

Interviewee: Antinette Beane

Interviewer: C.L. Bohannon

Transcriber: Andrew Sterling

CB: Where and when were you born?

AB: I was born in Minnick, North Dakota, on August 24, 1965. My dad was in the Army – I mean the Air Force and, of course, I was an Air Force brat.

CB: Did you have anyone else in your family in the military?

AB: No, not that I know of, just my dad.

CB: Did he fight in any wars?

AB: He didn't. He didn't fight in any wars, he mainly played basketball (laughing). He played basketball and we traveled. We traveled to Europe and lived there for about 2 years. Um, we went to England then we came back to the states and back to Roanoke, which was his hometown and my mom's hometown.

CB: How long have you lived in Roanoke?

AB: Since I was about 2 and never moved away – Been here all, well, most of my life.

CB: What streets and neighborhoods did you live in?

AB: OK. We started off in Roanoke City right on Cove Road but then my mom and my dad split up and we moved to the County and we were on 419 and I went to Green Valley Elementary and then we moved back to Roanoke City as I got older for middle school and high school. William Murphy (??) Middle School and then I went to William Fleming to graduate.

CB: Tell me about your parents and brothers and sisters.

AB: Well, OK, I will start with my dad first. My dad was John W. Brown and again he was an Air Force man and he was a tall man with a gentle spirit. When he got out of the Air Force, he worked for Norfolk Southern as (pause) I guess he was a trains men that would couple up – there was not any black engineers at that time so what he did I guess he was a brakes man or something like that. They would have to couple up the trains and so forth or whatever they did. And then after he left the railroad, he had a lot of businesses. My daddy like (laughing) he liked to, uh, he was the entrepreneur. I would put it that way. He worked for Church's Chicken, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Chickasee. I'm not sure if you have heard of that. But anyway, he ended up owning his own place and it was called Omirs (??) Restaurant and Lounge, so -

CB: Where was that located?

AB: That was on Melrose, a very hot spot and he would take care of pretty much everybody in there. They could go in and would not have to worry about problems even though it was in kind of a rough area.

CB: How long did he own that?

AB: (laughing) He owned it until he could not do it anymore. His health would not allow him to be around smoke and stuff. So its only been about 5 years since he has given it up. Oh yeah, my dad (laughing) he, uh, he's a good spirit. Now my mom – My mom (pause) is a trooper. My mother, um, wow, my mom after well, hmm (pauses and starts tearing up) Anyway – (pauses again)

CB: Take as much time as you need.

AB: (Pause continues) My mom, um, she took care of us. She had 3 girls, myself being the middle child, my sister being the oldest and then another little girl and when my mom and my dad separated or got a divorce, she held the fort down. She could only see out of one eye and, um, she made, she made it. She got a job at Norfolk Southern as a clerk and typist and she stayed there for 20 something years until she retired. Yeah and uh, she had been through a lot. Quite a bit, but she was a strong, strong soldier. And let's see (laughing) anyway – What was the other question about my siblings?

CB: Brothers or sisters or extended family nearby?

AB: Well, yeah, I have some people that are dear to me that helped raise me – Um, when my mom and dad split. Um, my Aunt Louise Bolling, which was a lady over at Gainsboro Library, yep, she was the assistant librarian there for years. I think she retired in like '85.

CB: What was her name again?

AB: Louise Bolling and, um, they helped raise us. Whatever my mom could not do, they filled in the spots. 'Cause she was my great-aunt, but she was more like my second mother. Um, her name was Louise Bolling. Her husband worked for the railroad. His name was W. A. Bolling and he was a porter, hmm, and uh, they lived at 1201 Staunton Avenue, and it was a big family there, five families there. We did not live there but it was like 5 brothers and sisters that lived there.

CB: Were they from Roanoke originally or - ?

AB: They were from Welch, West Virginia, and, um, then they moved here and that was their family home. My granddaddy lived there too and he had a hog business and worked for the railroad. So we come from a railroad family. Um, I remember them killing hogs about this time and they would have sausage, ham, all the good stuff (laughing) everything was pretty much homemade, you know. We had the finest of foods. We did not have a lot of money but we had pretty much everything we needed, everything we needed. Um, that was the 1201 Staunton, and, like I said, she was the library assistant at Gainsboro Library. A lot of people don't mention her because she was the head, but she was there for many years. That's the only library I used to go to. The only library we were allowed to go to was Gainsboro. She was there for many years and, uh, so, that's that on that, but like I said, they filled in when my mom couldn't or my dad couldn't.

