Oral History Of Gennine Hagar
Chief U.S. Probation Officer
United States District Court For the District Of Columbia

First Interview
March 10, 2014

This interview is being conducted on behalf of the Oral History Project of the Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit. The interviewee is Gennine Hagar. The interviewer is Kurt J. Hamrock. The interview is taking place in the offices of McKenna Long & Aldridge LLP, 1900 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. on March 10, 2014, beginning at 4:07 p.m.

MR. HAMROCK: Ms. Hagar, thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this oral history project. The Historical Society of the D.C. Circuit has been working very hard on these oral histories, and we think they are a valuable addition to the historical archives of the Circuit. We appreciate you spending the time with us today. Today we would like to talk about just general background information about you, your family, growing up the D.C. area, your basic primary and secondary education, college, and your entrance into the workforce. So with that, I would love to hear from you whatever you might care to share with us about your family.

MS. HAGAR: I was born in Salisbury, MD and I grew up in Pocomoke City, MD, which is a small town on the Delmarva Peninsula. I did not move to the D.C. area until the early 80s when I began working here. I am from a rural area and coming to D.C. was an entirely different experience. I had a good childhood. My mother Geraldine Milbourne, was still in high school and my father Alphonso Selby was finishing high school and getting ready to go to college when I was born. I was raised in the house with my grandparents, Donald and Elsie Milbourne, because my mother was a teenager and still living at home. She was the oldest of my grandparents'

four children. My mother later married and moved out. However, I continued to live with my grandparents. I went to live with my mother and stepfather Randall Poole for a short period of time, but eventually I moved back to my grandparents' home. My mother later divorced and returned to my grandparents' home with my younger sister Tammy and brother Randall. Shortly thereafter, me, my mother, and my younger sister and brother moved to our own home. My mother worked at night for Campbell's Soup Company and I was responsible for my younger siblings.

My father also married, and I have several half brothers and sisters. We were raised to regard each other as brothers and sisters and do not use the terms half or step brother or sister. My father died in 1996. My stepmother is also deceased. In total, I have four brothers and three sisters. I am the oldest of all the children as well as being the oldest grandchild. Being the oldest I'm kind of bossy . . . so they say, but whatever (laughing). I was fortunate to be surrounded by a good family. The house that I grew up in and our community were lively.

My grandparents' home was in the rural area of town in a community called Saint James. During the summers, I remember waiting for the bookmobile to come. I read all the time, and I still do. Reading is my favorite pastime. I never felt that we were poor, because I never wanted for anything. I lived in a close-knit community and some of my neighbors are still my best friends. I had a strong foundation in the United Methodist

Church. I have believed in God all my life and I still believe that everything that I am and all I have comes from God. It troubles me when I hear about people who experienced bad childhoods. I have heard so many stories throughout my career, but that was not my experience. Pocomoke City was a nice place to grow up. I felt safe and I don't recall any major disturbances in the town. I did very well in school and was always an A student. Because I grew up around my aunts and uncle, who were teenagers, I watched them studying and I began to read at an early age. I graduated as the Salutatorian of my high school class, and received a Maryland Merit Scholar award, a statewide award given to those graduating in the top 5% of their class. I was involved in many activities. I played sports and was MVP in volleyball. I was also a cheerleader, pompom band member. I did a lot at school, and learning came easy to me.

MR. HAMROCK: Let's talk some about just life at your grandparents' home. How long were you there?

MS. HAGAR: I would say until I was about 13 years old and then I moved away with my mother in our own house. When I was young, my only uncle, Harry, who is now deceased, was in the Vietnam War. I wrote letters to him while he was in Vietnam and I remember when he came home he told me that he would read my letters to the guys in his troop. I was about eight or nine years old around that time. He told me that when the mail would come they would say, "What is Gennine doing?" He said the guys would laugh

about my description of what was going on back home and that anything that made them laugh was a good thing. My grandparents watched news anchorman Walter Cronkite to learn about what was happening in the war. As a child, seeing the war scenes on TV and knowing that someone you loved was there was scary.

I also remember when Martin Luther King was killed. It was kind of odd because I recall everyone being in the living room around the piano and crying over this man who died. I did not understand what was doing on. I remember asking "Who is Dr. King?" and wondering if he was someone from our church. They said no. I do remember some things regarding segregation, like going to the moving theater in our hometown and having to sit in the balcony. The Eastern Shore of Maryland had a southern mentality, but I don't recall any racial turmoil in my community as a youth.

By the time I began school, integration had started. However, my aunts and uncles went to a segregated high school, and my mother did too. They had to take a bus that would come through our neighborhood very early. They would have to travel almost an hour to get to their segregated school, even though there was another school probably ten minutes away from the house.

MR. HAMROCK**:** Let's talk for a few minutes about your relatives. Would you tell us about your grandparents, parents, and aunts and uncles?

MS. HAGAR: My grandmother is deceased now, but she was my primary caregiver. My grandfather is still alive and he actually came to my swearing in as Chief, and that was wonderful. It is really good that he is still here. My grandparents divorced when I was 10 or so. My grandmother worked in a local chicken factory and my grandfather, at one point, had a store. He did different things. Both of my aunts finished high school, and one of them graduated from college and became a teacher. After returning from Vietnam, Uncle Harry was a bricklayer most of his life. I was surrounded by many great aunts and uncles as well. Most of them were laborers. They were intelligent, kind, hardworking, church going people who always seemed to keep up with the news. I guess that was because of the times, the 60s and 70s. Our neighbors were the same.

My father was the first one from his family to go to college. He graduated from Maryland State College in 1966. It is now called the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. At that time, going to and graduating from college was quite an accomplishment.

