

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Bettie Allen

Interview #: SAA-A-D-2003-001

Conducted by the Springfield African-American History Foundation
For the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Born in Springfield, Illinois, Bettie Allen graduated from Feitshans High School, attended Springfield Junior College, Moody Bible Institute, and Lincoln School of Law. She began working as a mechanic as a young teenager and continued into adulthood, while also working for the state. She volunteered in the South doing voter registration and civil rights work in the 1960s. She discusses her family's history in Springfield, home front activities during World War II, her many travels including mission work in Africa, her involvement with the YWCA, and details of her career with the State of Illinois. Bettie passed away in February 2015 at the age of 88.

Interview date(s): Nov. 7, 13, 21 & Dec. 2, 2003

Interview Location: Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: audio cassettes

Interviewer: Cullom Davis

Transcription by: The Tape Transcription Center

Edited by: Edna Shanklin, Cheryl Pence

Total Pages: 247 (in 6 transcripts)

Total Time: 5 hours, 49 minutes, 28 seconds / 5.8 hours

Interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential
Library in Springfield, Illinois.

Abstract

Bettie Allen

Springfield African-American History Foundation Project

Biographical Information and Synopsis: Bettie Allen was born in Springfield, Illinois, on October 21st, 1926, to Florence and Frank Allen. She had one sister and three brothers. She worked as a mechanic for Leon Stewart from age 13 till Leon's death around 1970. She attended Springfield Junior College, Moody Bible Institute, and Lincoln School of Law. She graduated from law school but did not take the bar. She was the president of the Associated General Contractors of America and worked for the Capitol Developmental Board for twenty years. In four interviews divided into six tapes, Ms. Allen covers a range of topics:

- In tape 1 she talks about her family life; living in Springfield; Springfield businesses; Springfield school life; religion.
- In tape 2 she discusses the Springfield Race Riot 1908; her family life; her family's service in the military; her activities on the home front – Air Patrol, blood donations etc.; discrimination in the medical fields; the People's Bank; YWCA; and her voter registration and civil rights work in the South.
- In tape 3 she talks about the various churches she has attended and briefly her time in Africa (continuation of tape 2).
- In tape 4 she covers in greater detail her mission in Africa and the various African countries she visited; the various European countries she visited; the death of Martin Luther King; an Africa-USA exchange program; AGCA (Associated General Contractors of America); the tenants committee of the John Hay Homes.
- In tape 5 she discusses an attempt to force her out of her job by a corrupt contractor (continuation of tape 4).
- In tape 6 she discusses the Phyllis Wheatley Club; the YWCA in greater detail; Capital Development Board (CDB); Service Bureau for Colored Children; her time as president of the Springfield NAACP; her vegetable wines, her trip to China and her thirty-plus years of friendship with Jackie Wilkes.

Topics Covered: Springfield, Illinois, 1920s – present; Leon Stewart; Africa; civil rights movement; voter registration; Old Merchants Transfer Line; NAACP; Douglas Community Center; People's Bank; YWCA; Human Relations Commission; AGCA (Associated General Contractors of America); Springfield College in Illinois; Lincoln School of Law; Springfield Race Riot of 1908; John Hay Homes; Phyllis Wheatley Club; CDB (Capitol Development Board); Service Bureau for Colored Children; China; Jackie Wilkes

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the

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