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**UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

ORAL HISTORY DEED OF GIFT

The University of Baltimore's Oral History Collection is comprised of taped interviews of people giving first-hand accounts of some aspect of Baltimore history which might otherwise go unrecorded.

You have been asked to give an interview. A tape recording of your interview will be made. The tapes, along with an abstract of their content and, in some cases, a verbatim transcript, will be deposited in the University of Baltimore Archives, 1420 Maryland Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21201. These materials will be made available for research by qualified scholars, for educational use, for scholarly publications, and other related purposes.

I, James A. Kane, have read the above and, in view of the historical value of this information, agree to the recording of my voice and my stories. I grant the University of Baltimore the full use of this information in all media known and unknown. I grant and assign all my rights pertaining to this information to the University of Baltimore.

Signed *

Name (print)

Address

Telephone

Date

Interviewer

James A. Kane

James ALBERT Kane

1630 E. Chase

Baltimore, Maryland 21213

410 - 675 - 3484

12/17/97

J. Madge Ford

<u>INFORMATION SHEET</u>			
Interviewer:	Talmadge Ford, III		
Project:	East Baltimore Oral History		
Date(s) of Interview:	12/17/1997	Place(s) of Interview:	1630 E. Chase St.
Number tapes:	1 (2 sides)	Length of tapes:	90 minutes

<u>INFORMANT'S BIOGRAPHICAL DATA</u>			
Name:	James Albert Kane	retired Steelworker/Businessman	
Address:	1630 E. Chase St. Baltimore, MD 21213		
Today's Date:	1997 Dec. 17	Phone number:	410-675-1484
Date of Birth:	1931 Jul. 31	Place of Birth:	

Schooling and/or Other Training:	
list	Years:
St. Francis Xavier, Mulberry & St. Paul Sts.	– 1928
PS #129, Ashland Ave. & Harford Rd. (Elmer Henderson, Ppl.)	1929-1935
Paul Lawrence Dunbar HS, Caroline & McElder Sts.	– 1941 (Feb.)
– '39 Featherweight Boxing Champion, '40 Football Team Captain; Track & Field	
– Valedictorian, Scholastic Scholarship	

Residences/Properties	
list	Years
1000 E. Broadway	1951 purchase
Madonna and Chase (commercial property – bar)	1963 purchase
	sold in 1983
also owned 36 other properties which he is currently selling	

Occupations:	
list	Years:
Pennsylvania RR, Prarieville, MD (worked 5 days)	1941
Maryland Drydock Shipyard	1941 May
Bethlehem Steel Shipyard, Sparrows Point	1941– '42 & '45–'71
U.S. Army	1943 – '45 May

– awarded Bronze Star, Purple Heart; served in Medical Corps w/10th Cav./Infantry
–training at Prayview College, Rosenberg College; Colorado State and U/Pittsburgh

Spouse:		
birth name	Catherine R. Rich	died 1993 March 5 in Baltimore
Date of Birth:	1908 Feb. 8	Place of Birth: Wilmington, NC

Children:	
list	Dates of Birth:
Joseph Robertson, Jr.	stepson

Parents		
Mother's Name:	Mary Priscilla Gough Kane	
Date of Birth:	1897 Aug. 8	Place of Birth: Jobbersville, St. Mary's County
Her Mother:	Lucy Gough	had 13 children
Date of Birth:		Place of Birth:
Her Father:	Ambrose Gough	
Date of Birth:		Place of Birth:

Father's Name:	Phillip Morton Kane	employed at Mulhn Construction Co,
Date of Birth:	1896 Sep. 21	Place of Birth: Mechanicsville, St. Mary's County
His Mother:	Delia Annette Curtis Kane	House/Farm-Wife – died 1936
Date of Birth:	1868	Place of Birth:
His Father:	James Henry Kane	Farmer/Property Owner – died 1936
Date of Birth:	1864	Place of Birth: Hermansville, St. Mary's County

Siblings:	
list	Dates of Birth:
Philip	1918 July 25
John Henry	1920 January 5
James Arthur	1921 July 31
Mary	1922 November 15
Agnes	1925 February 22
Ambrose	1926 July
Thomas	1928 January 1
Aloysius	1930 November 9
Michael	1932 October 4
Madleyn	1934 November 1
Edna	1936 December 21
Leola	1939 August

INTRODUCTION

Mr. James A. Kane at the time of this oral history was in the process of selling off his holdings to enjoy what time he had left with family. He has lost five of his siblings, but he still has six (6) brothers and sisters left and a host of nieces, nephews and countless grand-nieces and nephews. Mr. Kane will continue to enjoy what he likes to do: going to Mass, traveling vicariously through his television, and making people laugh. Mr. Kane was born in Historic East Baltimore where he has lived all his life except for the time he spent in the military. That is where he will spend his remaining years. Mr. Kane is an avid member of St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, has been a member all of his life. Mr. Kane is a well respected and honored man in his community and a great support of his family and friends. Mr. Kane attended several institutions of higher learning, and though he did not receive a degree, he possesses a wealth of knowledge.