When my son Gregory was very young, I let him stay with my mother in Pocomoke City during the summers. I wanted him to have the experience of being a part of a close-knit neighborhood and church in a rural area. I believe that experience made him a better person and remains one of the best things that I have ever done for my son. We spent a lot of time on the water, crabbing, fishing, and just bonding. Sitting and waiting for a crab to bite a piece of meat is just amazing! Our times sitting at the water's

edge are among my fondest memories. Of course we had hardships, but I was rarely aware of them. I was encouraged to read and do well in school, and I did. I had always had a good memory. When I graduated from high school, in addition to being the salutatorian, I received the Daughters of the American Revolution Award, for outstanding citizenship. The teachers and the principal picked one student to get the award. I was most surprised about receiving that award more than any other.

MR. HAMROCK: Tell me about the house where you grew up?

MS. HAGAR: Our family home is still standing. My grandfather bought it from a schoolteacher who taught in a one-room building in the early 1900s. The house is very old now. Whenever I doodle something, it's always a picture of that house. It is an A-frame, three bedrooms, two-level colonial that sits on about 3 acres of land. Behind the house there is a crop field and trees. We had a huge front yard. I love that house. I remember getting dressed there on my wedding day. My grandfather rents it now, but whenever I go to the Eastern Shore, I make my husband drive past the house. There were a lot of girls in our community and we are still friends. We lived in a neighborhood called St. James, and the church that I attended was St. James United Methodist Church, which is over 100 years old. It is still there and people still go there. There is a lot of history there. There are graves of people who were born during slavery. My father's grandmother is buried there, my grandmother, my father, everybody. I was married at that church. The church was the center of

our lives in the community. In a rural area there was not much else to do. I guess there could have been other things, but church is what we did.

MR. HAMROCK: You mentioned houses on either side of you. Was it a densely populated area?

MS. HAGAR: No. You were just close enough to yell to your neighbor. There were probably 20 or so families living along a rural road and each house was down a long lane. You had to walk down the lane to catch the bus, and the bus would stop in one place and pick all of us up. My other family members were not far. Most of them just a few miles away further down the same rural road. All of my family were from the Eastern Shore. As a youth, I was told that the slaves who were in our area came from Africa, were sold in Annapolis, and worked on the plantations on the Eastern Shore. I do not have family from North Carolina or other Southern states because our family pretty much went from Annapolis to the plantations on the shore. There is a plantation four or five miles from where I was raised, and the plantation is still there. It is called the Beverly Plantation. I do not know if that is where my ancestors were slaves, but likely so.

MR. HAMROCK: You started to talk already about how you spent your summers while you were there at Pocomoke. Would you like to tell me some more about that?

MS. HAGAR: The summers were good. We played, read, and went to vacation bible school. When I grew older, one of my aunts had moved to Philadelphia, and I spent a couple of summers with her. Going to "the city" was quite a change. Pocomoke City compared to Philadelphia was like night and day,

but a good experience. My uncle lived in Connecticut for a short time. I spent a couple of summers in Bridgeport, Connecticut. As a teen, during the summers, I always worked. Living on a peninsula, we went to the ocean often. There were many trips to Assateague Island, the beach, and Ocean City. There were no family vacations other than to see other family members. One summer job that I had for several summers was at the Peninsula General Hospital in their personnel department. I also worked in the hospital library that the doctors used. I was able to read a lot of books and learn about bizarre medical conditions. It was scary because the library for the doctors was in the basement right beside the hospital morgue. When I had to come out of the library to go to lunch, there were always funeral people outside my door, waiting on a body.

I also worked in the chicken factories a couple of summers. Chicken factory work is hard work, very hard work. You stand for hours, or you may be cutting something, or dipping your hands into ice. A lot of the African American people who lived on the Eastern Shore worked at Perdue and Holly Farms chicken factories. One thing I will tell you, and this is not a plug for Perdue, the factories were clean, well run, if something did go bad they would immediately remove it.

My mother worked at Campbell's Soup factory for many years, until they closed the factory in our town. She then became a nurse's aide.

Sometime after he graduated from college, my father worked for and retired from the Farmers Home Administration.

MR. HAMROCK: What do you remember most about your grandparents growing up? I mean, if you had to describe them in just a few words, how would you?

MS. HAGAR: Interesting, hardworking, and loving. I called them mom-mom and pop-pop. They were young grandparents, who were still in their 30s when I was born. I was their first grandchild, and their daughter was still living at home. They paid a lot of attention to me. They loved me and I felt it. My mother was a teenager, and was a good mother, but she was still a teenager. My grandfather still stays interested in what I do. When we talk he asks about my job, my family, and me. My grandmother guided me on the right path. We went to church regularly and I wanted to go! After everyone had moved out and my grandmother and grandfather divorced, my mother had gotten married and her, my aunts, and uncle had all left, it was just me and my grandmother in the house for a while. I remember doing good things with her, and most of it was church, but I liked it.

MR. HAMROCK: Talk to me about the church experience. I mean, different churches have different atmospheres, different activities and so forth. What do you remember about your church time?

MS. HAGAR: St James United Methodist Church. Wow! All my friends and family were there, and that is where I first learned about God. We had good, honest, God-loving preachers. My favorite one was Reverend Cannon. He died recently. He was in his 90s. They all had a great sense of humor. They let children be children. We were disciplined, but they made it a place where you felt safe. Most of the ministers who came through our

church lived an upright life and you could see that they were serious about God. I think having that role model at an early age was a great influence. I saw Reverend Cannon occasionally over the years and he remained a humorous, devout, man of God. He was a great example of what a Christian should be.

MR. HAMROCK: Was it a large congregation?

MS. HAGAR: Oh indeed not. Probably 100 people at the most, which included most of the people from the St. James community. My church was a part of the United Methodist Church circuit. There were three United Methodist African American churches in Pocomoke City, and for many years only one preacher served all three churches.

MR. HAMROCK: I should have asked you this earlier. When you were growing up in Pocomoke City, how large was it? What was the population?

