City of Alexandria

Office of Historic Alexandria

Alexandria Legacies

Oral History Program

Project Name: *Alexandria Legacies – Fort Ward Oral History Project*

Title: *Maydell Casey Belk*

Date of Interview: *June 6, 1994*

Location of Interview: *Alexandria, Virginia at Maydell Casey Belk's House*

Interviewer(s): *Patricia Knock et al.*

Transcriber: *Patricia Knock*

Abstract: Mrs. Maydell Casey Belk is around sixty years old at the time of this interview. She lived at 'The Fort' (Fort Ward prior to its establishment as an historical park) for fifteen years from 1952 until 1967 before moving to her current house. Mrs. Belk describes what it was like to live there before indoor plumbing, running water, or air conditioning, and also describes how life there centered around the local church.

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INTRODUCTIONS	
Patricia Knock:	Our project is the development of the African-American neighborhood on Fort Ward in Virginia. I would like to personally thank you as an official record here, Mrs. Maydell Belk (whom I personally work with), and she was the one who just in our chitchat one day said, "I lived on Ford Ward." So, I asked Mrs. Belk if she would talk to me, and I found other really helpful people from my Baptist Church and they said that they would like to talk to us too, and that's really how this project got started. So, Mrs. Belk, would you like to introduce yourself?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yes, I'm Mrs. Maydell Belk, and I'm sixty years old.
FAMILIES LIVING ON FORT WARD	
Maydell Casey Belk:	I lived up on Fort Ward for about fifteen years, and the McKnights and another family called the Youngs (and I was telling Pat Knock) remodeled the old school into a home…
PK:	Oh, they remodeled? The original schoolhouse?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah, and…
PK:	Do you know how old this schoolhouse was?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No, I don't. But, I know my mother said she went there, the old schoolhouse.
PK:	When was your mother born?
Maydell Casey Belk:	When she died she was eighty—so it had to be 1901.
PK:	And she was a Casey?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yep, my mother was a Casey. My grandfather was Wesley Casey that worked up at the Theological Seminary…and I had an uncle named Charles Casey—he also worked up at the Theological Seminary…that was the only jobs.
PK:	Because this was a residential neighborhood?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yep. And it was the McKnights who lived in front of us. I lived in the seventh house, and then the schoolhouse that was turned over to a house, and then the graveyard was right behind that.
PK:	We looked at the schoolhouse site this summer.
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah, and now where the elementary school is—that is where Mr. Peterson owned all that land…
PK:	Where Minnie Howard is?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No…I think it's St. Stephens…
PK:	St. Stephens in back of you?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah. And he owned all that land down there and in the city. I remember the city—he wouldn't sell one end of the city. He sold it to the school, and then the school sold the land. So much land went back to the city to make the park—the Fort Ward Park.
PK:	…when you said Young, it's interesting because today I just got the 1910 census, and here are the Youngs in 1910. I don't

	think…you weren't born yet. But here's the names from the 1910 census—I wonder if any of them look familiar to you. Do you remember the Cravens?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yep.
PK:	Here's Hall, Howard. Just hop in if you [remember]…Moores, Jackson…
Maydell Casey Belk:	I know the Jacksons.
PK:	You know the Jacksons? Ashbys?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah.
PK:	Miller.
Maydell Casey Belk:	No, that don't ring a bell.
PK:	Blackburn. Here's the McKnights. Cassias McKnight. Harriet was eighty then, so I know you didn't know her…
Maydell Casey Belk:	No.
PK:	Jacob Ball. A Garner, Javins, Gordon, Young…that's the Youngs?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No—this is the younger Youngs, not the older ones.
PK:	Okay. Peters, John Peters…
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah, I know the Peters. Yep.
PK:	Okay. Butler…
Maydell Casey Belk:	I know the younger Butlers.
PK:	And Robert and Clara Adams?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Well, I know the Adams. I know Clara, but that's the only one I knew. I was a young girl then…
PK:	She was an old lady then. She must have been, because here she's forty, so you were born in the [19]30s…
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah—very attractive, very stylish, outgoing lady…
PK:	Was she tall?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah, and I think she belonged to the Episcopal Church there. Yeah.
CHURCHES FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD	
Other interviewers:	Were most of the people that you knew at that time members of the Episcopal Church?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah, mostly. Mostly everyone that lived up in Fort Ward belonged to the Episcopal Church. Yeah.
Other Interviewer:	Well, how did Oakland come in? When did that come about?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Well, see, I moved up to Fort Ward after I got married, but the Oakland Baptist Church got started—from when I heard my parents talking, they used to have the church up in a school.
Other Interviewer:	Up in the school?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah. And then the Rosses, the Gazes, and the Terrells, and they all go together, and that's how they started Oakland Baptist Church.
Other Interviewer:	I see. Well, I guess they thought that the Baptist Church was more suitable to them than the Episcopal Church.

