

Oral History 1988
Marylon Taylor-Bath Attendant

Transcribed by Gene Wood, Park Volunteer, March 4, 1997

"I" stands for people doing the interview

"MT" stands for Marylon Taylor

Names of places and persons are spelled as heard-not necessarily correctly.

Words which are not clearly understood are in brackets[]

Tapes are identified by writing n the actual tape.

Tape marked "Marylon Taylor-Bath Attendant" Side A.

I- This is May 9th. 3:30 P.M., in the National Park Visitor Center Conference Room. To start with saying your name, and then how you got started in the bath-house business.

MT-My name is Marylon Taylor, and I started to workin' at the Quapaw Bathhouse,

approximately 1959. I started in the laundry, and while I was working in the laundry, I came to the bathhouse school, under eight doctors, and the courses we had were four courses. At that time, we had to take, Ah, composition books

and make notes, like you were going to school. Okay, after we had our tests and I passed as a bath attendant, I, ah, was then a bath attendant at the Buckstaff afterward but while I was working at the Quapaw, I was a receptionist to show the spring downstairs. I was also a maid and a pack attendant. When I came to Buckstaff, I was a pack girl for a few days, and then bath attendant. And, Ah, just before I came to the Buckstaff Bathhouse I worked at Libbeys, as a Therapy aid under Mr. Farmere, in which he taught that and he taught me some massagin'. Of course, I did not, ah, get my papers, I

did not stay long enough to get the papers. But since September 1st, 1970, I've been workin' for the Buckstaff Bathhouse. And I've enjoyed my work, met celebrities, just enjoyed people. Because I love people, and I've seen so many miracles happen with the baths. There have been people that came on crutches, and they walked on, ahm, walkin' sticks, they walked, and, ah, some could just barely, just walk without anything, with an arthritis, with their fingers twisted, their feet twisted, and the thermal baths helped them, especially if it would take enough.

I--When,ah,when you showed people the spring at the Quapaw,was that,was that,

ah,

MT-An Indian cave downstairs.

I--How,What did it look like,that Indian spring?

MT-Well,you went down some steps and it's a cave. It had all the,ah,Indian markins'on it.And,ah,the spring has a glass over it.Of course,I don't know if people look at it now,but it would nice if they could go down and see it and it could be explained to them.

I--Uh,huh.

MT-And the water would just be comin'up,and everybody would go down and then
come back upstairs.

I--Was,ah,how much light did they have in between the caves?

MT-Well,they had,ah,an electric bulb so you could,you wouldn't fall down the steps.

I--Yeah!!!

MT- It wasn't real bright.

I--Yeah!!!

Mt-And I imagine they may still have it now.But it would be nice if people could go down there and see,if they could open it up enough to do that,

I--Yeah!!!

MT-certain times a day.

I--Yeah,we do this on our,some of our tours.

MT-Have you seen,you've seen it?

I--Uh,huh!!

MT-Well, you know what I'm talking about then.

I--Yeah. I just wondered if it had changed any.

to the way they.....

MT-No,Well,I haven't seen it lately,but it was always the same.

I--Uh,huh!!!

MT-When I left.Which I had worked there a pretty good while.

I--When you were a therapy aid up at the Libby,what exactly did you do?

MT-Well,he taught us to,ah,of course I had the papers down here,I don't,ah,
I've forgotten when I had,when I,um,came down here.

I--Uh,hum!!!

MT-Because we gotta,had to have a test on that too.

I--Oh!!!

MT.Well,it was neck stretchin'and he'd,ah,show me the electrical,ah,he
was,ah,

electrical device,you know when you lay down,he was,he taught me that
too,

as well as the parafin bath,that you put on the hand and peel off,and you
know,all that neck stretchin',things like that,went with it.Of course,we
had [Hydrocalata] packs,you know,as pack girl,all we had to do a little
bit of everything,just about,and I was gettin' to that massagin'part,as I
told ya. Cause if I hadn't came down here then,I would have gotten it,
because he was giving me that free,because he needed some masseuse
too,

at that time,and so I was very interested,so.....

I--He was in charge,he was,ah,main instructor at the massage school,wasn't
he?

MT-Yes,and he was over Libbeys,he was a nice person,one thing I liked about him

is that you had to do everything right,exactly right,and that's the way it should be.So,we tried to do the same at the Buckstaff.

I--When did they,at the Buckstaff now,you do the baths and the packs.....

MT-And the packin'.

I--When did they quit havin' pack people?