MS. HAGAR: Probably about 6,000. There were about 120 people in my high school class. The high school had four or five hundred students. Most of us began kindergarten together, and went all the way through high school. I know some of those people better than their spouses probably knew them. Many of us remain friends. One of the greatest times I had was when I went to a reunion probably five or so years ago. It was just good for my soul to be with the friends of my youth.

MR. HAMROCK: Let us shift our conversation then and talk about your schooling. Tell me about your elementary school all the way up through high school. What sort of memories do you have of that?

MS. HAGAR: I had very good teachers. One of my teachers, Ms. Bishop, would sit in a rocker and read to us. Back then teachers actually smoked in the classroom. I remember her smoking and reading *Moby Dick* to us. She might have read us other books, but I remember her reading that book. My history teacher in high school was Mrs. Lewis, who I believe I had as a history teacher from the ninth grade through twelfth grade. I always tell everybody that Mrs. Lewis was harder than any college professor I ever had. I think she won "Maryland Teacher of the Year" many years ago. She is deceased now, but she was a good teacher who knew what you were supposed to know, and she would say "I taught you all this last year, you all should know this." So you had that to contend with. My English teacher in high school taught me how to write well. They were good caring teachers who were invested in teaching children. Maybe that is just the way small towns are, but they were the best teachers by far. When I had to write my salutatorian address a couple of my teachers looked at it. One teacher said "Oh no you're not going to say that!" You know, when you are a teenager, you really don't know what to say, and I remember their help with my speech.

I could have gone to almost any college in America because my grades were good, but I was afraid to go too far. I received many scholarships and did not have to pay for my undergraduate education. My teachers tried to encourage me to go somewhere far away, but I was adamant that Baltimore was about as far as I was willing to go. I told them that I would

go somewhere close for a year and then I would transfer to someplace else, but I never did because I liked it at Towson University. There are some places in America where you still can have a good childhood, and good teachers and family. I was fortunate. I would say the same about my profession. I was in the right place at the right time, with the right people. My life just happened, bit by bit, according to God's plan for me.

MR. HAMROCK: Did you have an elementary and a high school, or was there a middle school as well?

MS. HAGAR: Yes, elementary, middle, and high school.

MR. HAMROCK: Okay, what were the grades for each?

MS. HAGAR: High school started at ninth through twelfth, and middle school was sixth through eighth, and elementary was from kindergarten through fifth grade.

MR. HAMROCK: You talked about this a little earlier, but tell me about the extracurricular activities that you participated in?

MS. HAGAR: I was a volleyball player, and I liked sports. My senior year I was MVP. I was in the marching band as a pompom girl my whole time in high school. I was also a basketball cheerleader the entire time in high school, and I was on the yearbook staff. I stayed involved in a lot of things.

MR. HAMROCK: Okay, so we have talked about your childhood and teenage years. Looking back now, what sort of changes did you see in your town in the area from the time you were quite young, up until you graduated high school?

MS. HAGAR: More people moved from the rural area where I grew up to live within the town's "city" limits. Many relocated to larger cities. When I was a little girl, I used to be fascinated by the migrant workers who came from Florida. They were not Hispanic like they are today, but primarily they were African American. The farmers would have special little houses, almost huts, where the migrant workers would live for the summer. As I got older, that did not happen as much. Years later, I started seeing more Hispanics come to do the farm labor. This was quite a change, because at one point it was truly all African American. Also, more of the younger people left the area because there were not many places to work in that area of the Eastern Shore. A lot of them my age and older, would go away to college, and not come back. If you did not work in a university or school, there was not too much more to do.

MR. HAMROCK: You mentioned the migrant farm workers—what sort of crops were being raised there?

MS. HAGAR: Corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, peaches, pears, string beans, potatoes, everything. Now it looks like mostly corn is grown, but back then there were all kinds of crops. People picked them and made money doing that.

MR. HAMROCK: You talked about a couple of summers where you would go up and visit big towns, Philly and Bridgeport. Tell me about those memories.

MS. HAGAR: I stayed with my Aunt Bessie in Philadelphia. It was my first time ever getting on a trolley. Catching the Greyhound bus by myself to go to Philadelphia was very frightening. Someone would put me on the bus in

Pocomoke and my aunt would be there to pick me up. Unlike Pocomoke, Philly did not shut down at night. People moved around all through the night and they sat outside on the steps late into the night. You could not do that on the Eastern Shore where there is water all around. The bugs would eat you alive. I got the opportunity to see different lifestyles, and it was just—oh my goodness, it was just so different. I also went to Bridgeport where my Uncle Harry lived for a few years. Of course, he lived in an all-black neighborhood, so it was a lot like Philadelphia to me. I spent many summers in Philadelphia.

MR. HAMROCK: Were you tempted to go and live there?

MS. HAGAR: Never. At one point, my grandfather was living near Villanova University, and visiting him there was quite different. He worked for a white family for many years, and he still goes to see them. I cannot think of their name—I should know that, but he worked as their butler. I learned a lot of things from him about etiquette. You know, with African Americans, when they have worked in other people's homes—we learn more about etiquette, what to do, what to say, what to wear, what to pick up, than many would think. Although I enjoyed visiting the cities, it was never good enough to make me want to live there. Absolutely not!

MR. HAMROCK: So you mentioned Philly and Bridgeport during your childhood, teenage years. Were there any other trips to big cities that you remember?

MS. HAGAR: No.

MR. HAMROCK: Did you ever visit Baltimore or Washington?

MS. HAGAR: Washington on a school trip, but I do not recall going to Baltimore.

MR. HAMROCK: What are your memories of Washington on your field trip?

MS. HAGAR: The Monument. That is the only place that I remember going to, but I know that I went to many other places. I had never seen anything that tall. I would have never dreamed that I would work in the Capital one day.

MR. HAMROCK: Well, let's move to your college years. Tell me first—I know you mentioned that you had decided on Towson. But tell me about the process of deciding that is where you wanted to go?