Maydell Casey Belk:	Probably so at the time—I really wouldn't know.
Other Interviewer:	There wasn't…it wasn't in the dissension…they didn't leave it because of dissatisfaction with the way they were treated by the church?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No, I don't think so. I never heard my mother or grandfather say anything about that.
PK:	Did you go up to the Seminary when you were a little girl? Did you ever go up to the chapel and Seminary?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No.
PK:	The school at Fort Ward -where the Oakland Baptist Church was—was [it] the same one that the McKnights were in then where Clara Adams…?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Clara Adams had a house, but I don't think she lived there.
THE SCHOOL ON FORT WARD	
PK:	What did the school look like? The building? Do you remember? Was it one-story?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah—it was one-story. It had a little stream up in front. And, a little porch, and the family that I knew remodeled everything was on one floor.
PK:	Do you remember how big it was inside? Did you ever go inside of it?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Oh, yeah. I used to go in there all the time. They added one bedroom…they made it three bedrooms, a kitchen, dining room, and their room and a bathroom.
PK:	So it was a pretty good size.
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah.
PK:	They had inside bathrooms?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah, and with the subtank.
PK:	Was there much space around the schoolhouse?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah -they had a nice yard.
PK:	That was at the top of the hill wasn't it?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah. It was right up from the graveyard. It was up from the graveyard, it was their house that they turned over from the school, and then the house that I lived in was the middle, and Clara Adams' house was in the front.
HOUSES ON FORT WARD	
PK:	Were there any houses on the other side of the graveyard like down by the creek?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah.
PK:	There were?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Uh-huh. I don't know who owned it, but the Reynolds family used to live back in there.
PK:	Reynolds?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah. And they were renting it from someone else. It wasn't theirs, but they were just renting—outstanding owner's

	property.
PK:	Were a lot of people…most of the people owned the houses, or some rented?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Some rented. Some owned.
PK:	Some rented and some owned.
Maydell Casey Belk:	Like the Peterson owned, the Reynolds owned theirs, then they moved out and rented their house out. The Cravens was renting their house…don't ask me when they moved—I really don't know.
THE SCHOOL THAT BECAME A HOUSE	
Other Interviewer:	Talking about this school building that became and was turned into a house—was it a wooden-framed house, or was it a brick house?
Maydell Casey Belk:	It was a wooden frame.
Other Interviewer:	Can you recall what color it was painted?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Well the…when they lived in it, it was white. I don't know what color it was before.
Other Interviewer:	All the time that you ever knew of it, even though you knew it had been a school, it wasn't a school from when you were a little girl?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah…yep.
Other Interviewer:	Is that correct?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yes—it wasn't a school.
PK:	What year would that be?
Maydell Casey Belk:	The day I moved up there in [19]52, and when I moved up there, there was another family living in the house, and I don't know how long they had been in it and when they remodeled, but that's when they were in it. When I moved up in [19]52.
Other Interviewer:	And there are some rather large shrubbery in the general area where that is located. Did that have anything to do with the schoolhouse itself? Nowadays, there the trees end…
Maydell Casey Belk:	No, I think the people that remodeled the house did all the landscaping, but they had a beautiful lawn up there.
Other Interviewer:	Did the porch -or what had been the front door- did it face towards what is now the cemetery or did it face towards…?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No, it faced…
Other Interviewer:	No, it faced the little garden area?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah, that's the…
Other Interviewer:	Towards the little gardening area that the city has, that's the way it shows on the map also. Towards that way, where that area is that the city has all those garden houses…
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah, because on the side of the building was the woods and the graveyard, and they already had some graves up towards the schoolyard, and some way down.
PK:	The good and faithful servant… …you said your Mom went to school there?

Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah, that's what she told me.
Other Interviewer:	When she was a little girl?
PK:	How many grades did it have? Was it one of those schools…primary schools, or…
Maydell Casey Belk:	It went up to the fifth or sixth.
PK:	Do you remember who…did she say who her teacher was?
Maydell Casey Belk:	…the woman she was staying with. Her teacher used to be Ms. Beatrice Terrell.
PK:	Of the Terrells that live in this neighborhood right now?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yep…. The grandchildren and the great grandchildren live right down the street.
LIFE ON FORT WARD: GARDENS, PLUMBING, WATER	
PK:	Do you know anywhere near Oak Hill? Do you remember that name?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No….
PK:	Summerville? Green Heights?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No….
PK:	The houses…did they all look much alike or where they very different? Were some big, some small…?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Some big. Some was one floor, some was several stories, and some of them had great big large porches. With flowers and different things.
PK:	You said that one yard was real pretty, and did people like to do—I mean back then- they had enough time to do a lot of gardening?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah….
PK:	They had their lawns…
Maydell Casey Belk:	The Youngs had their little garden—they had different trees planted.
PK:	Did people have like a summer garden with strawberries and fruit?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No. Well, mostly it was tomatoes, vegetables and stuff.
PK:	Did you get enough to can? Were you able to can things?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Well, mostly we grew tomatoes and things, but nothing unusual.
PK:	Did you get enough to can? Were you able to can?
Maydell Casey Belk:	I didn't, but my mother did. Yeah, my mother and them did all that canning.
PK:	When you lived on Fort Ward, did you have inside plumbing, or did you have privies or outhouses?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Outhouses.
PK:	But you had water?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah—we had a well.
PK:	You had well water?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah.
PK:	How many wells were there?

Maydell Casey Belk:	…one.
PK:	Everybody went to the same one?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No. We had different sections. There was one well for the three families that was with us, then the other families had their well, but…
PK:	Was the water good?
Maydell Casey Belk:	It was okay. I didn't drink too much of it. My husband and I, we would come down and get bottled water from mother—you know- and I boil it to use it for cooking and washing, but I didn't drink that much of it.
PK:	I heard that it tasted like iron.
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah.
PK:	Yeah—the lady that used to live Winnoken, I talked to her, and that's what she said. She said it tasted…it was good, but it tasted…
Maydell Casey Belk:	[interrupting] Yeah, but they didn't boil it.
PK:	…tasted of iron. Did you have any pets, or did anybody keep chicken, or was there room enough for that?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah, we had… when I had my first three kids, we got them some baby chickens for Easter, and raised them right up there.
PK:	Rabbits too, maybe?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah—there was a lot of open space up there, a lot of room.
PK:	Did people garden together, or did they mostly have their own gardens?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Their own.
PK:	The soil was good? Was the soil good?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah… And…it was so many trees up there, you never did ever have to have air conditioning.
PK:	It was pretty cool, huh?
Maydell Casey Belk:	In the summertime, we still had to use blankets.
PK:	No kidding.
"FORT HILL" AND "FORT WARD"	
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah. It stayed a lot cooler. They used to call it Fort Hill.
PK:	They did? Yeah, I heard that—Fort Hill. Good, I'm glad to hear that. That's good. The more people that tell me that, the better. You said that a lot of people worked at the Seminary?
Other Interviewer:	I'm sorry. Where did the "Hill" part of this "Fort Hill" come from? What did they mean when they said that?
Maydell Casey Belk:	I mean, because it was the hill, it was a steep hill and when they widened the road, they cut it down some.
PK:	Oh, I see. So Minnie Howard was on a hill that was much higher?
Maydell Casey Belk:	It was a steep hill, and so that's why they called it the "Fort Hill."
Other Interviewer:	So, the "hill" part didn't have anything specifically to do with