CB: Describe your house.

AB: (laughing) My current house now?

CB: Growing up, houses that you remember spending time in.

AB: Um, well, then my mom kept a clean house, very clean. Um, like I said, we did not have a lot but she made sure it was very clean. Now, um, a lot of times, I remember my aunt's house, my Aunt Louise's houses and to me that was a little bit more stable as far as – I'm not sure if it was because there were so many people there or what but I got some of my fondest memories from my Aunt Louise's house.

CB: Is the house still there?

AB: Its still there – 1201 Staunton Avenue and, um, she was like the glue that held all the family together.

CB: Did they have a garden or anything?

AB: Oh yeah! They had a garden. They had grape vines. We had homemade jelly, applesauce, everything. Right here on Staunton.

CB: What type of vegetables did they grow?

AB: Cucumbers, green beans, collards, pretty much everything. Even sage that I have learned we used in our sausages and, um, in our turkey dressing and stuff like that. They would even make apple butter, mmmm. Homemade rolls pretty much everything. Chow Chow everything so we had good eating. (laughing)

CB: What kind of activities did you participate in as a child through your adult age in Roanoke?

AB: Well, what I would do, uh, I started off working a little bit. I started at about 12 cleaning houses and stuff with my aunts and stuff like that. But then, once I got to high school, I was a little bit more active in school so I ran track. I was a flag girl. Oh, I was in pageants. I would do little pageants and stuff. I was in charm school, uh, Charles W. Day's wife ran a charm school. And what she did was, she would try to get us together and she wanted us to know how to carry yourself when you would go places, how to walk, talk, and stuff like that and she would do a fashion show and sometimes she would do a pageant.

CB: Where was the charm school located?

AB: Actually, it started out at the Y out there on, uh, down by Gainsboro. Yep, that particular Y. Mm mmm. I can't think of her first name but she started that. Then I did some modeling for Jasmine's Models and that was done by Harry Alexander. Mm mm. Located right here in Roanoke.

CB: You talked a little bit about this but, could you tell me more about the work that your family did?

AB: Well, we had a lot of people with the railroad. It was Northern Western at first. The, it changed to Northern Southern and, uh, we had porters. We had train men – I think that was all we had back then. Then we had some entrepreneurs like my dad and umm the library work and that's pretty much it from what I know. And also my husband works at Norfolk Southern and he is an engineer and he is from Roanoke.

CB: Where was he born?

AB: Right here in Roanoke and uh, yeah, now his family is from out there in Cave Springs – Beane Electric. They have been in business for a very long time. He comes from a family of electricians and, umm, even though he does not have his license, he does work. He can pretty much do whatever.

CB: Talk a bit more about your school life.

AB: Uh, as far as, well -

CB: You talked some about where you attended school -

AB: I went to school in my early years at Green Valley which is out in the County, Roanoke County. And it was majority white and it was like two people, me and this other little boy, Benny Beane, and I married a Beane, that's weird (lauging). It was me and him all the way out until I moved and, uh, the people were really – I did not have any bad experiences and the schools were nice and, um, but I do remember it being all white pretty much except for us two. So, then we moved to the city and it was a little different for me. It was different.

CB: Which school was that again?

AB: Well, I went to elementary then we moved and went to Fairview and I just was not used to it. I had a a different transition. It was different but, uh, I did OK. I wanted to go back (laughing) and, uh, you could tell the difference in the schooling. In the County, we had longer days. We had longer days. We had more periods. I mean it looked more structured. When I got over to the city school, it was just totally different and, um, so by the time I got to junior high, middle school, I did pretty well but you could tell. If I had stayed in the County, I think I would have done a little better when I went to college.

CB: Did you walk to school? How did you get there?