MS. HAGAR: Well, I had actually wanted to go to Tuskegee, but it was so very far and I had not been that far away from home. I was afraid. There were no family members there, and we did not know anyone in Alabama, so that was out. There were other people who were in my high school who had gone to Towson, and that helped me to decide to go there. I received scholarships and did not have to pay for college. So, I went to Towson and did very well. I really liked it and did not leave until I graduated.

MR. HAMROCK: When you decided to go there, had you decided at that point what to study?

MS. HAGAR: No, I do not remember when I made that decision. As a young child, I wanted to be a judge. I started taking sociology courses and liked them. I also liked criminology. I did an internship at the Parole and Probation Office in Towson. What they did was so interesting. They were not police or social workers. They were in the office and out of the office, attended court, and went to people's homes. Oh my God! It was the most

exciting thing! There was never a dull day. The officers met all types of people, rich people, homeless people, and I wanted to try this profession.

MR. HAMROCK: Before we talk about your studies, tell me about just the general experience of starting at college for the first time. Big change in your surroundings, people, what were your experiences your first year?

MS. HAGAR: My first year, I shared a room with a black girl from New York City and a white girl from Camp Springs, Maryland. I knew nothing about New York, or about Prince George's County, Camp Springs, Maryland. Even though we were so diverse, we got along well. I have gotten along well with most people. By the next year, I had made new friends and started rooming with someone else. My roommate experiences were good. There was a pretty large African American population at Towson who lived on campus. Most of them were from Prince George's County, Maryland. There were only a few that I knew from the Eastern Shore and none from my hometown. The only students at Towson from my hometown were white. It was a nice campus community. I pledged a sorority, which meant I met even more people. I also became the President of the Chapter. I met my husband there through one of the fraternities and once I met him, I knew I was there to stay.

MR. HAMROCK: At what point in college did you pledge the sorority?

MS. HAGAR: Fall 1980.

MR. HAMROCK: Did students typically pledge their sophomore years?

MS. HAGAR: Second or third. You had to have at least, I think, 30 credits to pledge Delta Sigma Theta. You also had to have a certain grade point average. That was back in the day when you really pledged. You walked a line, you wore identical clothing, all of that.

MR. HAMROCK: Tell me more about that.

MS. HAGAR: I can't (laughing). No, but that was a good experience. I call them my line sisters; the eleven of us who pledged together in 1980. Today, some of my best friends are my line sisters. We have a close and strong relationship. We recently met on Martin Luther King's Day for lunch. Nine of the eleven attended. This has been a 30-year relationship. We still talk, keep up with each other, and we are all still alive. I would not trade our experiences or relationship for the world. What people do not understand about pledging is that, if it is done correctly, the goals are to make you closer, and to teach you how to work together in a group and get things done under difficult situations. It also teaches you how to study and work without having much sleep. You had to help the big sisters and still get your work done. I made the Dean's List the semester I pledged. My sorority experiences taught me a lot and we formed bonds that have lasted. There are good things, really good things about pledging, not the hazing or hitting—I was never hit or anything, but the ones who do those types of things, do not understand the true purpose of pledging.

MR. HAMROCK: What sort of public activities did the sorority have?

MS. HAGAR: The foundation of Delta Sigma Theta is community service, academic excellence, and sisterhood. In college, every line had to complete certain tasks and perform community service. We tutored and did charity drives. On line, we were trained to do service, and taught how to prepare an action plan, which outlined how you were to carry out whatever you were planning to do. We worked together as sisters.

Of course there is the social part of sorority life, but Delta is about service. One of the things we learned through pledging is that we must work to make the entire community better. The community extends well beyond Delta or the black community. The community is the world.

MR. HAMROCK How large a component of the campus was "Greek life?" I mean, were there a lot of sororities and fraternities?

MS. HAGAR: Oh yes. All of the major Greek organizations were on campus.

MR. HAMROCK: Besides the sorority, what other activities did you participate in when you were at Towson?

MS. HAGAR: Only sorority and school, that was it. Through the sorority I did a lot of things and I was still in the library almost every night. I ended up graduating cum laude from college as well.

MR. HAMROCK: During your college years, were you on campus in the dormitories?

MS. HAGAR: The dormitories.

MR. HAMROCK: All four years?

MS. HAGAR: Except for my last semester when I moved off campus with a couple of my sorority sisters. We lived in a community in Baltimore not far from the campus.

MR. HAMROCK: During the summers would you go back to Pocomoke City?

MS. HAGAR: I did my first summer, and I may have gone back home my second summer. Later I found jobs at fast food restaurants in the Towson area. Soo, I stayed most summers.

MR. HAMROCK: Are you good? Do you need to take a break?

MS. HAGAR: No, I'm good.

MR. HAMROCK: Ok. You mentioned the internship at the Parole and Probation Office. Tell me more about the internship.

MS. HAGAR: If I recall correctly, it was in the courthouse in Towson. It was almost across the street from the University. It was a convenient and good internship. I worked with a white male and a female officer. Their dedication to their profession was something that I have never seen before. Meaning, I had never experienced a white person being caring and involved in the lives of African Americans. I never heard them talk disparagingly. Also, their interest in what I wanted to do was very encouraging. I decided to apply for a position with the Maryland Parole and Probation Office and was hired shortly after graduating.

MS. HAMROCK: Let's talk for a few minutes about general life at college. Not necessarily college itself, but the Baltimore area. What are your recollections of the area at that time?

MS. HAGAR: We did not venture far from the University. Every now and then we would catch the bus down to the Inner Harbor. Although Towson is right outside of Baltimore, going into the city was discouraged. Many students did go to Baltimore. We went to a club sometimes, but it was not something that most of the students that I associated with did frequently. We stayed close to the campus. There was a sense of fear that kept me from going into the city. There was no public transportation in Pocomoke. So, getting on a city bus was something I did not do by myself. The only bus that came through our town was a Greyhound bus. There was always something going on at the school, so we did not have to leave campus. We did eventually leave later, sometimes to go to the Morgan campus to see the sorority sisters or something of that nature. I ventured out into the city much more after college.