	what is now "Fort Ward"?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No. But we was coming…we called it "Fort Hill," and then when the city bought the park, they changed it to "Fort Ward."
PK:	Did you ever hear of "Macedonia"? A place called "Macedonia"?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No, I heard other people talking about it, but I don't know too much about it.
PK:	You heard other people talking about it?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah… Some parts of this land here were called "Macedonia," but I don't know too much about it.
PK:	Yeah, I heard that. Were there some other names that you knew of this area? Fort Hill? Macedonia?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Fort Hill—I'm trying to think of some….
EMPLOYMENT AT THE SEMINARY AND ELSEWHERE	
Other Interviewer:	I'm interested in the relationship between your group of people and the Seminary? Did the Seminary provide any kind of guidance in terms of the church? Did they attempt any kind of guidance in terms of the church? Did they attempt any kind of worship services for the people that lived up there? Have you heard anybody say anything about that?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No, it probably was way before my time. But I know they took—and the Seminary was very close. I used to hear my mother and grandfather talk about that. About the Seminary, and the high school were very close, and…
Other Interviewer:	So a lot of the people worked…
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yep…. Mostly at the high school. I think that's where they did work between the Seminary and the high school.
PK:	Do you remember other people working in other places? What some of the jobs were that people held?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Oh, like Andy worked at the Torpedo Plant. He worked there and in Arlington County. He worked over there for years. And when they were building Fairlington, some of them worked there. So that mostly was the jobs—the high school, the Seminary. They did Fairlington, the Torpedo Plant, then we had some I guess as they a got a little….the grandchildren I guess way back started getting government jobs in D.C.
PK:	Did most of the people…
Maydell Casey Belk:	A lot of people were the chauffeurs for the Seminary, and it is a high school. Back then they had chauffeurs that chauffeured them around.
TRANSPORTATION, SHOPPING, AND ELECTRICITY	
PK:	…how did you travel? …few people had cars, or there was buses back then I think, wasn't there?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah—we had a bus. There were few people that had cars, and we could walk from the Seminary down to King Street.
PK:	You wouldn't think anything of walking that far?

Maydell Casey Belk:	No—we always had to walk down there to go to the grocery store because we didn't have any out here.
PK:	That was my next question—so the grocery store was down in Alexandria?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah.
PK:	Do you know Donaldson's store? Was that still open?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah, that's right down…
PK:	That was like the 7-11, right?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Right, yep…. For something fast. We could buy our soda there. They had an ice house since they didn't Fridgidairs. They had to get blocks of ice.
PK:	Did you have electricity? At you place?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yes.
PK:	You had electricity. Did your mother…did your mom live on Fort Ward?
NEIGHBORS IN ALEXANDRIA	
Maydell Casey Belk:	No. My mother…the family owned was always on Braddock Road—right across the street from Blessed Sacrament. Right there where they got those little houses that they just built.
PK:	Do you know where that is? Across from where?
Other Interviewer:	Blessed Sacrament.
Maydell Casey Belk:	The old school.
PK:	Blessed Sacrament. Oh, okay—I remember now.
Maydell Casey Belk:	And they just built some city houses on their property. That's where I was raised, right there until I got married.
PK:	Did your neighborhood get along with the—you said- the rest of the neighborhoods…the people got along pretty well?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Oh, yeah. It was just like one big family. You know, you didn't have to lock your doors and…
PK:	I was told that before…you felt safe.
Maydell Casey Belk:	…if we ran out of sugar, we look over next-door and just go on in and get the sugar, and tell them when they came home that we borrowed some sugar from you. You know…
PK:	That's nice.
Maydell Casey Belk:	Everybody looked out for everybody. We didn't have to pay for no babysitter. You would just sit for each other… If the parents say, "Don't leave the yard, you don't leave the yard." And, when our family owned, we had a large yard and most of the…like my grandfather and all his friends, they would play croquet everyday. So on one side of the house was the good grass, and you couldn't get on that side because…
PK:	Because that was the croquet side.
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yep….
THE CEMETERY	
PK:	…we mentioned the cemetery and you mentioned that there

