

Interviewee: **Clara M. Thomas**  
Interviewers: **Ernest Demby, Julie Hawkins-Ennis, Linda Moore-Garoute, Noah Waters, Ryan Craun**  
Date of Interview: **January 15, 2020**  
Location of Interview: **Eagle Harbor Community Center, Eagle Harbor, MD**  
List of Acronyms: **CT=Clara Thomas, ED=Ernest Demby, JE=Julie Hawkins Ennis, LG=Linda Moore-Garoute, NW=Noah Waters, RC=Ryan Craun**

[Begin Transcript: 00:20]

ED: Can we start by stating your name, please?

CT: Clara May Thomas.

ED: Ms. Thomas, thank you for doing this interview. I appreciate it.

CT: You're welcome.

ED: I guess our first pressing question be, how long have you've been in Aquasco area?

CT: 20 years.

ED: Is your family from here?

CT: No. We are from Malcom.

ED: Okay. Do you have any children?

CT: I had seven, now I only have six. One of my baby died. She was 49.

ED: I am sorry to hear that. Were your children from this area?

CT: Yes, Malcom.

ED: Ok

CT: Charles County.

ED: Do you have any other relatives in this area?

CT: Only on, in the Aquasco area but not right here.

ED: Okay. Does your whole family been centered here, or?

CT: We were born and raised here, right here in Malcom.

ED: Okay. What was your earliest childhood memory?

CT: Well, I got burned when I was three years old but I don't remember it. I was only a baby so I don't remember it, and I know I was in the hospital for three years so I only got to go to school late. But I finally

made and graduated from High School.

ED: Where did you got to High School?

CT: Pomonkey.

ED: Okay. How was that experience for you?

CT: It was hard but at least we could ride the bus. Because until we got to the High School we had to walk to school.

ED: Was it a long walk?

CT: It was a long walk. It was two and a half miles.

ED: Wow. Wow. All year long?

CT: Yes.

JE: And Pomonkey, wasn't that the all Black High School at that time?

CT: Yes, yes.

ED: Where did you end up going from High School?

CT: I went to work for some folks in Aquasco. And then when I left there I was old enough to get a job, so I went to the hospital. It was a hospital where only two blacks was there in the whole hospital and the rest was for caucasian or whoever. And then I worked there until I got to be 17 and then I went in to, well I went to Indian Head and I worked there for two years and was transferred to St. Elizabeth and I worked there in the forensic for 22 years and I was able to retire there.

ED: Do you remember new times, what was the popular things? What was everybody into at that time?

CT: I never had no whole lot of socialization because we worked on a farm and that's what we had to do. It was nine of us and that's what we had to do, work.

ED: What was that like? What was that life like?

CT: It was hard, but it was fun. We all loved each other and we still sticks right together.

ED: Are a lot of those lesson still there from the farm?

CT: Farming is hard, but it was good.

ED: Was your family religious?

CT: Yes

ED: Catholics?

CT: Catholics

ED: Still Catholic?

CT: Yes.

ED: Do you go to church around here?

CT: St. Dominic's right up the road.

ED: Okay. How long have you been going there?

CT: 64 years.

ED: Okay.

CT: Well, longer than that because I am 82 so, all my life.

ED: Do you have any memories that stick with you from around here that just, brings you a lot of joy or just somethings that sticks out of your mind?

CT: Yes! Right here it's, I didn't want to come down here in the first place because, it was, for me, because I was still on the farm and it was beautiful. They and all my children got their homes there, and I wanted to stay there. It was the curves and the roads. It was scary. And then after I got down here and started meeting the people and coming here to the meetings, it's good. I aint gonna never leave here.

ED: That's a theme in all interviews we've had. There's a very strong sense of a community around here.

CT: It is. And the board they all, they really look out for all of us that live here too. They really are here for us and they are doing a great job here.

ED: That's good. What would you like to see happening in Aquasco in the future? What do you think would you like to stay the way it is?

CT: To clean it up for one thing, there's a lot of cleaning to be to put stuff away. And my house is just like that too. I can't talk about to anybody because this garage got tools everywhere. But other that if they could just clean up the old cars and things sitting around, you know, make it look better.

ED: What about the preservation of these homes that are still around here? There's a lot history around here, you think that investment should be made in preserving that...?

CT: Yes, I think they need a lot of work. Yes, and they're working on it.

ED: Yes, we are. Is there anything you think you would like to say that means something to you?