MR. HAMROCK: Was the Towson campus primarily African American at the time?

MS. HAGAR: No. Absolutely not. African Americans were the minority.

MR. HAMROCK: While you were there did you have any experiences that raised issues for you in terms of race relations while in the college environment?

MS. HAGAR: No. Towson at that time was pretty congenial. I remember a black fraternity and a white fraternity had a dance or something together, but that was in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was not bad at all. I knew that racial tension probably existed, and there were some places we did not go. If you wanted to mix racially, you could do so and it was not taboo at all.

MR. HAMROCK: You mentioned that through your sorority you met your future husband.

MS. HAGAR: Correct.

MR. HAMROCK: Tell me.

MS. HAGAR: Well, actually I met him through his fraternity. I was a sweetheart for one of the lines. He actually started the fraternity of Kappa Alpha Psi on Towson's campus. He was from Gary, Indiana. He went to Vincennes College in Indiana for two years and he pledged there. My husband Chuck, his real name is Charles Hagar, is eight years older than I am. He went to the Air Force after Vincennes College. After leaving the Air Force, he came to Towson to finish his college degree. I had gone to an event sponsored by his fraternity and I met him there. We started talking and then later we had a class in the same building. Our classes were side by side and we talked more, and from there we started to date. I married him when I was 22 years old, and we have been married 30 years now.

MR. HAMROCK: Had you graduated from college when you married?

MS. HAGAR: Yes. The year after I graduated. I graduated in 1982 and married in 1983.

MR. HAMROCK: Let's talk about the decision to start working after you graduated. Tell me about your first job.

MS. HAGAR: I had applied for Maryland Parole and Probation, but had not received word of a position yet, because you had to take a test and do some other things. My first job was at the Woodies (Woodward & Lothrop) department store in DC in security. I lived with my girlfriend's parents in Prince George's County. I caught the bus downtown to Woodward and

Lothrop. Woodward and Lothrop was located in a huge building on 9th or 10th & F Streets NW in Washington, DC. They also occupied a building behind that location. Some of the glass columns in the store were actually closets where the security officers would watch people on the floor. The easiest place to steal something was the dressing room because you truly could not watch people in the dressing room. You could only count the items that they took in and brought out. Also, there were what appeared to be air vents, but they were slots where security staff could observe shoppers. That was really my first law enforcement job. I had to arrest people who were shoplifting, complete the paperwork, and take it to the DC Metropolitan Police Department. I worked there for several months. August of 1983, I was offered the job with Maryland Parole and Probation and I left my employment at Woodies.

MR. HAMROCK: What were your impressions of DC at that time?

MS. HAGAR: It was busy. Downtown was truly downtown and Woodies was right in the center of it. There were a lot of stores, a lot of people; a lot was going on. The downtown area was vibrant back in 1983. The downtown area died for a long time and now it is full of life again.

MR. HAMROCK: Tell me about the job with Maryland Parole and Probation.

MS. HAGAR: I started there in August of 1983, two months after I got married. I began working in the College Park office not too far from the University of Maryland. Maryland Parole and Probation had a wonderful training program. We went through six weeks of training in Woodstock, Maryland

where they taught us everything we needed to know as new officers. Once the training was over, we went back to the office and began to work. My husband and I were living in Baltimore, and I was driving from Baltimore to College Park every day. I was assigned to Landover and Cheverly, which were not the good places in PG County at that time. I was hoping that I would be assigned to College Park and Laurel, but I was not. I did eventually learn how to get around in PG County. That was really a great start, and it was a great start because we were trained well. I had good supervisors, one of which was Mr. Leroy Jones. Mr. Jones was the Director of Maryland Parole and Probation, or Regional Director, at the time. He told me, "I'm going to give you two pieces of advice that you should take throughout your work life. Always return all your calls, I do not care who it is or how high or low the person's status, and always take a lunch." When I got sworn in as Chief, I shared the advice Mr Jones gave me. I have followed his advice. I take a lunch, and I do not care who calls me, I return their call. He said he was not able to make it to my swearing in, but I talked to him. He called to congratulate me and I told him what I said and he was touched that I even remembered his advice. It's amazing the impact that some people have on you that they do not even realize they had. Returning calls demonstrates that you are responsive and professional, and taking that break helps you deal with the stress. Good advice!

MR. HAMROCK: You mentioned several times the training program, how good it was. Tell me about the sorts of things you received training for.

MS. HAGAR: How to interview and supervise individuals, the rules and regulations that the state of Maryland had regarding parole and probation, how to complete forms, and safety techniques. We did not carry firearms in the state of Maryland at that time, but we did have the safety, defensive tactics, and counseling training. It was a comprehensive program. I felt good about walking into the job and doing it after going through that training. Maryland's training program demonstrates that training officers or the new employees of any type builds their confidence and protects the agency. It is not good to throw anybody in and say "figure it out."

MR. HAMROCK: Parole and probation. Those words have changed a lot over the years.

MS. HAGAR: Right.

MR. HAMROCK: When you started with Maryland Parole and Probation, what did those words mean?

MS. HAGAR: Parole meant the person had been to prison and was released on supervision. Probation meant they may not have been sent to jail, but placed on supervision for a set period of time. Either way, they were your individuals to supervise. These were individuals you had to care for to make sure that they did what they were supposed to do. The role of the officer is to help the individual become a law abiding and productive citizen, and to ensure that the community is protected. I informed the individuals on supervision when it appeared that it was time for me to

write the Parole Commission regarding their noncompliance. They were aware that there were consequences when they submitted too many positive urines, failed to attend drug treatment, or didn't do what they were supposed to do. So, you had them removed from the community and were hopeful that when they came back, they returned ready to live better.

MR. HAMROCK: Tell me about if there was such a thing as an average day at work when you were at the Maryland Parole and Probation Office?