	were some graves up there that were probably not marked, and were there graves other than the cemetery in those few that are beside it? Do you remember any other graves…areas on Fort Ward itself?
Maydell Casey Belk:	It's the one that's up there now. I know my grandfather's up there. I have my uncle up there. I had a lady that helped to raise me that I call "Mom." The Crones…
PK:	I remember that name.
Maydell Casey Belk:	They lived there. She and her husband lived up there and she has daughters up there.
PK:	How do you spell that?
Maydell Casey Belk:	C-R-O-N-E.
PK:	And you said your grandfather…what's your grandfather's [name]…?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Wesley Casey.
PK:	And the other person that you named?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Charles Casey—that's my uncle.
PK:	Are they named by name on the headstones, or are they just buried up there?
Maydell Casey Belk:	I don't think Charles has a headstone. I don't know too much about my grandfather. The Crones should have a headstone. I remember them having one up there, I believe.
PK:	Yeah, I saw that.
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah.
PK:	Still turning.
FORT WARD PROPERTY BOUGHT BY THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA	
Maydell Casey Belk:	Wanted the land for the park and my mother—she was forty, and she didn't want to sell hers. That's when the city told her that if she didn't sell it she would lose out because they were going to condemn the houses because they didn't have any bathrooms, no running water and stuff, so that is when she gave in, and that's when…they told her to see if anybody had a purpose for a house down here.
PK:	Say that again?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Anybody that sold the land up at Ford Ward, they put the name of the list down here for a house. So my mother already had her house, so she put her name down and that's how I got it here, through my mother.
Other Interviewer:	Oh, I see.
Maydell Casey Belk:	Anybody that sold these houses—anybody that lived in these houses right here had land. That's how they got the houses.
PK:	I see—but this was already a neighborhood here?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No.
PK:	No? This was empty?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yep—all that was land, and we had homes on it, and we didn't have the running water on the inside. The city was going to cut

	down on all this too, if they didn't sell. So they finally got T.C. Williams High School and 29 homes. So, everybody that in this section of the 29 homes had lived around in this area.
Other Interviewer:	…well, did the city reimburse the pagers for the homes?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yep.
Other Interviewer:	Were the people generally satisfied with what they got? I mean, the amount of money they got?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Some of them were, some of them wasn't. But, you know if you was left… [dogs start barking at this time].
PK:	What is your dog's name, Mrs. Belk?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Casey.
OLDER HOUSES AND STORES	
PK:	Casey—now we have Casey on the first Alexandria Archaeology History of a poodle. Were there any old houses in the neighborhood that you used to visit like that you considered very old? Do you remember any old places?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Well, there was a lot of old…you mean when I was coming up?
PK:	Yes.
Maydell Casey Belk:	One of the ones that my daughter built. I used to go in there all the time. The ones you wrote about in *Old Alexandria.*
PK:	Oh, yeah. I don't know what that is, though. I can't remember the name.
Maydell Casey Belk:	Well, I don't know the name.
PK:	Menokin?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No, I don't remember the name. I just know the old houses that the families used to live in. That's about all I know.
PK:	You said that you bought your food down on King Street. What was the name of that store?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Well…
PK:	There was a supermarket?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah. Well, at the time we was going, there was a Safeway in Alexandria, when they first opened up. I would go with my mother, and then they built one over here where the 7-11 is on Quaker Lane. It used to be a co-op.
PK:	A food co-op?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yep, a large store.
PK:	Where did you buy your other goods? Like hardware goods or furniture goods, or things like that?
Maydell Casey Belk:	There used to be an Alexandria Furniture store that used to be on King Street, and a Gaines Hardware store that was about the oldest one in Alexandria.
PK:	Caines?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Gaines. And I'm trying to think of the other one. It the Nights? They used to have a hardware store on King Street that we used to go to.