After this interview I can say that I've met a new friend. He is a very funny, very soft spoken, and very intelligent man. There was no preexisting relationship between Mr. Kane and I, but I plan to stay in contact with Mr. Kane. He gave me his trust, invited me into his home and trusted me to be the person that I represented myself to be. At this day and age in Baltimore and in this country it's hard to trust people, especially for the elderly. The week of the interview in Baltimore City alone, there were three home invasions against the elderly. I think Mr. Kane is a Champion amongst men.

INTERVIEW

Talmadge: Mr. Kane, could you tell me your parents' place of birth, starting with your mother?

Mr. Kane: My mother was born in Jobbersville, Maryland in St. Mary's County. I believe it was August of 1897, and my father was born in a place also St. Mary's County but it was called Mechnicsville and that was in September 21, 1896.

Talmadge: Mr. Kane, you know what year your parents came to Baltimore?

Mr. Kane: My father came to Baltimore I think, I think when they got married in 1917. that was ah the year they got married, in 1917 up to

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St. Peter's Xavier that a Catholic Church on Freemount Avenue and Edmondson Avenue's. That were they got married, October I think it was, in October of 1917.

Talmadge: How many of your parents' children were born in Baltimore?

Mr. Kane: All twelve children was born in Baltimore City, starting with my oldest brother July 25, 1918; and then the next child was ah John, John Henry, it was an January 5, 1920; the next one was my self, James, July 21, 1921; the next one was my sister Mary ah November 15, 1922; the next was Agnes Emma Kane, she was born February, I don't know exactly, I think it was ah 1925; and I had a brother name Ambrose, he was born 1926; the next one was Thomas Mertant, he was born 1928; the next one was Aloysius, he was born October of 1930; the next one was Michael Ralph, he was born, I think it was October 1932; the next one was Madelyn ah Madelyn, she was born in 1934 November, and next one was edna Martina, she was born in December of 1936; the last child was Leona, she was born, I think it was either August or something, not quite sure of 1939. That was the last of the twelve children.

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Talmadge: What school did you attend while living in Baltimore?

Mr. Kane: I started to school at St. Francis Xavier Catholic School, and it was tutored by the the Sisters from Maryland Avenue. I think I started there in 1928, that was located at Mulbury and St. Paul Streets, ah. We weren't there very long because the fact that ah the city had some projections and ah the school had to be torn down and make way for the viaduct, or something like that, although those projections was always years ahead, and then ah we had to vacate then

The four oldest children, we had to go to public schools, and that's when I went to 129 at Ashland Avenue and Harford Road. The Principal there was Mr. Elmer Henderson. And then from there I went to Dunbar at Caroline and ah Caroline and Elder Street. It had portables and all like that out there and ah I stayed there until I finished high school in 1941 in February.

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Talmadge: OK, you finished high school in 1941?

Mr. Kane: February 1941

Talmadge: OK Mr. Kane I would like to go back a little bit because I missed your birth date. I know I'm recording this but I'm trying to take notes also.

Mr. Kane: July 31, 1921

Talmadge: I was involved in getting all your brothers and sisters and missed your birthday.

Mr. Kane: You missed the main man ha ha.

Talmadge: OK Mr. Kane, after your graduated from Dunbar in 1941, how old were you sir?

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Mr. Kane: I was nineteen

Talmadge: nineteen?

Mr. Kane: yes sir

Talmadge: I would like to know a little bit about East Baltimore at that time? What was the environment like? Were there blacks and whites living in the same communities? Were they segregated? Things like that.

Mr. Kane: Well, life back then, well, we had the segregation. Because when we were living ah McDonough and Chase Streets and we lived in the 1000 block, but it was a school an elementary school it was predominantly white, in fact all white. But we could not attend, as was through out the city. Although you had some of these schools that were in colored neighborhood, you had to travel through other areas out side where you lived in order to get a real education. Then, as your neighborhood changed and then it became predominantly black, which it was never integrated

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Talmadge: there were Schools in the African American Community, but African Americans were not allowed to attend?

Mr. Kane: Right! you could pass by there, but you couldn't stop in there brother.

