point were, Miss Gatten and Miss Butler. Her teachers at Valley Lee were Miss Mercer and Miss Jamison.

- 23:00 What was your favorite subject in school? Reading and math.

Track 07

- 23:22 What did you dream of becoming as an adult? To become old enough to get a job and get away from home.
- 24:00 Courting: We went to Happyland and they would show movies. The movies were shown on the dance floor.
- 25:05 What kind of work have you done to support yourself? She started out “scrubbing (washing) clothes for white folks” on the island for \$0.50 to \$0.75 per day. Next she worked as a waitress for the Officers Club on the base. Then she worked at the laundry on the base. Next she did domestic work and took care of the elderly doing day work. “In those days you took any kind of work you could get.
- 27:22 How did you get to work? “In those days there was a bus you could catch at Swan’s to get to the base.” It was nice to be able to work and being able to help her parents.

Track 08

- 28:45 She met her husband (John) at Happyland Club. He was with his friend Eugene Eggerson. “We started talking and that was it. She got married August 21, 1948. She got married “because he asked me.” She got married at St. Mark’s parsonage

in Valley Lee. Only the minister and his wife were in attendance. There was no honeymoon

31:00 What was your family life like? Great with no complaints.

31:24 What part has religion played in your life? She use to sing at St. Mark's until she became Catholic. She studied to become a Catholic under Father Smith. "I go to church and that's it." Health problems have prevented her from doing a lot of things.

33:33 Did you participate in community activities? No

Track 09

33:28 How do you feel about life today? Things are so different now. The quality of life related to doctors, hospitals and nursing homes are better now. Everything else was much better when she was younger because now there are more bills to pay.

35:04 Do you think teenagers are different now then they use to be? "Oh God yes. If we did the things that teenagers do now, we would not be able to sit down."

35:57 Race relations: No comment.

36:20 Where you ever afraid of any body or any group that practiced hate? "No, we never did have any trouble."

36:40 What was segregation like? It wasn't a big issue. People went to separate schools but played together on the weekends. They never had any problems.

Track 10

37:17 City living versus country living: She never lived in the city but has visited New York, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. She does not like the city.

38:00 County people and outside people: "Yes, there is a difference because you meet some people from the outside that is very nice and some of the county people could care less about you."

38:50 Travel: She does not travel.

39:00 Patuxent Naval Base: It was a good idea because it gave more people jobs. She is not sure about the effects of the new base expansion.

40:00 "The new growth is nice but I don't like it." People live to close to each other.

40:50 What do you feel has the biggest changes in this county in your lifetime? “The base and the different housing projects.”

Track 11

41:03 What is the most valuable thing you’ve ever had? “I ain’t never had nothing that I couldn’t have done without.”

42:15 Have you done everything in life that you wanted or planned do? She never made any plans to do anything. Once she got married and started having children, it didn’t bother her. The only thing she wants to do is to be healthy and try to take care of herself and John. She would not change one thing.

43:25 The torpedo base didn’t affect them are much except that it gave local people jobs. They had to look out for torpedoes “when they went astray.” They went astray often but they were not loaded. Sometimes the torpedoes would miss the barge target and come on shore.

Harry Lundeberg used a lot of local people when they took over the land on the former torpedo base.

Track 12

45:40 Her husband worked at the as a waterman, then worked at the torpedo base and finally Patuxent Naval Base. He probably would have made a living as a waterman if the base had not opened.

47:18 Weather: During the storm of 1933 boats were sent to rescue people but they would not get in the boats because the water was so rough. They were afraid the boats would capsize.

Track 13

48:15 Biographical Data:

Georgia Marie Barnes Milburn

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DOB 8/18/1927

Place of Birth – St. George’s Island, MD

Attended Piney Point Elementary which was as the site of St. Luke’s Hall. Then she went to #1 School in Valley Lee and later to Jarboesville High School in Lexington Park.

Employment – Waitress, worked in laundry on bases, domestic work, and a geriatric aid. She retired in 1988.

Husband – John Raymond Milburn

Maternal Grandparents – MaryAnn Campbell Pierson and Sonny Pierson

Paternal Grandparents – Rosanna Barnes (doesn't remember maiden name) and John Barnes

Mother – Grace Geneva Pierson Barnes

Father – John Melvin Barnes

Siblings (+self)

Alvin Rudolph Barnes

Georgia Marie Barnes Milburn

Mary Angela Barnes Elsberry Jones

John Melvin Barnes, Jr.

Barbara Jean Barnes Hall

Children (grandchildren)

Carol Michael Milburn (Tonja, Angela, Shelly, Michael Jr.)

John Raymond Milburn, Jr. (John III and Janet)

Joseph Manning Milburn (JoJo, Chanta, Tiffany, Shawntoya and Terrance)

Grace Barnes Hendricks (Darryl and Roger)