AB: Yeah, we walked – we walked (laughing). Well, in the County, we did not walk because it was too far. But in the city, my mom had to be at work at a certain time, so we walked to school and back from school. There was all kinds of stuff going on (chuckles). We walked to school in the mornings. Someone would get in a fight or – Oh gosh, I remember this time we were walking home from school and this guy let his Doberman Pinscher out on us. Yep, I will never forget it. We ran. I, you know, this could not have been too long ago. He let his dog out on us to chase us. It was awful.

CB: Where in the city did this take place?

AB: This was in Northwest. It was a white guy. It was a group of them in a car. They let the dog out of the car to chase us. We were no bigger than that high I mean. Over near Shenandoah, they let that Doberman Pinscher out to chase us down. Yep, I will never forget it. But anyway -

CB: When did this happen?

AB: It would have to have been 1970, yep, 1970. I will never forget that. Other than that – that was enough. We just walked to school and back from school. But, other than playing amongst ourselves, someone might get into an argument or -

CB: Were you ever allowed to stay home from school?

AB: Umm mmm (laughing) No indeed. You would have to be so sick in order for that. But I like going to school. I didn't not want to not go to school. We were pretty healthy. So, umm mmm.

CB: How much schooling did you complete?

AB: I completed all the way up to 12th grade and 2 years at Virginia Western. I did not finish my last years. I did not get a degree should I say and, um, I went to Anthem and I stayed there for 15 years thinking that was going to be my last job (laughing). But anyway, we mature and grow, but umm, yeah, I was at Anthem for 15 years.

CB: Did anyone in your family attend college?

AB: Yes. My mom attended business school and she came out with a degree.

CB: Where did she get her degree?

AB: Uh, mm, OIC something that used to be here a long time ago Business College. I know she went to OIC but I don't know if it was a different business college. I don't know but she does have a degree. My dad does not have a degree. Um, my aunt, she did not have a degree. She had tuberculosis. She had to be in one of those iron lung things. Nope, not too many people that have a degree in my family. Now, on my husband's side, they have a lot of educators and people who have their degrees, umm mmm, the Beanes.

CB: Can you describe your home life?

AB: In the past or present?

CB: Do you remember

AB: (laughing)

CB: What events do you remember or experiences that you remember when your family was together?

AB: Mmm. For the most part, I remember me and my sister watching the Silvers on TV. I don't know if you remember them. They were a band group with these big afros. I remember getting _____. We lived in Northwest City then. I remember (pause) – Wow, for the most part I remember being happy. We were poor though. I look back now. We were really poor but I guess it did not take much. I remember when we got an Atari game and it would beep and beep – Pong! I remember us having that and we thought it was the best thing ever. Oh, we played that game. We had the little walking and talking dolls that were really tall like 5 feet tall and they used to sing all the songs from around the world, yep. Um, so we lived a pretty good childhood.

CB: Do you remember any community gatherings or anything that stood out?

AB: I do. I remember May Pole event when they would wrap the ribbon. Oh, it was beautiful. That was right down here at the Y.

CB: Can you talk a bit more about the May Pole?

AB: All I remember was the ribbons and how beautiful everybody was. It was like a social event and my mom took us down there for that.

CB: Was this an annual event?

AB: It must have been. It must have been. My sister was in it. Her name was Anita Powell and she got to walk up stage. They had made her this pretty satin gown and it was a big deal. I was not old enough but I do remember it quite vividly. It was beautiful.

CB: What other community gatherings or events do you remember besides the May event?

AB: Um, not too many. I remember – I don't know if this was my aunt taking us to Joe Muncies (???). This was a family owned grocery market and it would be right down the hill from Hill Street and we would go up there just about every other Saturday or whatever. To get our groceries and she would talk to you and they would find out all of the news (laughing) about everybody in the grocery store and, yeah, they would call her Mrs. Bee and, um, she would find out most of the information right there. I know I was not supposed to be listening but, uh, she would find out a lot of stuff there. I really don't remember too many main events. We did not go a lot of places. My mom did not drive for one thing. My dad did. My mom did not drive until after she – She had actually bought her a car and had her job but did not know how to drive. She was determined that she was going to drive 'cause we used to walk a lot of places.

CB: Tell me about – Did you guys go to the hair dresser or - ?

