

Interviewee: **Delegate Susie Proctor**
Interviewers: **Ernest Demby, Julie Hawkins Ennis, Noah Waters, Ryan Craun**
Date of Interview: **January 29, 2020**
Location of Interview: **Eagle Harbor Community Center, Eagle Harbor, MD**
List of Acronyms: **DP=Delegate Susie Proctor, ED=Ernest Demby, JE=Julie Hawkins Ennis
NW=Noah Waters, RC=Ryan Craun**

[Begin Transcription: 00:35]

JE: How are you, Delegate Proctor?

DP: I'm fine today, thank you.

JE: First of all I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with us. We truly appreciate it.

DP: You're welcome.

JE: As I have told you, this interview is about the history of Aquasco. Just pretty much give your memories of it or any history of it. Those information will be archived and can pass on the next generation about Aquasco area. Will start with the hardest question, what is your name?

DP: Susie Proctor

JE: And you are a Delegate of Prince George's County.

DP: Yes, this is my fifth session as a Delegate here in Annapolis

JE: Can you tell me your parents name and are you from Aquasco area?

DP: I'm from Cedarville which is probably 10 miles from Aquasco. I went to school on my elementary days at Cedarville but, my Junior Year was in Aquasco. We had Westwood Junior High, it was two rooms and a basement. All of the children from Aquasco came to Westwood for Seventh Grade and some of them are from Cedarville. I was part of a section of Cedarville that went to Westwood Junior High. My children today have a hard time believing that when I went to school at Westwood is there were no bathrooms and we didn't have indoor bathrooms until I went to Douglas High School and they think that happened 200 hundred years ago. But it was a experience that I will never forget. And at one point, we had a neighbor who retired from the school system and she listed that she attended Westwood Junior High and our Public School Administrator told her that there were no such school. So you see – what an impression we made on the area. Of course, transportation was a big issue. Many of the people including students from Cedarville had a very long ride to get to the school. So that was quite deterrent when it came to after school activities or any programs with the parents or students. We had teachers who came from the districts and many of whom really didn't understand the fact that some of our students would be absent for several weeks because they would stay home and help on the farms. And so making a living and helping on a farm was the most important thing so they would miss two or three weeks out of school and of course the teachers who are not been used to that would become very upset.

JE: From many of the people we have spoken to, they do mentioned "farm like" living and that seemed to be a big thing in Aquasco. Tobacco – is that the same thing that the kids did that you are speaking of?

DP: Mainly tobacco but, many of them farmed produced large gardens. So they sold produce to the area and that was a good source of having some extra. The fact we didn't have transportation was such a deterrent. Kids would have gone maybe to County Upper Marlboro to seek jobs or whatever. Couldn't do that because they didn't have transportation.

JE: Which explains why a lot of the families stayed in that area so isolated. What is the memory that you have of Aquasco and Eagle Harbor? Did you travel at Eagle Harbor at all?

DP: Eagle Harbor and Cedar Haven. They are side by side. You know what our limitations then. So basically if we wanted to go to a waterfront, that's where we would go and we could just play in the water there. Of course there were no safety issues so you had to be very careful because you didn't know where any rocks or holes or anything of that sort. Eagle Harbor at that time was a little out of our line if you will at some points. Because they didn't want everybody in Eagle Harbor so we were more on Cedar Haven.

JE: So Cedar Haven was more of a resort area where everybody went?

DP: More of a public area. So Eagle Harbor was more of a private area if you will. They did all the riprap.

JE: Okay. Now we understand.

DP: There was a little store between Eagle Harbor and Cedar Haven, so that's where we would go for our snacks. And sometimes they have a little entertainment in the evening. So Eagle Harbor and Cedar Haven especially when it's really hot (nobody had air-conditioning), we would end up there because that's a place to go and at least be cool for a while.

ED: We were told about a place where lot of musicians going there?

DP: I think you are thinking more up the road in Brandywine in Wilmar's Park?

ED: Wilmar's Park, yes. Do you remember any of that?

DP: Sure.

ED: Did you catch any shows?

DP: Yes. On stage and off stage. I had the opportunity to meet *Fats Domino* and [Lou Wall]. It's a jam and that's the only way you could... And there were no limitations. It wasn't like to got to stop to a clock or any of that. As long as everybody is having a good time and the band is with us...

ED: That's all you need.

DP: Yes, that's all we need. And the neighbors would get up set but we only did it once in a while.

JE: How about Aquasco Speedway?

DP: I don't have a lot of experience with Aquasco Speedway although I had lot of cousins who go there to speed and my brother used to do that. In fact, my mother encouraged them to do that so he would stay off the high-way speeding. But, we still have clubs – there is a *Corvette* Club and they still use the Aquasco Speedway at that time. But they also use the cars to let us be in parades, so it has like a dual purpose. But

these folks are very protective of their cars. I was in one of the Corvettes for parade and I said to the guy “who drives the car besides you and your wife?” he says “I only drive the car” I was like “okay”.

ED: Very protective, I understand.

DP: What stand out to you the most about that area? What makes meaningful to you?

DP: Wonderful people. People who in many cases had extremely limited resources but made the most of things. It as automatic sharing. I can see my grandfather they would dig up potatoes and cut them and save them for the winter. And so he would have three bushels for himself and another for a neighbor. You didn't even have to ask, they knew that that neighbor need it so they automatically give.

ED: That's like a running theme. In all of our interviews it seems like they are limited with they have but they did have each other. And it really shows people to this day that unity and love for each other. That's a really nice thing.

