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ORAL HISTORY DEED OF GIFT

The oral history collection of the Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project includes taped interviews with significant Baltimore-area citizens who can provide first-hand accounts of some aspect of Baltimore history which would otherwise go unrecorded. Our goal is to supplement and enhance the more conventional archival materials held by the Baltimore Region Institutional Studies Center of the University of Baltimore.

You have been asked to give an interview for this collection. A tape recording of your interview will be made by the interviewer. In some cases a verbatim transcript will be made. In every case an abstract will be made of the tape. All materials connected with your interview will be deposited with the Baltimore Region Institutional Studies Center and copies will be sent to the Maryland Historical Society. This material may be used for research, education, scholarly publications and other purposes according to the educational and historical objectives of the Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project, the Baltimore Region Institutional Studies Center and the Maryland Historical Society. Specifically, this material may be used by the Theatre Project in the preparation of dramatic presentations.

I, __________________________, have read the above and, in view of the historical and scholarly value of this information, I knowingly and voluntarily permit the Baltimore Region Institutional Studies Center, its Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project and the Maryland Historical Society the full use of this information. I hereby grant and assign all my rights of every kind whatever pertaining to this information, whether or not such rights are now known, recognized or contemplated, to the Baltimore Region Institutional Studies Center, the Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project and the Maryland Historical Society.

Date of Agreement: ____________________
Date(s) of Interview: ____________________

Acknowledgement of Maryland Historical to abide by the terms of this agreement:

Date: ____________________

Signature of Curator/Director

Signature of Interviewer/Collector

Signature of Informant Donor

847 North Howard Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
(301) 396-1515

Gloria Aull
Chairperson
W. Theodore Durr
Project Director
Ben Primer
Project Administrator

A project of the University of Baltimore and BRISC
Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project
Interview Notes

Name of Informant: Beverly Butler

General Topic of Interview(s): Education / HeadStart program

Date(s) of Interview(s): July 12, 1981

Total length of Interview(s): 45 minutes Total Number of Tapes: 1

Name of Interviewer: Brian Peterson

Circumstances of the Interview (places, others present and their relationship to the informant, etc.):

In the park (outside)

Particularly Valuable Parts of the Interview (topics discussed in greatest detail, areas of particular expertise, unique information, etc.):

problem with pre school kids

General Evaluation of the Reliability of the Informant and the Information Contained on Tape:

Very reliable

Possible Topics for Further Investigation:

?

Other Comments:
Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project

Biography Form

Name (including maiden name): Beverly F. Butler

Address: 424 W. Biddle Street, Apt. 2

No. of Years in Residence: 6 months

Own or Rent: 

Date of Birth: Aug 16, 1956

Place of Birth: Baltimore, Md

Parents:

Mother: Grace Barnes

Father: John W. Butler

NAME (including maiden name) Date of Birth Place of Birth
Grace Barnes June 29, 1930 Baltimore

DATE OF BIRTH PLACE OF BIRTH
Baptist

Religion

Mother's Place of Birth

Father's Place of Birth

Brothers and Sisters:

Edward T. Butler

Gloria Smith

Renee L. Butler

Joan L. Butler

Paula L. Butler

Schooling and/or Other Training:

Frostburg State College

Occupations:

Teacher

Dates of Birth:

Aug 24, 1953

Feb 2, 1942

Aug 29, 1957

Jan 29, 1965

Dates of Schooling:

75 - 80

Years in Occupation:

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I went into education because I like to work with children. I like to teach them new things. I like, I don't know, it feels good when you teach kids new things. It's like taking something fresh and often you start to mould it. That is how it is, you are molding this child into whatever.

I have been in the education system just a year.

I like the children, personally, I like the children. I like them as people. I like little people. They're real interesting to talk to. They are like, I don't know, they are so truthful. They're like big people. Big people know how to lie. The little ones (preschoolers are my interest) they haven't learned to lie yet. It is really neat to get all these true to life things. You can ask them questions and they will answer honestly truthful. If you ask someone, like a friend or something, they might sugar coat it or something.