MT-Oh,let me see.I'm the one that started that [chuckle] because sometime we

would have pack girls,seem like everybody don't work,like they,you know,you know,you would to help 'em sometime and,but the thing about it is,ah,they would get another job.Everything was good but,you know,some people

just wanted a change. So after that happened,well,I started to doin' the bathin' and the packin',and they saw that it could be done.And it,and it's it's really wonderful because Sweed will have to set down,as slow as it does be sometime,even if it isn't,it'll keeps you busy,you know,doing somethin'.Um,let me see,ah,been purty good while,I can't just exactly pinpoint it.But ah,so the rest of us started doing that too,you know,an' it works out,good so far. Now if we were havin'more people,I 'magine

MT-than what we,ah, have now,triple or so,we may'b would have to have a pack

girl,you know,but now,we can handle it.

I--How many tubs are you in charge of at a time?

MT-Three.I,I have three.Another lady have two. It's mixed up but it's 'proximately 14 tubs on the ladies floor,including th' steel tubs.

I--Do you use the steel tubs very often?

MT-No.Most of the time we don't.Sometimes.We used to use some enamel tubs,

cause most people like to get in enamel tubs,and sometimes we use 'em,you know,some people want the steel.

I--Of the people that come for baths today,do you have,um,have any that come

with the doctors,ah.....

MT-Sometimes.

I--notice?

MT-Yes,Sometimes.

I--Is that different from when you,when you started with the packs,but were there more people when you started working in the bathhouse that you know of,that came with.....

MT-Yes,quite a few,

I--from doctors.....

MT-at that time.Just not as many now that do. In fact,they found out that if it's certain things that they,ah,need to do or don't need to do,some of 'em,we could tell 'em about goin' to school.

I-- um,huh.

MT-Cause at the time we were goin' to school down here,under the doctors, they taught us some first aid,you know,and different things to do.And of course,we knew the[temp-ratures] and timins'and all,by the rules and regulations,if we had a heart patient,we knew not to over-heat 'em.You know,I mean,so I guess some people stopped gettin' 'em so much because of that,but some still get 'em.

I--When you started,how,how long were most people staying for,in the,I mean
how many baths were most people taking,for,in a stay?

MT-[Proxmately] a week,some take,would take two weeks,three weeks. It used to
be a trend of 21 baths,but you know,the more you take of the baths,the better they,they,take care of ya',an'ah,help,help your aches and pains.

I--How long do most people take 'em now?

MT-Well,there's different times,and I tell ya,it's accordin' to your

condition. Some people are not in [bad-a] shape as others are,an'some can take two or three,an just be,just doin' great,you know,an some have to take more,cripple an'aches an'pains,an'the more they take,they feel better. An as I tol' ya',some couldn't walk,they can walk without anything,an' feel good,some come twice a year,an'I have some come every three months,I [m], every four months. So it just varies how people come now.

I--Do you have any that are still coming from when you first started?

MT-Yes,from the other bathhouse.[Chuckle] Then they came where I was at this

bathhouse because it was the masseuse that I knew. When she left,ah, Quapaw,she wrote letters an'all,so she was fair,for a while while I was there,when I first came there,so shur',lot of them knew me too. But some of 'em have died an'some of 'em don't come,but a lot of 'em do.Because, when that bathhouse closed,of course,she told 'em where she was goin', so that brought more business to Buckstaff,too.

I--You left,yeh,you left before they closed,didn't ya? Was it already called the Health Services when you were workin' there,or was it.....

MT-I've worked,Mr.Farmere asked me to stay on after the Quapaw stopped,he wanted some of the others,too,but it was about a few of us,about two or three that stayed,an'I was one of 'em. So we started,I started to learnin' different things then,you know,an'then he transferred me over to Libbeys. An' that's where,you know,I learned some of that too.

I--I know we got some physical therapy equipment out of the Quapaw after they closed.Do you remember them havin' very much,well it was exercise... like a wrist exerciser an'.....

MT-Yes.They had that,you know I quit they had it.

I--Did they have to have any kind of doctors' note to use that or could people just.....MT-Well,I'm.....I--with instruction use it?

MT-Some people had instructions.But I didn't do in that department,an

MT-mostly the masseuse was doin' it.An',da,they also had a lift there too that was in the middle of the floor at Quapaw,did you see that one?

I--Ya,I think.....

MT-An'I've used that many a day,an'some of the bath attendants have used it too,to lift people in an' out of the tub.

I--Did any other,ah,bathhouses ever have lifts like this too?

MT-NO...NO....