MS. HAGAR: In Parole and Probation, you may have your day planned, but it rarely went as you planned, simply because you were dealing with people. When someone calls with an issue or the court calls, you had to respond timely and prioritize. On a typical planned day, you may have to go to court for a hearing, meet with people in the office, or perform work in the community. We call community visits "field work." When performing field work, we visit the offenders' homes, treatment programs, and jobs. We verify whatever the person tells us. The state of Maryland required officers to have face to face contacts with those on supervision and the minimum number of contacts were based on the offender's risk level. Each day was different and you had many things to do. You never knew what you would be required to respond to during the day. You were in the community most of the time. This was not a desk job.

MR. HAMROCK: Tell me about the people with whom you dealt. You know, who were they? What was their background? What were their offenses that led them into the criminal justice system?

MS. HAGAR: When I was in Maryland, most cases were not as severe as the ones that I supervised at the U.S. Probation Office. The federal offenders had more severe criminal backgrounds. The state cases involved drunk driving, theft, check fraud and sex offenses. Those types of things. At the U.S. Probation Office, there were conspiracy, drug distribution, government fraud, murder, bank robbery cases. The federal offenders ranged from politicians to street gang members. The state offenders were primarily blue collar workers.

MR. HAMROCK: What do you remember about the policies, for want of a better word, or priorities of the Maryland criminal justice system at the time you were in the Probation Office there?

MS. HAGAR: That we had to see the individuals on supervision and maintain frequent contact with them. We had to make sure that we enforced the conditions that the court ordered, and that they received treatment. We had to make sure that we did our best to get them to pay monies owed to victims. I supervised close to 100 offenders. In Maryland, based on the offense and the characteristics of the offender, you had to adhere to contact standards. Some offenders had to be seen a certain number of times each month. In U.S. Probation, the highest caseload I had was probably 45, which was a big difference. Surprisingly, this smaller caseload required even more work.

MR. HAMROCK: How large was the Maryland office?

MS. HAGAR: There were several offices in Prince George's County and I was in the College Park office. This office was later moved to Beltsville. I would say there were approximately 30 officers in the College Park office. Maryland Parole and Probation covered the entire state and there were several offices, or at least probably one office in very county. The larger counties like Prince George's and Montgomery County have many offices.

MR. HAMROCK: During your time, how long were you in that office?

MS. HAGAR: 1983 to 1985.

MR. HAMROCK: Do you remember any changes in the Maryland state government system that caused any particular changes in your office while you were there?

MS HAGAR: No. Not during that time.

MR. HAMROCK: Thinking back on it now, are there any particularly good stories you remember about your time there that you would like to share?

MS. HAGAR: I remember I had one individual who I was supervising who was convicted of impersonating a police officer. He kept doing it, despite being on probation. He had mental problems, but saw his psychologist regularly. He would simply tell me, "You know what, he was speeding, so I pulled him over." Never harmful, but one day he pulled over a Prince George's County police officer, and the officer asked my offender what precinct he was from. Unfortunately, he named that officer's precinct and the real officer arrested him. Several years ago, while I was looking at TV, there was a report that a Prince George's County police officer was killed. When they named the slain officer, I told my husband that the

person named was on my caseload over 20 years ago and always impersonated police. I was able to identify him because he had a unique name. Subsequent news reports did indeed indicate that the person killed was impersonating a policeman. So, sadly, he never stopped. All these years later, he was still engaging in the same type of behavior and it resulted in his death. Even when the media questioned his neighbors, they reported that they thought he was a police officer, because that's how he acted and that's what he told them. I remember some of the bad cases that involved incest, rape, and abuse. The things that you know and witness as a probation officer are astonishing. These situations are so sad. I just wanted to make the person better, and sometimes you can't.

MR. HAMROCK: Let's go off the record for a tape change.

MR. HAMROCK: This is the Oral History of Gennine Hagar, March 10, 2014, recording number 2, 5:20 p.m., the offices of McKenna Long & Aldridge LLP, 1900 K Street, NW, Washington D.C.

MR. HAMROCK: Ms. Hagar, I would like to resume our conversation. I had a couple of follow up questions about your time working as a parole and probation officer in the state of Maryland's Parole and Probation Office. You mentioned briefly sort of your interaction with other law enforcement entities and agencies in the court, can you tell me a little bit more about your interaction with those entities?

MS. HAGAR: I had to appear in court routinely for hearings. I responded to the judges' inquiries and requests and kept the court informed. Early in my career, I

became accustomed to going to court, talking to judges, attorneys, and police officers. It was a great learning experience and I gained first-hand experience about how the court system worked. It is not as dramatic as TV portrays, but there have been emotional moments. The people that I have worked with, most of them care about their profession and the people they serve. Most officers and judges try to do the right things for the victims and for the offender. Everyone seemed to want Prince George's County to be safer. It was good working with other professions, such as with the treatment counselors and psychologists. I learned a lot by listening to people talk about their jobs.

MR. HAMROCK: How would you describe the role of the parole and probation officer with respect to the, I don't know if, "client" is not the right word, the . . .

MS. HAGAR: Individual.

MR. HAMROCK: Individual.

MS. HAGAR: Yes. Oftentimes as a probation officer, you know more about the person than what most other people know about them. You know things that his mother, wife, and victim do not know. Over time, if you establish rapport with them, they confide in you. They want help and they often learn that, as a good officer, you are there to help them and you want them to make it through supervision and life. You do not want them to go back to jail, because in addition to the costs to the government and loss to the family, as an officer that also means more work for you. Officers must write the court, attend the hearings, and everything else associated with the

revocation of supervision. So, you want them to do well for many reasons.

Some probation officers see themselves more as law enforcement officers. They do not become involved as much as they can in the lives of the person. Other officers view themselves as social workers. I believe we are a mixture of the two professions. Part of our job as probation officers requires that we have collateral contacts, which means that we talk with the employer, neighbors, treatment providers, friends, and family. We are required to make home visits, and on some of the visits we walk throughout the house, conduct searches, and ask questions. This routine practice is something that you have to learn to become comfortable doing as an officer.