I definitely think that preschool is important for the children. I think all children should have the experience of preschool. It prepares them for regular school. It is not like entertaining. When you are working with preschool it's like you play. The children learn through play. It is not like they have to be forced. "You must learn this work" It is like the only experiences that they know they learn. Say through playing a game on the peg board, they learn colors. Now the, you can tell them but you don't have to tell them, "We are doing this for you to learn your colors" you don't have to say that, you can play a game and the children naturally learn. This is the best way to learn, naturally. If you tell a child "You have to, you have to" they won't, If you let them experience and find out for themselves they will. That's what preschool is, letting the child find out for themselves and once they find out for themselves they want to know more. It is like "Oh I can do this by myself. I can learn this all by myself"
There are definite dislikes that I have. Paperwork, that's one thing. I detest paper work. Well, you have to document everything you do. Which is good, say like, ah an exple, OK, say I happen to be with a the, child one on one, individual learning and say we get into something like, we start talking about a story, well, we start talking about the story. I say, "Ah hah, that's another form of training." Then you have to write it down. But you realize, you do these little things EVERY HOUR OF THE DAY. You find yourself writing a book. Then you write things down. Every day you have to other than that writing down, you have to work with the children, then you have to document more things. Then you have to make phone calls to parents then you have to report to someone else, then you have to document all this and then it's like with all this bookwork I have to do with writing out BEFORE I work with the children it hardly gives me time to work with the children, which is what I really like to do.

I teach a class of mixed sexes and races. The size of the classes? I only have ten children, that's very adequate for me. I work for (FORDET?) that's for working parents and I have a few handicapped children in my class. That is no problem, it's a joy. I like working with handicapped children. Because it is very rewarding, more so than, say you have an average child. Somebody who picks up rather well, who able to catch on and follow directions, well as a well mannered child could. Then say you have a handicapped child who is very slow who doesn't catch on who is far behind the rest of the realm of children and they're are just like they don't know as much. So when this handicapped child learns one little step, EAT WITH A SPOON, it is like WOW! For anybody else, you know you get a child say eat with a spoon and they learn how to eat with a knife as well. So this child that you have practicing for months. Every body would take such little things
Butler

that "regular people" take for granted, "Oh we know how to tie shoes, or we know colors" and even for an average child some of these things are rather hard they have to be worked on. But for an average child to learn the color red it may take a week or what ever. For a handicapped child, it may take years to learn colors. Yeah. It depends on the handicapped and I am speaking severe handicapped. I do have severe handicapped children, I do.

Physical and mentally handicapped. I happen to have one who's, and that's another thing I don't like either. I don't like about education that they have a habit of labeling children. I have a child that is labeled, SEVERELY HANDICAPPED although in my mind this person is not severely handicapped, she's just a little slow. Severely handicapped is too harsh! Then we have a physical therapist, speech therapist, psychiatrist. We come in contact with these people constantly. They come in the centers and they work with the teachers working with the children. This is all fine. But sometimes it is like they find a case and they prognosticate, and they see the child maybe once every two weeks. And here you are constantly in contact with the child. They say THIS CHILD IS THIS. I mean the SPECIALISTS THEY SAY this child is da da da......

And you know darn well wait a minute this child......no no no this is this (and this is that and the child does this because) A BOOK HAS PROVEN! That is wrong because they label children wrong. They give them names and the child is stuck with that their whole life. Say a child has a speech problem, like a lisping right? Ok. So they are not able to talk as well as other children. Well in a sense they would be considered handicapped. When the record goes to public school in their record goes HANDICAPPED. Everywhere it is going to be handicapped. So when that child goes all through his school because he had a little problem they are considered handicapped. It is on the record. Even if the child finally overcame and is able to go to college, whatever they have been
it is kind of bad. It's rotten.

Oh, we have the best materials. We are federally funded and we constantly have money for the children. There is notheing that these children would not have. They have the best kind of educational toys and regular play toys the rooms are set up like, there is nothing that the child can't do. The child can do things that they can't do at home. The parent 'You can't play in the water' 'You can't play in the dirt, you can't get dirty, you can't have any more food' Maybe they can't have more food because there is not more food. The way our program is set up it is like, the children in my class be getting breakfast, lunch, and snacks and maybe even another snack. They eat as much as they like. If the child has six rolls and wants to have a 7th they can have a 7th. Say a child doesn't want to eat at home with there parents and they have greens on their plates or whatever and you might say to the child, "You have to eat all your food"

Here is it set up that the child doesn't have to. If they don't want to eat they don't have to. We encourage them to eat because we know some of them don't eat at home. We try to encourage them but we don't force them.

It depends on the parent, it depends on the child. Some of our children come from really hard lives. One you read the records and its on the record. I work over in a "bad" area called infront of Murphy Homes. On Argyle Avenue project high rise. Last summer there was a curfew and we are supposed to make like home visits with the parents. The police wouldn't let us make the home visits because there had been so many murders. Like two or three a week that happen that we weren't able to go over there. People were stabbed and a lot of drugs and everything over there. To give you an example of one kind of hard life, I have a three year old and he's a little slow. He is shy and regressed. He wasn't coming to school for a little while and I wondered
Butler