JE: Because I grew up in the area and I didn't realize it until people started talking about how close we were. I used to visit and told before by my father told me it was normal to me that when people **talk about this or that was** kind of special in that area.

DP: Yes. We of course going back to the resources and the condition, so we had to make our own entertainment. We had lots of house parties which I tell my children that's something that they will never experience and I'm sorry about that because we had a good time. We set up card games and all the board games – just made our own entertainment.

JE: What are some of the family names in that area?

DP: In addition to Proctor you have Sevoigh. One of my best friend, she's deceased now is named Katherine Sevoigh. Eaststep was one of the names I remember, of course we know we have Johnson's. Sim's, Scout... I can't remember others. I know that Eagle Harbor there were many family names from Washington DC. I understand our current Mayor's family was one of her family is one of the founders.

JE: Yes, Mayor Bowser.

DE: I think Eagle Harbor is really starting to grow at this point. And I just can't imagine that waterfronts are not making enough waterfronts. I'm wondering how long we'll be able to be as unique as we are. That somebody would step in and change the landscape if you will.

ED: That's my next question to you. What would you like to see happen around the area?

DP: I would like to see the infrastructure improved. I would like to see them get to a point that the families were they can actually have maybe some retail so you don't have to...

ED: Go out so far.

DP: Yes. And, I'm sure you probably if that started to happen would make changes in your requirements for how you maintain your property and things of that sort. But one thing we need to do is to really preserve the history. I think the Judge that spoke at the dinner... Federal Judge... I can't remember but I see him all the time.

JE: I see his face.

DP: But anyway, I think he was saying... I can't remember how many of course at that point we were "colored" beaches. I think he named myrtle beach, George Town, all these places...

JE: Sparrow...

DP: Yes. So Eagle Harbor is one of the only... I think he only said two waterfronts that were owned by African-Americans that are still owned by African-Americans. So I think that just tells us how urgent it is to try to hang on to the history.

JE: Exactly why we're doing this today.

DP: That's great.

JE: Do you know any of the "slave" history or have you heard anything specific about that area? Or you've been Native American in that area?

DP: Sure.... Native American. But going back to the "slave" part, I don't know about slaves but I do know that there were families where you felt like you had unspoken rules that you didn't go beyond or they would be consequences. At that time, the same people owned the banks, the law enforcement and everything. So if the folks at the banks... Brandywine Bank knew you and gave you the go see of approval, you could go in and and borrow money and make transactions. But if for whatever reason that they didn't want you to have it, you had no recourse. And it was as if there was nowhere to go. It's like at this point you can come to your delegates, your representatives and others. My husband ran in 1986 and at that point he was the first person that wasn't White male to ran for that area. And there have been no effort at that point. I don't if I can still find things to show you but it was like the 27th District. There was effort to help people understand what that meant. So when we did literature, we had the 27th is Aquasco, Baton, Brandywine so people would know that. It's growing right now so fast that it's easy to kind of forget were so many of us come from if you will.

ED: Experiencing things like that – is that what pushed you towards politics?

DP: Yes. The biggest thing was we were both educators. And people here in Annapolis were just really destroying up pension system – our retirement system. So my husband and Ulysses Curry that just passed, Senator Benson and Delicate Howard who just retired, they all decide that they need to have some educators now and try to look out for teachers. So that was the biggest pushed.

ED: That's fantastic. That's the main thing if you asked me is. Being educated and having know – that's what pushes things for and many strong people's objective. It's good to have people educated. If tough things fall apart you know better.

DP: Initially people were very hesitant to get involved because they didn't know what consequences might be.

JE: I think there's a fear factor.

DP: Yes. They actually got the word to us that they will going to get my husband's job. So we put everything that we had at my name because we say "we're just going forward". So if this happens... And it was all a joke. We were trying to run a campaign on a Christmas card list, we're out to sell lemonade trying to make money.

Reverent Turner, his son still lives in the area. He came to house one day, of course we had no money, so we're on a backyard with a piece of 5x8 ply board painting his name of it, and Reverent Turner took of his jacket and just right got down with us and started to help to paint. So many of those stories that we will never forget.

ED: That's noxious kind of approved me that way. When you have to, when you need to volunteer.

DP: There's a building at the University now, named after my husband. His was Vice Chairperson of Appropriations. He never forgot the support he got at Bowie. This is before the beltway so he was working on NIH, coming back to Bowie at our family. And they did all kinds of little things that made it possible for him to complete his education and he never forgot that. So on Appropriations and he forth for Bowie.

ED: That's fantastic. That is legacy – it gets to keep going. We never forget people like that, put foot for that kind of sacrifice. That's a good thing. I like that, sorry to say but I like that.

JE: Is there anything that you would like to say about Aquasco and where you think it should go from here?

DP: We're on February 29th at 1pm, there would be a ribbon cutting of the recreation center that is on Missouri Avenue. My husband work for that about 10 years ago before he passed. And the big thing now is getting transportation from Aquasco and the surrounding areas. One of the things that happened of 3-81, there's a big gravel pit with water and three children died there. So many of our children know to swim. So I just can't think that will have these fabulous building with fabulous swimming pool and not have a way of getting everybody who wants to come to the building. So that's my next dream. It's how do we get some transportation from that area. Not just for the Recreation Center, but there's a Medical Center and if we could get folks like to... stop and ride, that opens up a whole new world. So that's what I would like to see.

ED: That is fantastic. I don't have any more question.

JE: Thank you. We really appreciate you taking the time to do this again.

DP: You're welcome and I appreciate. Thank you for what you are doing.

JE: Thank you.

[End Transcription: 21:39]