AB: No. Oh no. I wish we did. (laughing) They would get us in there on Saturday. We go 2 weeks and you would be in the kitchen with the hot comb. I've got my grandma's to this day. They would wash it and grease it and stuff. There was no such thing as a blow dryer 'cause they would do each little piece and they would straighten your hair and that was an all day job 'cause my momma had 3 girls.

CB: And you all had 2 week cycles?

AB: Yep. Every 2 weeks so we did not go to the hairdresser. That's when we got to high school, we may have went in middle school. I think that's when the perm came out. Hallelujah. (laughing) Be glad you are a guy. (laughing)

CB: What about community stores?

AB: Munsons is the one I remember.

CB: Where was that located again?

AB: It was like over near Hill Street, umm, I know they changed. Its a lot different now. It was near the Gainsboro area and I remember that store being very important because on Saturday you would make the market and people would go in there and get their groceries and you would just see everybody there. You know and I remember them wrapping our meat up in this butcher paper and, um, I just remember it being old timey, very old timey and, uh, with a good feeling. Its closed down now. I don't know if there are any other stores.

CB: What chores did you have to do around the house?

AB: Well, um, she split the chores between me and my oldest sister because my little sister was not old enough. So, she would take a week of kitchen and I would take a week of bathroom and vacuuming. Whoever got the kitchen, they mainly stuck to the kitchen. The other person would do the vacuuming and the bathrooms and you best have them done before she got home from work. This was every day, every day. So the house was spotless and then as we got older, we would have to make sure dinner was fixed. So, she would let us know what we needed to do as far as having dinner, you know, what was expected. What would be like – she would have the meat laid out or whatever. So we knew how to cook at an early age and I'm glad for that. Sometimes, I meet people and they don't know how to cook. (laughing) I can cook. I come from a long family of cooks. My daddy can cook. My mom can cook and both of her parents could cook very well.

CB: Do you have dishes or recipes that have been passed down?

AB: Well I say, umm, I make very good green beans, macaroni and cheese, stuffed celery, a nice ham. I do pretty good. I do pretty good but I'm not going to give my recipes away. (laughing)

CB: Are there things that your mom or your grandmother cooked that have been passed down or things that you still cook today?

AB: Um, (pause) yes, my mom makes a roast with Lipton Onion Soup Mix with and she would put that on there with some cream of mushroom and its different. Its really good and its one of the ones I still use. Now my dad is a really good chicken fryer and he tells me the best, well not, but I do it too, but the best way to do chicken is to make sure you clean it. The cleaning process is what makes the chicken taste better and seasoning before you flour it and making sure your grease is hot and all that wonderful stuff. Nothing really serious but just the basic stuff, so -

CB: What were the family stories that were passed down from one generation to another?

AB: Well, I don't know of any from the war. My dad did not go to war and he was the only one who went into the service. It was him and another brother, but the brother died of a heart attack. He _____ his name was Charles Jr. So, he was the only one who went into the service but did not go to war. As far as stories being passed down, well, I don't really know. There probably are some, I just cant think of it. Um, just know that my aunt from West Virginia, Elizabeth Wells (??), her and her husband Harrison were married and they were originally from here but they – We have land out in Starkey to

this day, 60 acres. She used to have her own shop and used to cook. It was like a (pause) a place where you had beer, a bar, like my dad but she was a 6 pack Annie. She would shoot you. (laughing) She was short. She was so short that when the ATM came out, she could not see over to get her money out. Really short. They called her shorty. She had a fuse about yay short. She would shoot you more than talk to you. Her and Harrison, her husband Harrison – He loved her and um, she never remarried after he died. He is buried out there on Starkey and Starkey is right now here on Cave Springs and um, like I said, he is buried out there but, um - Now she used to make a mean macaroni and cheese, and cobbler. So, that's some stuff that was passed down.

CB: What is your fondest childhood memory?

AB: My fondest childhood memory. Wow. I think one of my my favorite holidays is when I got a bike.

CB: When was that?

AB: Oh, um, probably in the '70s. It was purple and it had a white basket and the little things. I rode it in the house and knocked the Christmas tree over but I was so happy. That was one of my fondest memories was having a bicycle.

CB: Did you guys ride around the neighborhood?