Other Interviewer:	Gaines hardware—wasn't that the clothes for kids that used to be near the…
Maydell Casey Belk:	The railroad tracks.
Other Interviewer:	Yeah—that's the one.
ENTERTAINMENT: CHURCH, SWIMMING, GAMES	
PK:	What did you do for entertainment when you were a child?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Oh—when I was a child?
PK:	Yeah—do you remember what the grown-ups did?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Church. When I was growing up we couldn't go to the movies, but on Saturdays.
PK:	Because you weren't allowed or 'cause…
Maydell Casey Belk:	We wasn't allowed to go on Sundays, and through the week you couldn't go anyway because you had to go on working and go to school. Then we went to church all day on Sundays.
PK:	How would that go if you got up Sunday morning?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Went to Sunday school.
PK:	What time would you get up?
Maydell Casey Belk:	10:00.. Sunday school. 11:00 church service. Then you had a 3:00 church service. And then you…
PK:	Everybody went to the 3:00?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah. Then you had to be at the BYPU at 7:00 pm.
PK:	What was that?
Maydell Casey Belk:	The BYPU.
Other Interviewer:	Baptist Young People's Union.
Maydell Casey Belk:	We had that at 7:00, and then our parents would come in at 8:00, and they add singing or preaching, and that was all day every Sunday.
PK:	And how did you feel about that?
Maydell Casey Belk:	I didn't have no say about it.
PK:	And it was okay with you, huh?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yep, 'cause that's what we had to do.
PK:	What about in the summertime? Would you picnic in the area? Did you go down to Chinquapin ever?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Well, Chinquapin wasn't open. That was war houses for the people that was in the Service.
PK:	War houses?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yep—that was….there wasn't nothing but temporary houses for the guys that was in the Service.
PK:	If you weren't going to church, or you had a special fathering in the summer, where would you go?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Well, back in our days, our church would take us to a Sparrow Beach which was day down in Maryland for blacks.
PK:	Sparrow Beach?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yes—that's where you had to go.
PK:	There wasn't anything in Alexandria?

Maydell Casey Belk:	No—you go to some water-hole, or to…
PK:	What about the quarry? Do you remember if the quarry was there or not?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No—that was before my time. Plus, we didn't have no swimming pool. We didn't have no tennis courts. We would jump-rope and play softball. We would take fruit baskets, and hang them on a tree and make a basketball…
PK:	You were a basketball player, weren't you?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah.
PK:	I remember you telling me that. And you were a good basketball player too.
Maydell Casey Belk:	On the weekends we played baseball, or something like that.
PK:	Was that the games of the children? Basketball, jump-rope…
Maydell Casey Belk:	Softball, marbles, playing catch with the dog, and made grass doll babies.
PK:	What do you mean? Grass in a jar, and make jar babies?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah.
PK:	How did you do that?
Maydell Casey Belk:	We put the grass in the jars, made veins…
PK:	That sounds like fun. [Turning towards the other interviewers] Do you have any more questions?
FORT WARD AND THE SEMINARY	
Other Interviewer:	No, I guess not. I think was just interested in the relationship of the Seminary, and what role it played in their lives. That's all I needed to know, and I see that it more or less an employer…
Maydell Casey Belk:	And so that families that ran out of food or something they could always get help from the Seminary.
Other Interviewer:	I know that in some ways, the writings, these people…there was an attempt on the part of the Seminary to provide some kind of Christian education for them, and I was wondering how many of the people took advantage of that, or how many participated in that? Because, obviously like the McKnights were Episcopalian and some of the others were, I was wondering whether that break came in. Like, why were some Episcopalian and some of them were Baptist. I was wondering just how that came about. I know that there was an effort on the part of the Seminary to missionize some of the blacks in that period. I know that the Peters, for instance, I know that Juanita was Episcopalian—and because they belonged to Meade Memorial Church, which the Seminarians founded…
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah, but you know that's a good question, but it was before my time. The thing about it is that my grandfather worked all those years for the Seminary, I really don't know why the switch-over, you know.
MORE ABOUT LIVING ON FORT WARD	
PK:	Did you have any questions? [addressing third interviewer]