After a while, surprisingly, some of my offenders in DC began to look out for me as well. They would tell me not to come to a certain area at a certain time of day, or they would wait outside for me to take me up to their apartment, so that I would not be in the stairwell alone. This was the era before cellphones, when building entries were often locked. I did not view my role as the person trying to send them back to jail, quite the contrary. I would tell the offender that I was the one trying to keep them out of jail, sober, and working. In probation, the judge really relies on our recommendations because the court knows that we have worked closely with these individuals.

Oftentimes, a unique relationship develops between the officers and the person on supervision. Over the years I have seen many people on the street that I have supervised, and I am not afraid to interact with them. There have only been a couple that would instill fear. I am glad to see them, talk to them, and ask about their family. Even when I see them back on supervision again, I ask, "Why are you back? What are you doing? Why are you here? When are you going to give this up? Is this going to be a life sentence on the installment plan?"

So, yes, it is a different type of relationship. It is different from the defense attorney who is always advocating for the offender, because I am not on their side when they are wrong. I am going to say, "You know what, you are wrong, and this has to be reported because I am required to report it." We do not have the option to not report violations to the Parole Commission or court. I still have to do that, and I have the opportunity to provide the judge with appropriate alternatives. The judges in the District of Columbia, and the US District Court, work with us as we work with the individuals on supervision. Even in Maryland, the judges worked with the probation officers. I find that the court is often willing to work with the offenders as long as the offender is not a threat to anyone and is sincere about changing and seeking help.

MR. HAMROCK: Let's move on and talk about the time you spent in your next employment at the District of Columbia Department of Corrections. Tell me about the transition from the Maryland job to the DC job.

MS. HAGAR: Someone in my office in Maryland had told me about the position as a case manager at the DC jail. It was in the District, different from parole and probation and paid more. So, I applied and I got the job. I worked at the DC jail from 1985 to 1988 when the crack epidemic was hitting the city hard. It was pretty much at the onset of the AIDS epidemic as well. As a case manager, one of my duties was to interview people who were brought to jail by police the night before. So, each day when I walked in around 7:00 a.m., there was a room full of people waiting to be interviewed. We conducted the interviews in offices that had no barriers. Some of the individuals were still in bad shape from whatever had gone on the night before.

During the intake interview, I had to get basic background information. I believed that I got a lot of truthful answers. Most of them were still in shock from the arrest or crime, and many had not sobered from the night before. You heard the stories in their rawest form. Jail intake interviews were an eye opener for me. Listening to the different stories and seeing the anguish or anger people had about being in jail, or back in jail was sobering for me.

The DC Jail was overcrowded at that time, and court orders were issued to control the inmate population. I remember reporting to the jail a couple of times right before midnight to process inmates for release, so the jail would be in compliance with the court order. We had to go through the paperwork to make sure we were not letting anyone go who was not

supposed to be released. As a case manager at the jail, the inmates of the jail would send me a request that they need to talk to their lawyer, or they needed to be in the school program. I was their case worker inside of the jail. One of my duties was to provide the DC Parole Board with compliance reports that helped them determine whether an inmate should be released on parole. I provided my recommendation regarding release and informed the Parole Board of where that person planned to live and work. For a period, I worked as the case manager for the women's unit. Just hearing the women tell their stories was something I will treasure. As a young person of 25 to 26, it seemed as though everyone at the jail was older than me. They were kind though. I heard some very colorful and adult stories. Listening to prostitutes from the city streets of DC provided me with lessons about life and lifestyles that were quite extreme. Working at the jail opened my eyes and made me realize what a sheltered and blessed life I had led. I really never believed people's lives were that bad. You would see it on TV, but it is nothing like someone telling you about something horrific that happened to them. These stories opened my eyes and made me realize what a sheltered life I had led. I remember a young black man telling me that someone took him to the roof of an apartment building and raped him every day from the time when he was 8 until age 12. The women talked about the abuse they endured, being left to die, but living. I heard what the clinicians said was wrong with the inmate. Overheard the physicians describe what they had found inserted

in an inmate's body. My DC Jail experience escalated my knowledge of life beyond measure. The days of my rural girl innocence were long gone. I was forced to grow up.

In addition to the inmates and their situations, the Department of Corrections was being sued all the time for sexual harassment. I was fortunate because I had a good supervisor. I was never subjected to the sexual harassment that I knew was going on at the jail. By the time I got to US District Court, I saw some of the jail employees I knew in the hallway waiting to go into court. Unfortunately, some of the predators in the jail were actual employees. I learned a lot about the dark side of humans.

MR. HAMROCK: Were you living in DC at the time?

MS. HAGAR: No. My family has lived in Prince George's County since moving from Baltimore to Laurel, Maryland in 1984. We moved from Laurel to Upper Marlboro in 1987, and to Fort Washington, Maryland in 1996. We continue to live in Fort Washington. I love Washington DC, its people and neighborhoods. It is my job to protect the citizens here, and I take that seriously. I consider myself an honorary Washingtonian (laughs).

MR. HAMROCK: Yes. No objection. At the time you were at the DC Department of Corrections, who was mayor at the time?

MS. HAGAR: Marion Barry probably. It is interesting because as Chief, I did eventually get to speak to Marion Barry while he was on supervision in my office as Chief and shortly after he completed supervision. We had a very nice

conversation. It's ironic that at one point in my career, I worked for him at the DC jail. It's funny how life goes.

MR. HAMROCK: What were your memories of DC government generally during that time period?

MS. HAGAR: It was problematic. I worked in a good unit, and had a good supervisor within the jail administration, but the news about DC politics, the Mayor, routinely portrayed DC government as corrupt and inept. Certainly, some of those things were happening, but there were many very good people in the DC government. The jail did not seem to have a financial problem because the needs of the inmates were met. Now there was a space problem for sure. It was the city's only jail. The local prison was still operating in Lorton, Virginia. However, the citizens of that area in Virginia were always working to close that facility. Ultimately, it was closed.