CT: Well, I guess I appreciate the people here because it's all like a family. They have nice little outings and it's just nice.

ED: That's good. Do you have any questions?

JE: At St. Dominic's, did you all do any type of family days like picnics?

CT: We do but we have to do it at St. Michael's because we don't have a hall.

RC: What are some of the family surnames that have been around in this area? Can you just list some of the friends and family that you come to enjoy being around in this area? Just so we can, like a sense of who has been with you?

CT: Okay, I didn't know the ones that been dead for a while. But I do remember the Paten's, they were really good. Cause she's dead, he's dead, but the daughter is still here, she's on the board and she's good. And of course, Mr. Waters, he's really good. I have little bit of sight in this eye and he will drive for me before he go to some places at night.

ED: That's kind.

JE: Now the farm that you have mentioned that you grew up from, was that in Eagle Harbor or was that in Malcom?

CT: no, In Malcom.

JE: And Malcom was around five miles from here?

CT: Five miles.

JE: I noticed a lot of people came from the Malcom area down to Eagle Harbor so they really weren't that far away and settle here. Why did you settle here in Eagle Harbor?

CT: My husband forced me to. But I'm happy now. But I wanted to just stay there where all of my children can build right there on the farm. It was 41 acres there and it was all built so I was happy there.

ED: That'd be hard to leave.

NW: So what would you like to see to be developed in the town? Do you have an idea how you would like to see the town maybe grow or not grow?

CT: I would like to see it grow and I could say it looks tacky down here. They are trying to fix it up people got to work with them too and get their own places fixed then and put some plants and flowers.

NW: Would you like to see this to have more like parties and the town events that we have a facility here, that we can do here, instead of travelling?

CT: Yes, that would be nice.

RC: What is the name of that venue that artists would come to? Wilmer's park. Did you have any events that you go to Wilmar's Park?

CT: I heard about it, but we never did get to go. My father he didn't play, we had to work.

ED: Speaking of work, did you have a main responsibility on the farm? Was there something like your thing that you are good at?

CT: Milk the cows, feeding the chickens, the pigs. Just all of the farm work.

ED: Getting up early in the morning?

CT: Yes sir.

ED: What time did you used to wake up?

CT: By six o'clock. And I still wake up at six o'clock in the morning.

JE: Do you know anything about the Methodist Church? A history on it and all?

CT: No, I don't. I have a lot of paperwork but I don't know anything about it.

ED: Was there anything that was here that isn't here anymore that you would like to see? That you wish that were still here?

CT: That little place at the front. Mr. Davis place.

ED: That's a store, I was told.

CT: It was a store.

ED: How long ago did that stopped going?

CT: It was down when I came down, that was 20 years ago.

ED: Sounds like that it will be a convenient thing for you to have. Like a little shop to walk to.

CT: Yes. Lunch meat or something

RC: Do you know what happened to it?

CT: No, I don't know.

ED: We were speaking with another person from the area. She'll probably be back in a little bit, but she was saying the same thing. She would love to see that store up and running again. So it makes me believe that it was probably a hub for around here or somewhere that everybody went.

CT: Yes, it used to be. And the other place was over Cedar Haven though. It was a bar.

NW: Do you think it was a good activity for public school events or maybe children coming down and having activities on the water and running about pretty much on the Patuxent river and wildlife.

CT: Yes, all that would be very nice. But you just got to have somebody that's going to do it and you just going

to be somebody down here that's already down here. Like you with the keys.

ED: Just creating your own job.

RC: Do you recall the powerplant being put right here?

CT: No. I just know it does change about three times.

ED: Change ownership.

CT: Yes. I just see the names come up.

NW: I remember talking to you last night about sometimes I walked outside, and it smells like there's a dry cleaner, I guess it's the chemical they use. You mentioned that how it caused you have to clean the Vinyl of the home.

CT: I have to get it power washed.

ED: How often do you have to do that?

CT: I get my son and daughter to do it, but he do it about twice a year.

ED: Okay.

CT: Matter of fact I need it now.

NW: And I have another question. So considering this is Prince George's County and the area, do you think this is one of the safest areas? How do you feel regarding your safety?

CT: Yes, and I want that to keep to myself too. It's very quiet down here and thank God because really the police don't get down here too fast.

RC: Do you remember any stories that your parents would tell you about their past and growing up and being around here?

CT: I never knew them to come down here.

RC: Not necessarily Eagle Harbor but just near area too.