AB: Yeah. Oh, you did not ride too far away. So our parents were like I am today and a lot of other people need to be. “We are responsible for you. I need to see you and be in calling distance.”, so, you know. My mom was kind of strict but I can see why now. That probably saved us and her a lot of heartache.

CB: Did you guys have a lot of friends over?

AB: No. (laughing) No, they could come over if she was there and she would ask them, “Who are you?” and “What are your parents' names?”. She felt out who came over and when they left, she would either say they could come back or they can't, so -

CB: What kind of work have you done throughout your life?

AB: I started at Anthem in the mail room actually. Then I got a license to sell. Then I was in telemarketing and I would sell individual coverage for person under a group plan. Then, I moved up to underwriting and we, uh, look at the applications, review it and the, um, the medical part of it, underwrite it up front so we could get information from doctors to determine whether or not you would be approved for insurance. And, uh, no I am here, um. I left because my mom got kind of ill. Well, she is still ill but I could not do all of that. When you are underwriting, you got to be on it because the rules and regulations and so forth. And yes, they have the law where you can take the FMLA or whatever but my husband said I could come home but I went back to work. I missed working. And I like having my own money. (chuckles) I like to have my own money. I'm just used to that.

CB: Describe cultural events that happened in Roanoke.

AB: Wow. Who was it that that came? P-Funk George Clinton. Yes!! I went to see him, well, the group went to see MC Hammer. I went to see, oh gosh, what's the guys name? Lionel Richie. Wow. Doug E. Fresh, Prince, well that is before he (laughing) and that is about it. We had a ball.

CB: What about movies or dances?

AB: I tell my first dance. I was a late bloomer. I was in high school and I was a junior. That's when I first went on my first date. (laughing) Junior year – Scared to death but, yep, that was my first date as a junior. It was at William Fleming and I think – But, uh, yeah, that's when I started being a social butterfly.

CB: Who were some of your strong community leaders?

AB: Wow. That I remember and not that I knew so much about them, but I just admired them from a distance. Noel C. Taylor. I admired them from a distance. I would see them as representing us in the community. Uh, Reverend Burton.

CB: Where did he serve as reverend?

AB: Sweet Union which is my home church. I belonged there first. Let me see. (pause) I knew the Claytors a little bit for one because they were my doctors and they went way, way back.

CB: In Roanoke?

AB: Yep, in Roanoke, right here in Gainsboro. Everything was right here. Noel C. Taylor was a mayor. Oh, wow. They named a school after him. I guess he lived in the '90s until he passed. He did have a church. That's about it.

CB: Who were your role models?

AB: Of course my mom and my dad, my Aunt Louise Bolling and I have another Aunt Norma Jean Houston who was the daughter of Louise Bolling and she did get a degree from Howard University. I think that was her first and only job. She retired from there at Howard. That was her only child too. I kind of looked up to her and I also looked up to a lady, Carla Lewis. She just retired from Gainsboro and, of course, my mom and grandmother on my mom's side. Even though she did not have a lot of education, she was a hard worker and she taught us a lot of things to do and to not to do. She used to clean up for the people over here off in Old Southwest. She used to do day work and even though she did not have a high school education, whatever, she could make something out of nothing. I mean she could wash stuff and iron stuff. She made her own starch – Argo starch out of the box and she used to mix it up or whatever. She could cook fish. She was just a grandma. She could, um – they don't make 'em like that anymore. She would clean up after these people and they loved her. They treated her more, the kids would treat her more like, they would come to her, my grandma, before they would to their own parents. Dr. Hefner is the doctor she worked for in Southwest Roanoke and she would clean their house everyday and they loved my grandma and she would keep those clothes clean, keep those kids clean and it was just amazing. She said that when she was, I don't know, she birth or something like that. It was a bit much but she did some wonderful things.

CB: How has Roanoke changed over the years?

AB: Well, its changing but its a slow change. Like I remember we could not go to any of the libraries except Gainsboro so that changed. As far as in the County, there are more of us living in the County. So I think, and so just like they are building this hospital, Carillion Clinic, that's a big change. We needed that. A lot of people don't want to come back here and I can't blame her. See the world, yeah, yeah.

CB: This concludes our interview. I think you for your time.

AB: Your welcome. (laughing)