MR. HAMROCK: Did you have any interactions with the folks at the US Attorney's office during this time period?

MS. HAGAR: No, not while I was at the jail.

MR. HAMROCK: In terms of . . . what kind of training did you receive before you started with the DC Department of Corrections?

MS. HAGAR: We went to Lorton for about a week and received classroom training about the Department of Corrections policies and procedures. Most of my training was hands-on training done by case managers at the jail. My job title was Classification and Parole Officer. The inmates called us C&P

officers. The title was later changed to Correctional Treatment Specialist. A woman who had been there for quite some time, who had worked at Lorton and at the jail, trained me. When I first started doing intake, she or another older classification and parole officer observed and coached me. I watched them and then as I started to do the intake, they would watch and guide me. When I received requests from the inmates, they would tell me how to handle them and they trained me on how to write the reports to the DC Parole Board.

So, people who had been there for many years trained me. They gave me the training that was not in the books. For example, I was told not to even give an inmate an ink pen. As innocent as it seems, inmates were supposed to get items from the approved sources. The rationale was that once they knew that you were open to giving them something you were not supposed to give them, they would continue to escalate their requests, until one day they would ask you to bring in drugs or other contraband. Seems extreme, but I heeded their warnings. There were wise people who worked in the jail, who told me what and whom to stay away from. Their advice was priceless.

MR. HAMROCK: I know recently there was a lot of publicity about some issues involving . . .

MS. HAGAR: Baltimore.

MR. HAMROCK: Yes. I wondered if you had any thoughts about that situation?

MS. HAGAR: The worst thing that you can do as a correctional officer or probation officer is to do those things that are contrary to what you are hired to do. You are making the offender's life worse by helping them to maintain a criminal lifestyle. That is about the lowest that you can do in my profession. I mean, having babies by the inmates? No, No!

MR. HAMROCK: You mentioned to us or you mentioned to me when I met you at your office about some comments, I guess it was your grandmother had when you were working this job and you were expecting your first child.

MS. HAGAR: Oh no, that was my mother.

MR. HAMROCK: Your mother.

MS. HAGAR: I worked up until the day I had my son. I worked that Friday and I went into labor Friday night. She was so concerned that I was going to have my baby at work and that her first grandchild was going to be born in a jail. I wasn't concerned about that at all. I guess I should have been. I was 25 and I was healthy, so I kept going to work. After my son Gregory was born, and I think I have told him, he used to sit on the stairs and look between the rails and it was only then that I felt I may have worked at the jail too long when I was carrying him (laughs). Although the inmates were nice to me, my parents and my husband were concerned that something would happen to me. The inmates were respectful. The things that you see on TV, like when a woman walks through a prison and male inmates are whistling and making inappropriate remarks, did not happen like that at the jail. They would ask when is the baby coming, or

something like that. The female inmates would tell you about their children, and ask questions like "have you been sick?" Their questions and concern appeared sincere. Maybe I was too naïve, I don't know, but I was not afraid.

MR. HAMROCK: During this time period in 1985 to 1988, I think you said that by that point you were either in rural or upper Maryland?

MS. HAGAR: Upper Marlboro.

MR. HAMROCK: Upper Maryland. Upper Marlboro.

MS. HAGAR: Yes. Yes.

MR. HAMROCK: Tell me about your home life during that time period.

MS. HAGAR: I married when I was 22. My husband was 30. He was working as a television cameraman. When we were living in Baltimore he worked for Channel 11, and later he worked for Comcast. He has worked in Virginia as well. Now, he works for Voice of America. He worked for American Chemical Society for about 10 to 15 years. While there, he traveled all over the country doing stories about science, chemistry, and medicines. Sometimes the national and local news would have clips about a new medicine and the American Chemical Society TV team provided the clip. He has seen the Northern Lights in Alaska and he has been in a submarine, while I go to Southeast DC as a parole officer to make home visits. We work in two entirely different worlds, but it provides lively conversation. I am fortunate to have a good husband and home life. He always says that he married a smart woman and he never held me back from whatever I

wanted to do. As far as being in the community, I am sure he was concerned, but I would do whatever I could to reassure that I was safe. I often told him that it was really not that bad—sometimes it was, and sometimes it wasn't. The chief that hired me, Eugene Wesley, said if a situation in a community looks bad, feels bad, go a different day. If you are going up to a house and you just have this feeling or something, don't go that day. Follow your instincts. Establishing the rapport with the people you supervised, provided you with some degree of safety. The communities in the 1980s and 1990s were bad in DC. Some of the same places, for example, off of Wheeler Road that I really did not like to go to as an officer, were projects that drug dealers and addicts frequented. Today, many of the projects have been torn down and replaced with single family homes and townhouses. It makes you wonder about what happened to the people.

My home life was and still is my haven. I have a good, kind husband, and had very good in-laws. My in-laws lived in Gary, Indiana, and were a lot older than my parents. My husband's parents were actually my grandparents' age. They were very kind to me.

MR. HAMROCK: You mentioned earlier that church was very important to you growing up. Once you moved to Maryland, did you find a church that . . .

MS. HAGAR: Yes I did. When I became pregnant with my son, I started looked for a church in Prince George's County. I knew the importance of being raised in the church and knowing God. I wanted my son to know that there is a

parent who is far greater than I will ever be to him. One who sees all and will protect him. He was little when we joined Full Gospel AME Zion Church, and he grew up in that church. It later became From the Heart Church Ministries. We were members of that church for more than 20 years. I was active in the church and a member of the Young Missionary Society. We joined a new church this year, and I plan to become fully active. Still, nothing compares to Saint James United Methodist Church.

MR. HAMROCK: Why don't we break for today. This is the end of recording number 1 of the Oral History of Gennine Hagar.