Well what's the matter? I called his house. I didn't get any answer on the phone. Later I got in touch with the mother and I found out that the child had witnessed someone being murdered on the elevator. Someone was shot on the elevator, and the child happened to be in the hallway of his house and the saw the whole thing and when the child came to school he was like regular. I didn't talk to him about it because I didn't want to....I didn't know how to.....I didn't want to bring it up at the time...I knew he had to talk about it because he seemed somehow more closed than he ever was and so I did a little one on one with this boy...care with him...he sat next to me at breakfast and he could hold my hand when we went out side and he told me in his own time that it had happened. He told me what happened. He didn't understand. I don't think that he even knew that the person was killed. He just said, "Ms. Butler I...there was blood on the elevator." I said, "Oh, there was?" "Yeah the man was laying down in the blood, and the blood and the blood." I mean if the adult had seen something like that it would be a shock. But the little 3 yr old person has to have that imbedded on their mind for the rest of their life. And they are only 3 yrs old. Think of how that is going to affect when the nightmares come up. He took it rather...I am glad that he was so innocent. He was one of the most innocent of the children. His mother didn't have him playing much in the project. She would take him out to church and everything but still regardless, no matter how innocent he is he still can remember that. These are the kinds of things I run into.

My parents work. All of them work. They don't have the money to send their children to school. Say they have six children and they work and they make minimum wage and they are working 40 weeks and they don't have someone to watch this child so we take them in. We watch. We take the child and we teach them. Sometimes you get them where they do work with them at home.
They are really good. We stress parent-child relations here. We try to bring the parents in for everything. Even though it is a little hard for me because mine work. It is hard for me....... They drop them off and pick them up in the afternoon. We it is funny, we see the children more than the children see them just about. Because you figure the average day for a three to five year old, you would say that hopefully they would go to bed at say 8, 9 o'clock. Although some of mine stay us to 12 and 1 o'clock because they told me about movies I couldn't see on TV because it was too late. That's true. OK the child comes in the center from 7:30 to 5:30 that's a long time. 7:30 the mother brings them in and then leaves. You figure they get home they eat their dinner and they go out for a little while. 3 hours a parent would really see their child and then on the weekend of course. they see the child........... Discipline is not really a problem for me. It depends on what you mean by discipline. If you mean how a child would.....OK....I say there are no bad children. I think there are bad children but I SAY there are no bad children. Discipline, it depend on what kind of action..... I have had no experience with children.....I guess I have it good because I get them real young and they are not that bold to say somethings to me. Although I have heard cases where some kid says just rears back and bop the teacher or something. It wasn't me so I can't talk about it. I have had them hit each other and you get them and say something. We have "Cubbies" A Cubbie is a Cubbie, little closet, not closet, where they hang their coats. You say weel you have done something go to your cubbie and think about it. You don't let them stay in the cubbie long. Children that young have no sense of time. One minute is a lifetime for them. Two minutes is death. It is like....Ahhhhhh. So you let them think about it for awhil. You never send them
Butler.

You never punish a child when you they don't know what they are being punished for. Say you hear a child say "SUGAR HONEY ICE TEA" (Shit) you can't say "GET IN THE CUBBIE AND THINK ABOUT IT" They may go home and hear it all the time. It is like "What am I in for" You always have to reiterate. You say you are not supposed to say that word in here and you know that. They think about it. You ask them why did I put you here?

Say student A hit student B in the mouth and made a tooth come out. This is an example. So you say to student A "What did you do that for?" "Because she was using my name" "I say alright get in that cubbie and think about it until you apologize." Then they get there and you let them sit there for about two and a half minutes. That's life death and everything else. They apologize and then the next thing you know they apologize. Sometimes self discipline is the best thing. I found the one thing that I detest about this age of children is that they love to tattle and I detest tattling. I mean telling on somebody so everytime they come over to me from the beginning of the year, I say, "Miss. Butler does not like tattling...if you are going to tell Miss Butler something tell her something nice. Tell me something nice." So they for get of course so you always have to reinforce. The say, "Ms. BUTLER...."

I don't want to hear a tattle...what you want to tell me. "Ms. Butler..... I got a truck for Christmass." This might have happened three years ago. So you talk about that. The only time I want to hear a tattle is when they get hurt. Say somebody got pushed down and hurt their back, then I get in on it and I say "Tell me where somebody hurt you". I found that some discipline was not the best. I used to, when they hit each other, when somebody would hit, I would say "Oh, you shouldn't have done that" then that would be that you know what I found out, I found out that It kept happening... I started looking at what the other teachers were doing. When the kids would hit somebody
can't have a child hitting back!" But you know, I have started doing it and it works and it works better than my discipline, self discipline. I can see somebody go on a limb and start to hit everybody and all of a sudden boom, somebody goes POW and I haven't had that trouble again. They know if they hurt somebody and they mean to, not an accident, somebody is running and makes a mistake and knock somebody over. That's an accident. But if they mean to, then you go right ahead and mean to and hit them back.