Talmadge: OK you mean that your like stores and other things were also segregated?

Mr. Kane: But the neighborhood stores, you know ah ah, they were permissible you know just like you have now these corner stores. But you take these ah. . . I can't venture outside the neighborhood and just about. You take for instance down town places like Hutzler's, ah May Company some of the other big stores, Hoschild Kohn's understand, they were some of the segregated. But don't quote me entirely

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because during that time, you know, we had ah you had people, I forget how many thousands of black people, would cross over the line. And you couldn't tell because they had the features, they had the hair, they had the eyes. That's all they excepted, you know, they had all the features.

Talmadge: OK you're saying that there were African American that could pass for white?

Mr. Kane: Yeah man, yeah

Talmadge: They passed for white so they lived in white neighborhoods instead of living in black neighborhoods?

Mr. Kane: yeah, yeah, yes sir, yeah, yeah. A little later, Ebony did ah some stats on 'em. I forget how many thousands and thousands of em had cross the line. Yeah.

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Talmadge: I would say, I shouldn't say this - I should be questioning you, but at this time I would suspect in the 20's, 30's or whatever, they had white features because they were just coming out of slavery.

Mr. Kane: Somebody was fooling around down them houses.

Talmadge: ha ha ha ha

Mr. Kane: ha ha ha ha

Talmadge: They weren't coming out right

Mr. Kane: I'm telling you now

Talmadge: OK so growing up in this neighborhood basically all your life what did you do for fun? To say when you were 10, 12, or 15. What was what did you do for fun?

Mr. Kane: Well, tell you the truth, you go back awhile there, the kids back then use to make there own little skate boxes you know then we

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had the little arah clothes hangers and they would bend them (sling shot) so you take a little hook off. . .a wagon, not all the spokes, and the kid would push the thing, you could wheel it around you know. Let's see what else, they had that scooter, well most all your. . .was made primarily out of wood and your old skates would get worn out. You would separate them - put one on the front and one on the back - a piece of two-by-four, you know, and some of the kids would get some these skids with ah the revolving wheels or turn, you know, and they would make wagons and stuff out of it like that. You and your friend had toys.

Talmadge: uh-ha, uh-ha. You created you own toys.

Mr. Kane: That's right, but every once in a while some kid in the neighborhood that parents could afford, you know, just like other kid, you know. All that it was restricted to live in colored neighborhood but that don't deny them some of the things, you know, that was advertised in the paper, ah like the little wagon, 'specially at Christmas and the bicycle and what not. And their stuff was comparable to some of the other kid, regardless of color.

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When we were over on, we were in the 1900 block of Biddle Street, and there use to be little interracial softball games, you looked forward to that back in the late 20'S and middle 30's. We lived in a place called Carlyle Place, but a little later they changedIt to Ellsworth Street and those, and these white teenagers and some, learned that. . .and some would come up in the neighborhood and compete in softball and there wasn't no friction there or anything, you know then we would play. And then the railroad bought that property and then we moved on North Biddle Street and ah over on the south side, the 1900 block, which have a school there now, and ah there was a lot right across the street from there and they would come over there. In the 1800 block there was a few white homes dwellers in the 1800 block that was Clifton Avenue and ah. . .Chesapeake but there was never no fights or anything like that, you know. And another thing they use to do back then was to take an old stocking and stuff it real tight and put. . .some of those things was so compact man they would serve as, serve as a softball you

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would buy from a store.

Talmadge: Ah! That's an Idea. Kids today aren't that creative I don't think.

Mr. Kane: Yes indeedy, yeah man! They would knock the devil out of that thing.

Talmadge: Now when I first meet you, you talked about Urban Renewal. And how many times over the years your family had to move because of 'Urban Renewal?

Mr. Kane: Actually we all, we moved, we didn't. Probably was what happened in the 30's there was a gentleman, he was ah Czech ah extraction, named Mr. Hadlin he had – back in those days, mmm, you use to deliver your milk by the wagon, you know, a little horse goes click-a-dee clock, you know, you can tell – and people would leave notes in the milk bottles, you know, they could exchange, you know

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(telephone rings, he'll get it - that' one of my nephews) and they would exchange bottles and ah every thing and ah. So he had this house at ah 1032 MacDonough an he asked my father and my mother did they want to buy it? It was only \$450 dollars and they paid it right through the building loan up on Madison and ah, Madison and Carlton, which was called Slavic, Slavic Bohemian Building Association. Then we never had to move on the account of Urban Renewal what not. We've been in this area all our lives for the past, close, you know, , .Preston and Broadivay. We've been in this neighborhood all our lives just about.