CT: I could say nothing but farming. My mother died when she was 39 and my father was an alcoholic so we didn't do talking of what he did.

ED: Just working?

CT: Just work.

JE: Did your mother come from the area as well?

CT: Yes.

JE: From Malcom?

CT: Well, she was born in Hughesville, but, which is just a little ways away.

NW: Did any of the people, like older people talking about anything from slavery as far as people being running away or troubled?

CT: No. Only a little bit in school and that's all.

NW: So, what was mentioned in school?

CT: They really didn't talk about a whole lot, you had a book you had to read.

NW: Okay, the history book. Because there seems to be an idea that Aquasco area is different and that maybe there were slave relationship with the slave owner, that it was different maybe from other areas because it was not a lot of history coming about as far as people being whipped. And usually, when you watched movies about slavery, the whippings and the beatings and all like that and this area we have gotten a lot of information passed down about that type of event occurred.

CT: I didn't see any of that in the iPad. I think that was in the Solomons. That was down on Solomons island. But I don't know anything about that I just read that there's tobacco plantation.

JE: Are you familiar of any of the names of American history around here?

CT: No.

RC: When you are growing up, did you have any neighbor friends or anything?

CT: Just cousins. In Malcom everybody was just cousins.

RC: Anybody particular you get along with the past?

CT: Yes, the Turner's. They were first cousins and we could walk that far.

RC: They went to school with you and all that?

CT: Yes.

NW: What would you say to young people today regarding the town because in the meetings the involvement is usually older crowd. What would you say about young people and involvement, especially young people who have family who own property in the town but they're absent. What would you speak towards them?

CT: I think it would be nice if they did come down and check it down and fix it up or do what they got to do with it. It's gonna be theirs anyway in the long run. But how do you get young people to do?

NW: So what do you think the town could do to attract young people?

CT: I'm not sure on that one, unless you got a lot of loud music and stuff.

ED: That's the problem. It seems like attracting younger crowd you need something that this town-  
(Interrupted)

CT: If you had the bar they'd be ride on up in here.

ED: Do you think that maybe young people isn't the answer but just mature people that understand the value of what this area is like and appreciate it enough to, like you said clean it up.

CT: Yes, exactly. That's where the children come from the parents.

ED: Right. I feel like everyone we have interviewed wants this are to be respected. It doesn't seem like they're looking for entertainment for someone from outside. They just it respected and treated the way it should be treated.

CT: Right.

ED: I understand.

NW: As someone like yourself who lives here in the town, what do you think residents like myself, you know, what can I do to help to make the town better? What can I do? What is needed?

CT: Don't make me say you could get on the board. You're a sheriff anyhow, so get on.

ED: I agree with you though.

RC: It's a good answer. How did you meet your husband? Did you meet him on this area?

CT: Bryantown. It was a church picnic and my father did take us to the church picnics and that's how I met him.

ED: Was that everybody from this area going to the picnics or was it just like the attendees of that church.

CT: Well, the church was in Bryantown where he lived. That was 64 years ago.

RC: How did he win you over? Do you remember?

CT: I was trying to get out the farm and I guess. He's strong, good looking man, and he accepted me so I was okay.

JE: So you said you came down to this area to Eagle Harbor because of your husband, did you husband like to fish? Was that his thing?

CT: No. The mayor there at that time, she had talked to him and kept talking to him, she had him down here. And he just liked the place, so he kept bugging me until I said okay.

ED: I don't have any more questions unless anyone else?

CT: I think that was Mrs. Coleman.



ED: Mrs. Coleman?

CT: She lived in that little purple house over there.

ED: Okay.

JE: Mrs. Thomas, you have a son named Joe Thomas? He plays base or sings?

CT: Yes.

JE: He just joined our band last Sunday and I just realized you're his mother. His excellent.

CT: I got good guy. I'm with my children and I'm very proud with all of my children.

JE: But I was saying it was such a small world. It was like we kind of travel in the same circles because he was saying told me he was from here and it didn't dawn on me until Noah said it. And I said as small as this town is he might be related.

CT: Well, you got a good one.

JE: He's excellent.

CT: Thank you.

JE: I'm trying to get him down here, but I guess I don't need him now that you came.

CT: He works hard all the time too.

ED: I'm out of questions, anybody else?

CT: Okay.

ED: Thank you so much for doing this.

CT: Alright, thank you.

ED: Hope we didn't put you under too much stress.

[End Transcript: 22:51]

