

# WOMEN



AS: My grandmother's name was Mrs. Katherine Bennett. And she was a midwife.

JG: Now, what did a midwife do?

AS: Oh, she delivered babies.

JG: Do you remember any of the families that she delivered babies for?

AS: Sure.

JG: Who were they?

AS: She brought the Zabriskie children and Paxtons. Those—these are white people now, and the Stewart's children and the Handry children and the Billens. You know Alice Billens, don't you?

JG: Right.

AS: Alice Thompson. She brought those children in—

JG: And there was one other family, the Bantas?

AS: The Bantas.

JG: The Bantas also. Was she—was she being paid at the time?

AS: Some of them paid. Some of them paid and some didn't pay her at all.

JG: Some didn't pay her at all?

AS: No. Some of them couldn't afford it.

JG: Did they give her anything other than money for her help?

AS: Yes, they used to give her vegetables and things like that from the farm. She went out any time in the day or the night. One place she went to deliver the baby they had chickens in the house. [laughs]

JG: Oh, my goodness. She had to go past the chickens to get to the mother waiting for the baby, huh? [chuckles]

AS: She took the broom and got those chickens out of the house.

JG: So she cleaned up before she started to deliver the baby.

AS: She cleaned up before she delivered the baby. You know, most of the children my grandmother delivered were white.

JG: She must have been a very kind person.

AS: She was very good.

JG: When did the babies usually come? You know, babies have a funny way of arriving at the wrong time. Do you ever remember your grandmother having to leave the house at odd hours?

AS: Oh, sure. All hours. Sometimes in the night or early morning sometimes.

JG: Did the people who were expecting the babies make arrangement with your grandmother before?

AS: Yes, they did. They used to come to the house and tell my grandmother when they thought the baby would arrive. Then she had a bag all packed ready to leave. I can still see the [laughs]—

JG: Did they ever go to a doctor or was your grandmother really the doctor for them?

AS: My grandmother was a doctor for them. There was only one person that they—she had to send to the Paterson General Hospital and that was Kerry Stewart. She lived right in Dunkerhook by us. And my grandmother saw the condition Kerry was in and they got the ambulance. See, Boyds had a telephone and they called up to the hospital and sent the ambulance out. And they took Kerry to the hospital.



2002

KB: I went in [the Navy] for World War II, 1944 or '43; I guess it was '43. And I have—I was on duty in Washington. ... But I was—when I first went in the Navy I was—went to Officer Candidate School at Smith College. And I was—I graduated from there and I was [unclear]. I got the title of ensign as I graduated and I was assigned in Washington to the Bureau of Ships. And there I relieved a man of sea duty and took over his duties in the Internal Combustion Engine Division. Believe it or not, I knew how to tell people how to fix the engines after awhile. [laughter] It's great how much you can learn. And I was in that section right through the war. And a got a commendation for the work that I did. And then I went out of the service and I went back into work in a law firm. I had been working in a patent law firm previous to that. ....

So anyway, I went out of the service and when the Korean War started they were looking for people with my background. And I went back into the Navy in 1951. And I was stationed in Washington in the Office of Navy Material doing similar-type work but on a little higher level. By then I was a lieutenant. And I was a Navy representative on various boards with industry and the other branches of the service and procuring Defense items for ships and—well, really, ships in combat areas. Also, planes because—for the carriers. And I went—and then from there I was transferred to New York. And I was assistant to the officer in charge of training. And I was there until '58 when I went out of the—went off active duty and went into a Reserve unit, an Intelligence Reserve Unit. And I was head of security in that. And while I was—right after I got out of the Navy—I was a lieutenant commander when I was in New York. And then when I got out of the service I was made a commander. And I was the highest-ranking woman officer on the East Coast for quite some time. And then others were elevated. And now they go up to admiral, you know.



1994

DP: Tell me. Can you think of any events that would be notable historically in town that impressed you particularly? Things that would be—little stories, events that you participated in? Anything like that?

IZ: No, because I didn't participate in too much outside the house—the home and the ... and the church. ... That was my life, my church and my home.

Kreig

HK: ... No, I think a typical day of a young mother was we got up. We got our—if our husbands were home, we got them off to the station. Then you got your children off to school.



1994

DP: What do you remember about any town elections or any town issues that were important?

DW: ... [chuckles] The women in those days seemed to be more concerned with home and family and children and things like that than political things. Today it's marvelous because the women are into everything. I think that's great. And when I went to college at Douglass, which was one of the early, early colleges just for women, we were told how important women should be in politics and involved, not only in our families but to get out of the house.

DP: Now, what year was this that they were—

DW: That was around 1922,'23 when I first went there.

DP: For example, what were a woman's expectations? A high school girl—did—what were the expectations to a high school girl? She didn't go to college. What could she be expected to do?

...

DW: She should look for a husband or she should study nursing or something like that. There weren't the opportunities for women and, of course, now being in the art world, women artists, no matter how magnificent they were with their work, were never given big awards or allowed even in some of the galleries to show things.