Talmadge: So Mr. Kane after high school what did you do?

Mr. Kane: When I finished high school, I came out of ah, I came out of high school and I went to work on the Pennsylvania Railroad, I worked on the railroad for five days. I use to work up a place called Prarieville, that up where Havre-de-Grace – it was Prarieville on one side, Havre-de-Grace on the other – that was for the Pennsylvania Railroad

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and I took off one day I said “be dog-gon !f I’m going to hang around this railroad. I was a young man then, man, my back wouldn’t take it and it had some of them old guys up there you know man them guys man could bend over and tap that stuff all day long and so I took off and went down to the shipyard and I got hire around Drydock and stayed there until May, ah ‘til May ’41, and I went down to the Point and ah I gave a gentleman, a friend of mine, five dollars. That how I got the job at Bethlehem Steel and I stayed there for thirty years (including the time I spent in the service) and thirty years from the day I was employed retired exactly thirty years later.

Talmadge: I don’t have the pleasure; OK, you were employed at Sparrows point from 1941 to 1971?

Mr. Kane: aha

Talmadge: what year did you go into the military?

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Mr. Kane: Oh let me see, I got my papers in 1942 December, December of 1942 in January I went to Fort Meade, in 1943, then I went from there to a place called Fort Clark, Texas, that’s the Second Cavalry Division. That’s when Joe Lewis and Jackie Robinson was at Fort Reily, Kansas. See they were in the Ninth Cavalry Division. I was in the Tenth Cavalry, but the Second Cavalry Division, and there was a place called Sparkle, and there is a history behind that. Fort Clark, Texas, I seen it on television a couple of times and it was a little rough down there, not a little, it was rough! Because of the fact that you had a lot of the officers were from the south and I recall one incident we had a group of Engineers, young fellows out of Michigan State, and they hadn’, hadn’ been use to being handled like that. And after retreat they were given these heavy chains, see you wasn’t, you wasn’t suppose to to enter these struggles that was in the Second Calvary Division. Fort Clark, Texas 1943 we were with. . .*(tape skips)* you go back a little further in history when I think Crownsville, Texas. You know there was always something going on but I was surprised that those boys wasn’t going to take that, but kicking. I stayed there a while then they

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looked on my records and seen that I was eligible for army specialized training now, for O.C.S., Officer Candidate School. Your IQ had to be 110 or over for army specialized training, your IQ had to be 115 or over, plus you had to be 22 or under, ahha, that would make eligible. And in that program they had Engineering, Psychology, oh they had foreign languages or what not. That's why you had a lot of these fellows from the University of Notre Dame, Michigan, from all over the country, there were aver 140 some thing thousand of us in school plus they had the Naval B12 program which was similar to the Army Specialized Training.

So what happened in March of 1944, we're taking classes and these ladies started raising a lot of sand "why can't our husband. . . got all these in various colleges, colleges and universities," so they broke up the programs. I didn't do anything but go to school for nine months that was my service. Where they had that big flood about four or five months ago, I was in college up there, but I was just taking refresher courses in chemistry, history, math, and something else, I forget what else. Anyway, I just missed this full back, big

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John Mosley, he was all conference full back, I had just missed him by three weeks. But it's a funny thing when you in service back there during that time there were only three colored families in that town. I could go anywhere in that town that I wanted but the Mexican people was discriminated against and had menial jobs and stuff like that. Theaters, you know was restricted, but you will be surprised what goes on.

Talmadge: In the little community no one was allowed to mingle ‘

Mr. Kane: yes that's right then when I went on maneuvers and ahm. . .So after they broke up the outfit I was shipped to maneuvers in Louisiana. I was down Camp Polk, Shreveport, and down there were a little rough too. You see the boys, they wouldn't half feed the boys, but you've got all types of guys in the service boy! Them boys know what to do with apiece of pork if he was on four legs ha ha ha.

Talmadge: When you were in college and transferring to different bases, how did you stay in contact with your family in East Baltimore?

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Mr. Kane: Just by mail. My allotment, I wasn't married or anything you know that, just the only one that I wrote to was my mother. The first time I've ever been away from home and I'm not afraid to admit I cried when I was in Texas. My mother you know. . .her education was limited.

Talmadge: your time in the military, when did you get out? When did you get out of the military?