I--I don't think I've ever seen any.

MT-Uh,Uh. It's mostly Libbeys up there,which is wonderful place for people that cannot be,you know,help themselves out of the tub. Now we can help them some but just pickin' up,you can't,lot of 'em.So.....,it was nice.

I--Y'all wonder what they did years ago when they didn't have such things an',you know,people that couldn't get around much at all,would just to have to bring extra help or [in-audible].....

MT-Yes,an'sometime if they were too bad they would just have to refuse 'em an' I 'magine,o' course,Libbeys was there before I ever started,so I don't know,I 'magine they may have had place,some place,or someway for 'em to do it.I 'magine they did.Cause Libbeys had been there a while,I know before I started.But,ah,they would have to bring help or even maybe one or two,if they,if it was possible they try to help her,but if it's impossible,you know,big 300# person or so,for ladies,you know,you just can't pick 'em up,you know.'An sometimes,are the ones that are the ones that are smaller than that.If you tryin'to help 'em,they push against ya',you know,an'it's just hard,you know.You know,you get a few people that just won't do what you tell 'em either,an' you don't want 'em to break their neck or fall or hurt,break a hip or anything. So you just try o be careful.

I--Is there anything about,um,about working in the bathhouse that you don't, that's,or what's your least favorite part of working?

MT-Well,I can't say that,because I love to work on people,you know.

I--The heat ever bother you?

MT-[Nnnn],We get hot,no,I mean I feel it,we feel it,but you get kinda'used to it,you know. Course,uh,I don't have no pressures or no heart condition,

MT-we have to have physicals too,you know,no nothin'like that,don't have to wear glasses yet,but we never know,but ah,ah it's really nothing less favored is all I,you know,I just see,works work,an'try to get the job done.An'make people feel better,get well,that's the purpose.

I--What,ah,who are some of the [famous] people that you've met?

MT-Annie,get your gun.That was one of 'em.And some of the others,I really,I don't remember their name,tell you the truth,but she was one,really,she was so funny and she was nice.But we have had celebrities too.You've had a few.You know,here,but where I met her was at Quapaw.You never hear of her anymore either,an I wonder what happened,you know,but,you never hear,but she was,it was her,too.And the reason I found out because I've looked at her and used to se her series,you know,and used to hear 'em on the radio.You 'member when she was famous"Annie get your gun".Ah,do you ever remember that,you may not know it but I do.Well,we had it here,in other words,I don't where are you from?

I--I'm from here.

MT-Yes.but anyway,we used to hear it on the radio,you know,and see the series when it was on television,but [chuckle] it,it went off.But when she came in and I got her,I said "Oh,thats jus' look jus' like her". She had [her] [plats],pretty blonde hair,an all an everything,so I asked her,she didn't want many people to know that thats' what it was or,see some of us back in the back,we knew the manager.Because,see,people been crowdin'around ya', an celebrities don't want that,an I don't blame'em,you know,really.An' she was real nice,an' some others but,I jus'really remember their names like I did hers,because of what,I guess,was seein'her series,an she was so funny an' nice an' very friendly,an' nice to wait on.

I--Have you noticed,ah,changes,any changes in the business from the time you started to the,what it is now ?

MT-Yes,I have.Was some changes.Well,some people don't come as much,I mean, you know,some of them,[I guess,are dead] and some don't,but it's always new people comin',you know,an ah,but really with the business variation

we've been doing pretty good at our bathhouse. Really, it's, it's like anything else, you know, it jus' is pretty good this minute, this time an' then another time, it, ah, is not as good, but most of the time we have really good amount of people.

I--How do you think they've survived all the years when the others have gone out of business?

MT--Because, we have, we were counted as the number one bathhouse. An' I think

that spells some, because we tried, we wouldn't a' been if we hadn't a had as many people as we did, quite a few people, but we tried to keep the bathhouse clean, we tried to do our best to hold it up, an' do the best we can, an' I think that helps a lot. I don't say that others didn't but I know 'bout the Buckstaff. What we do, we try our best to entice people to come back, we try to give 'em good service. An' I think that has helped a lot, an' bein' friendly, you know, it's all, all o' that goes into together, an' lovin' people, an' people can tell when you love 'em, you know, I think that helps their feelings, too, of getting better. Uh huh.

I--Why do you think the business has declined over the years?

MT--Well, I tell you what I think, ah, sometimes doctors give 'em medicine, you know, an' they take medicine, an' then some end up comin' still to the bathhouse. I think some of that might be part of it. But when people come here to the bathhouse once, they usually come back, most of 'em. You can't beat nature anyway. 'Course their, the medicines help too, I presume, you know, but that may be some of the reasons.

