

BETTY MILES

- o Resident since 1954
- o Eaton parent from 1954 to 1967
- o 70 years old

We moved here from Arlington in 1954, primarily because it reminded us of areas where we had grown up in New Jersey and New Hampshire and had the appearance of stability and family-orientation. Our street, Lowell, has kept its great mix of babies, teen-agers, college students, middle aged and elderly.

All of our four children were graduated from John Eaton. By and large mothers did not work, which meant that they were ready and available for large doses of volunteer work. Most of the responsibility for schooling fell upon the women. All of us were active in the PTA. I remember when I made an opening statement at the fall PTA meeting saying that belonging to the PTA and working in the PTA was a way of life in Cleveland Park. We counted as many as thirty women a day working at the school in various capacities. We ran the art program, began and operated the library, conducted a tutoring program, put on the Toy and Book Sale, and on cold mornings, we made cocoa for the patrol boys.... no girls on the squad in those days.

Macomb Street was the boundary line which determined where Eaton students went to junior and senior high school--north of Macomb to Deal and Wilson, south to Gordon and Western. The concentration of children at Eaton in those days lived north of Macomb on Newark, Highland Place, Porter and Ordway. Living one street south on Lowell put us in the Gordon/Western school district.

It was at Gordon that we were introduced to school integration. Gordon at that time was an open school and any child from anywhere in the city could request attendance there. This made for one of the most interesting enrollments in the city. We had marvelous black children who came across the city, sometimes on three different buses to attend Gordon. They came to get a good education. And that they did. Our children were the beneficiaries of this education with its urban mix.

So advantageous was the situation at Gordon from our point of view that a group of us teamed together to try to make Gordon and Western pilot projects in secondary education. Five of us, all former Eaton parents, instigated what became the WISE project, Washington Integrated Secondary Education. We were Liz Hill and Peggy Ives on Newark, Martha Lewis on Porter, Persis Herold on Macomb and myself.

For more than eight years we dedicated ourselves to the proposition of quality integrated secondary education. We elicited the commitment and dedication of like-minded black parents from across the city and formed the Community Coordinating Council for WISE in support of Gordon and Western and their feeder schools. We obtained \$300,000 from the School Board for the project and got George Washington University involved as a third party. The director of the project had his office on the university campus. There were moments when we were sure our experimental project would succeed and fulfill our dreams, but finally too many outside forces over which no one had control overwhelmed the project.

One of our family's prized possessions is a huge sign, "The Bells of Washington Cathedral." It was taken from the flat bed trucks that arrived with the bells for the tower. They had come into the Port of Baltimore from England, were loaded on a truck and because of their weight had to take a circuitous route to Washington after midnight. Each bell was lifted up to the tower level by a special crane brought in for the purpose. Our family will never forget that operation. We were all there before breakfast on that spring day of 1963.