Mr. Kane: Well, what happened after we got off maneuvers they raised so much sand, that's when they broke up the that 98th and 93rd. See they were the "Black Helmets." They raised so much sand that they broke that outfit up, they said you'll get them xoxoxo. "Get them out" said the General. You know that's the reason why some of those fellows went Boodersville. The 24th, they shipped them to the South Pacific. So we came on back to Fort Wytopa. We never got a chance to get up on the old post, that's were Geronimo was held

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captive, I hung around awhile. So the first chance I had to return home was August of 1944. So when I went back I knew that I was going overseas. I spent 26 days on the water going over but. . .

Its a sad situation. I came through the Streights of Mencena, we go around on the other side of the boot of Italy, and that's where I first observed how people suffered during the war and ah ah generally the black people or black folk has always been very generous and they always had a can of something and they would throw it to the people and they would seem so appreciative I felt like this: I didn't want to get to know war and that's what I told people. I was sucked up in it.

Twenty or Twenty-six days on the water I met a fellow who was a Lieutenant who was with 366 outfit coming out of Fort Devon, Massachusetts, Lieutenant Spike Bollen. And I heard this name called, that was in November of 1944 was on our way going up to reliever, and I heard and we exchanged greetings. Until that night I did not know it was him and I didn't see him anymore for a couple of years after that. . . Lieutenant Spike Bollen. . . then that outfit that I was in, the 92nd. . . I seen this Colonel Walker I don't know what happened to him. . . 'e was the last person that I injected you know.

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I was a Medic the war cause I didn't want to hurt anyone. I didn't want to carry or fool with a gun. I didn't want to hurt nobody. I didn't want to do anything but we got caught in Shigellae Canal, that was in the Afro. . .the weather broke on us man. Them Germans put something on us. They were some beautiful fighters man. The 99th out of Tuske'e, ah man they some flying rascals. Some of the boys were in the same outfit that washed out of Tuske'e because they couldn't make it, but man, the guys were flying. They were coming out of North Africa. It was a black outfit, it was an all black outfit. My older brother, he was overseas way before I was, and my second oldest brother. The three oldest boys, were were over there together, but we never seen each other.

Talmadge: You all were in different places?

Mr. Kane: I had a beautiful time over there. I seen, I've been through some, I've been threw the Catacombs, hell, the Coliseum all that kind of

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stuff. Been to the Leaning Tower of Pisa, 'scribe my name and what not. Had a beautiful time over there. Been there three times but the last time ha, that was the time I stepped on that devilish mine.

I was going to get this fellow, I never will forget his name, Sergeant Thomas. No, I didn't know this fellow's name. Sergeant Thomas was the one that happened' three months before, that he had got, a sniper had got him right through the helmet. . .when you carry metal packs, you carry them on you sides with two hooks. So I crawled up between his legs with these heavy combat boots and I was trying to move him. He was to heavy for me to push, that was April the 5th, that was the last allout push 1945, there was no turning back, 5 minutes after 7 and I went over to see. I heard a guy calling "Medic." Good thing I did because I don't remember anything after that. Three days later I was in a Field Hospital. My leg was gone.

Talmadge: you were in the military until the war ended in 1945? When did you come back to the states?

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Mr. Kane: I came back in May. It took me nine days coming back. I came back on this big cruise ship West Point, twin screw, we had amputees, we had every thing on there,

Talmadge: Was that a medical ship?

Mr. Kane: It was a converted cruise ship. They flew you to Casablanca if you were to serious and you boarded. The war ended in Europe but not in Japan.

Talmadge: when you returned to Baltimore what did you do?

Mr. Xane: I laid around here for a while and then I returned to work at Sparrows Point in 1946.

Talmadge: Mr. Kane, you stayed there until retirement?

Mr. Kane: I retired in May of 1971

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Talmadge: Mr. Kane, when did you get married?

Mr. Kane: I got married May 30, 1951. I was 29 and she was 43 she was 13 years my senior she had been a widow for sixteen years.

Talmadge: I'm smiling because that May 30th, rings a bell because that's my parents anniversary.

Mr. Kane: My wife's name was Kathleen, Kathleen R. Rich from Wilmington, North Carolina, she attended the same high school that the basketball player went to, Michael Jordan.

Talmadge: your wife is not around is she, excuse me, what year did she die.

Mr. Kane: She died ahm, let me see, on March the 5th, 1993, a month after her 85th Birthday.

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Talmadge: So Mr. Kane, you married and bought a home on Broadway Street in 1951 ,you are still there?

Mr. Kane: Still there in a matter of speaking. All may bills come there taxes, phone bill, gas and electric.

Talmadge: When you moved into the block, how were you received? You said that were a handful of African Americans in the block.

Mr. Kane: All right, now across the street they had a lot of doctors and nurses. Down the street there were students that went to Hopkins . . .