I--What do you think of the government involvement with the bathhouse business?

MT--I think it's fine, because they want us to use the water right. An' they have the rules and regulations an' it has always worked. So I'm glad that their still handlin' it an' I think it'll be better if they keep it that way, really. Because some people will handle it in the wrong way, you know, an' that, I don't that would help a bit. You see, some people will come in an' wanta' do just like they wanta' do, [but] see, we don't go against the rules, we cannot do it, you know, ya' not supposed to do it, an' if they use the water right they wil get help. So I jus' love it, I jus' hope the gov'ment keep it like it is.

I--When did, ah, do you remember they quit havin' the government school?

MT-Oh,must been a pretty good while. Hmmm,that's been a long time.Not really,

I don't 'member exactly,but it has been a long time.Usually now we train 'em on the job,bath attendants.I have my name signed to a lot of,you know, to some of 'em,because of training on the job,then they come down here, [an' guess] they have it easy,than what we did,because those doctors, those eight times that we had to come,there was a doctor,an we had to write down things,an' he would tell us things that,you know,'bout goin' to school like a doctor or a nurse would get.An' it wasn't as easy to get in the bathhouse as it is now.That's right,everybody couldn't get in there unless you,you know,you had to go to this school,had to pass the tests.See,they would ask us questions,jus'like,jus'like goin' to school an' we had composition books an'all,you had to write on,things, you know,scripts an' all,which was good because it,it taught us a lot of things,that,probably first aid you would have to get someboby to come in an' do.

I--Do they,they get any of that now?

MT-Well,of certain things,if somneboby pass out,mostly,jus' somethin'minor, cause if a person get to sick and everything,they'll have to rush him to the hospital or a doctor. You know there are some people come in,you can ask em',do you have heart condition,or are you diabetic,[or are jus'all 'o that],some of 'em will tell ya.Some of 'em will eat a big meal 'an come right on in the bathhouse,'an you know that water will not,it will not be good for them.Sometimes that happens.And then you have some people are

kinda' demandin',most people are good,but some aren't,an'then there's a [I did it so an'so an I beat it so an'so an'so],so we say,now if you take this steam,you have to take it at your own risk.An' thats what,you know, that they jus'wanta'almost force you to do it,you know.But,ah,we explain it,we try to take care of the people an' if it gets to rough,we get the,ah, our supervisor,and let them tell us what to do,so there don't be problems, you know. You know,when you have problems,that's where you go.So I think

that's what has helped us,ah,get as far a we have,prob'ly other bath-houses too,but I'm talking 'bout the Buckstaff. An' Quapaw used ta',used ta'be that way,too.O'course,you have to go by the rules and regulations. Those th' places that I've been,and Libbeys,that all I can speak for.

I--What do you think is the communitys' regard for the contributions the

bathing business makes to Hot Springs?

MT-Ah....can you go over that again,whats the community think, 'er.....

I--Yeah.....

MT-About the bathin'industry? Well,it's a help to Hot Springs,really.

You know,the bathin'industry.

I--You think people around town realize that,or ?

Mt-Well,we do have some people here,take baths,but we have a lot of people that needs to take the,that don't take the baths,until they go away an' come back an' pay hotel bill,that's the truth,cause some of 'em have done that,they,but they were crippled an'up,an' then they come back 'an get some help.But it's lot of people take,you know,baths too,around Hot Springs Village an'some people here.But it's,it's not as many that should take the baths.If they knew more about it,they would be in the bathhouse more often,an'feel much better.

I--I don't have any more questions.There anything else you wanna'add.

MT-Well,ah,I'll say this,I've enjoyed talkng to you about it.

I--Well,we're glad you came,even though we hear,you know,we hear a lot of things from different people and lot of answers,you know,[MT-are different],are the same,yah,but then there's always things that are different,that's why we try to talk to as many different people as we can. [MT-Sure] So we're glad you took the time out to come.

MT-Yeh,well I was glad to do it,cause I'm interested in it,in Hot Springs, the bathin' industry,an' all,as a whole.And I sure have enjoyed meeting you too,Miss Sears an'talkin' with ya.And if I can be of any help,any other way,I want you to let me know. [I--Okay][ah,jus'],if there's anything I know that I can tell ya',I'll be glad to.

I--Okay....

MT-An I've enjoyed it,Okay.

I--Thanks a lot.