Other Interviewer 2:	Yes—do you recall any houses that were at Ford Ward when you were growing up that might have been brick at all, or that were close what would be the present-day kind of wall of the fort, or the earthen woods? What is nowadays back towards the back part of the Fort?
Maydell Casey Belk:	You know what? I have never as long as I've been here never seen a brick house.
PK:	Framed houses?
Maydell Casey Belk:	All of them with frames and all of them had little porches, you know?
PK:	I did want to ask you were you put your garbage or your trash or whatever. Was there one area where you would take garbage cans, or would the city pick up the garbage?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No—we had to put it on the street.
PK:	You put it on the street. Did you burn things? Did you burn papers, and not garbage, but just the trash? Were you allowed to burn?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Not when I was up there we didn't.
Other Interviewer 2:	The wells you mentioned—were they similar to the hand-primed type?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No—we had a bucket, and we would go down…and then some of them had the pump…
PK:	And you said there were three?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yes—there were three that I can remember.
Other Interviewer 2:	Were they in the area like where the schoolhouse and the homes, or was any use of the well made, was any use made of the well that happened to be inside the fort area itself?
Maydell Casey Belk:	The only thing I know, it was a well over by the school and they had the pump kind, and there was a well where the McKnights lived in the front, and I know the Pedersons had a well. Theirs was also the pump kind. There could have been many more, but I wouldn't know.
Other Interviewer 2:	Do you recall from the time when you were growing up—actually, I really- do you recall and of the censuses, any of the federal censuses that occurred, it would have been I suppose 1960, or 1961? You left in [19]68, so you might have recalled the one from 1960, I suppose?
Maydell Casey Belk:	To tell you the truth, I don't even remember. All my kids were born up there.
PK:	Is that right?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah—five of my kids was born up there.
MEDICAL CARE	
Other Interviewer 2:	Where did you go to have the children?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Alexandria Hospital.
PK:	Downtown? King Street?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Yeah—at Duke and…

PK:	Yeah, Duke and Washington.
Maydell Casey Belk:	One long hall for the blacks, everybody in one room.
PK:	How were the doctors out here? Did you have to go in town for the doctor?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Had to go in town.
PK:	Was there a black doctor?
Maydell Casey Belk:	A black doctor—but he wasn't only Alexandria Hospital staff.
PK:	What happened when you delivered your babies? Some stranger had to deliver your babies?
Maydell Casey Belk:	A hospital doctor.
PK:	So you get to know a guy all during your pregnancy, and then you…
Other Interviewer 2:	That will change right now in some places. I know in Charlottesville, it was a long time before any black doctors…there were several black doctors in town, but they couldn't work at the hospital.
Maydell Casey Belk:	And then the black doctors and got on in staff at Freedman's Hospital, which was our university, and you could go all the way over there and see if you wanted them to deliver your baby…
PK:	…And if you could make it. Did you have fast deliveries?
Maydell Casey Belk:	My last one, I did go over there and have it.
PK:	That sounds more comfortable. Did you ever hear where some of the people were from before they came to this area?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Most of the ones that I hear talk about it are from the Charlottesville and Lawrenceville.
PK:	Charlottesville and…?
Maydell Casey Belk:	Charlottesville and Lawrenceville…
PK:	Charlottesville and Lawrenceville, and not from any other states?
Maydell Casey Belk:	No.
PK:	No—okay. [Interview ends]