I think teachers are qualified to teach. Well I am a teacher. I have heard a lot of teachers, teaching is the only thing that they can do. I know of some. I think if that is their bag fine, but most people like that don't stay in teaching. You find out that in order to be a teacher you have got to like to teach. A lot of them get in the field and they don't like it so they quit teaching. If you don't like teaching you can't do it. Because you won't be any good at teaching. You ruin yourself.

But no I can't say that. I have known people who have made it all the way to the last step and then say "No I don't want it" and then just changed their field and have to go back to school for another year just to change it.

(Brian asks about sex and drugs and gets laughed at)

OK let's talk about sex and the small child. Before I got to school. My bunch be called the "Wild Bunch" they were very wild and very grown. 3 going on 25 they gave an orgy in the bathroom. What is an orgy? You take off your clothes and you do it on the floor, whatever...they hadn't got to that part. They had got to the part of the clothes off and dancing and then they were thingking that they knew what they were doing...they were about to do something. Would I lie about this? They started to and they had another teacher caught them. She read them their rights and locked them up. Nothing physical but she reared
into them and it was the last. Scared them to death. But it is funny cause the kids....there's so many things on TV that they be....TV is so full of sex and violence and the kids pick up on it. I always call the kids Bionic Ears cause it doesn't matter what it is they hear it.

That is why you have to tell the parents to be discreet around their children, what they do. They will, they children will bring in whatever is going on at home. Say they were fighting last night, and she hit him over the head with a bottle. Or he went out and smoked some reefer and then they had sex...then the kids don't say "Have sex" they say "They did it"

Some of my kids have been to rate X movies and have told me about it. Daddy took me out to the Howard X or whatever it is called a......Because this child happened not to be in school one day......when somebody is absent you have to call and find out what is up. Say Johnny is not here one day and I have to call and find out why. I call up and they say "Oh, such and such is sick"

I say "OK" and the next day comes and I say to the child "Oh You were sick Huh? "No I wasn't sick" "You weren't?" this is without the parent.

I let it rest for a while. "What did you do yesterday?" "Oh daddy took me out to a movie, we went to see 16 CHAINED UP" "You are kidding" "No!"

and then they proceed to tell me about this movie. Even though she didn't understand the finer points she got it. It shocked me. They know more things than I knew when I was 17 you know. Gosh, gosh.

There is no one on alcohol and drugs there was a child who could smoke reefer. His mother allowed him to smoke reefer. He brought on to school. And he was four years old. They told him they didn't care he was not to do that.

This one could cuss and like a sailor. He cussed the teacher out and called her all kinds of names.

While nothing from children and if they ask a question you have to use discretion on how you answer it. I mean, you don't just say, "Well you stick
Butler

"A penis in the hole and a baby is born." You find a tactful way of saying it. We don't hide anything. We don't say, "Oh no you can't look at little boys!"

In fact the bathrooms are unisex the boys and the girls so it is nothing new. Doll babies have equipment. If they have any questions they ask. You don't volunteer information...but if they ask, then you can talk about it. Say a mother is pregnant and the child wants to know. None of the children want to ask how it happened they always want to know why?"

We promote women and men on an equal basis as far as accepting challenges and things. None of the toys are stereotyped there is a kitchen section and a truck section. There is a block section and a manipulative section. There is an art section. If the girls want to play on the truck then the girls play on the trucks. If the boys want to play with the dolls and housekeeping then they do. Children should do all roles. Everyone should do all roles.

I think the children get adequate recognition for the things that they do./One thing we alway say is GIVE PRAISE all the time. If the child does the smallest things tell them and build up their self confidence.

When you talk about vandalism with small children...children 3 to 5 everything is theirs. Your pocket book is theirs. When they pick up a toy and take it home they are not stealing it, they feel it is theirs, well I play with it it must be mine. They have not learned the value of someone else's things.

As far as they are concerned. And you know with children they don't thieve or steal. Now when they get older...we've had people walk in the center and steal pocket books and in the neighborhood. BUT VANDALISM WITH THESE SMALL KID! No.

I will stay in the education system for maybe a year or two. Who knows..
Butler

I would like to go into theater. I will stay just for the hang of it now.

Advice on Education?

Well, don't get in it if you don't want it......if you don't think you can handle it. The children or whatever. If you don't like children.....being around children 20 hours of the day. Even through the work hours are 8 you put in a bout ten and you think about them the other 10 so if you don't like children don't even do it. If you don't like people, if you don't like being around people. Being in contact, if you can't take disapproval, constructive criticism don't get into education.