



**Annie May Boone Joyceet Binford**  
**ROBS History Project**  
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Let our record show that her name is Annie May Boone Joyceet Binford. The Annie May portion was given her by her father. She was named after two of his sisters. The older deceased sister was her first name and her middle name was in memory of her father's middle sister. Annie had a knick-name of '*Baby Sister*' she admitted to keeping secret. Her mother gave her the name because she thought Annie would be her last child. As it happened there were four other children who followed so that was what they called her for many years. She also had a brother who family called "*Baby Brother*." Annie explained she had no children of her own but did have two adopted daughters who were former students of her's from Brentwood, one of whom she considers her step daughter who has a son that she calls her grandson, adding there are no step grandchildren, he's just a grandson. At the end of her previous year they came to her and asked if they could live with her because they had nowhere else to go.

It was so ironic that on the last day of school last year her husband and she had left home around nine and stopped to have breakfast because she didn't have to be in school until about ten. As they were sitting there she said to him, "*You know I'm retiring next year. What am I going to do with my time? And in doing my time I said, to him I know, I'll take in a couple of babies. But I don't want to change any diapers. I don't want any five year olds or fifteen year olds, etc. Oh, let's forget about it*". She went to school and was 1.

there getting ready for the end of the year by cleaning out her room when a little girl knocked on her door and said that she had a story to tell me. Ann said *"Sure. Come on in."* Well she knew she was a foster child and had a sister who was a foster child. As she spoke she said she was going to college and she was eighteen but she didn't have a place to stay and she wanted to know if she could come live with Annie. She didn't have to ask her husband because they'd already talked about it. He'd agreed that we were going to take in a couple of babies. Well here were her babies. So they were with Ann then and are already in college. One is in Albany University and the other is in Binghamton University. *"So it's now vacation time and my family is growing. I've taken a little of Brentwood with me. They were students of mine since the tenth grade. They were in 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade with me and at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> year they knew I was leaving so they wanted to leave with me. They are my family here. Most of my family is in Virginia. My mother is in Virginia and all my sisters and brothers so I'm really the only one that's in this area. So my family has grown here also"*. What a wonderful statement that makes about you and the impact that you have had on their lives and will still have on their lives.

Annie sees her family in Virginia quite often; on the average of two or three times a year on every Christmas vacation, Mother's Day we try to go home because dad is gone but mother is still here And we try to visit with her as often as we can.

Annie was born in what is now known as the City of Suffolk, Virginia. Her father passed away in 1982 but her mother is still there and she is eighty three years old. There were nine children in the family. They try to get to see their mother now as often as possible. They come from a very small town and they had a humble beginning. As she tells people they were very poor in terms of material things but they had a lot of love for each other. Annie said she really didn't find out that she was poor until she went to college. When she saw kids with different things she knew that they didn't have those things.

One of her earliest childhood memories had to do with starting school. Over the years she would hear Brentwood kids complain about having to go to school. When she first went to grammar school it was in one room. There were four classes 1<sup>st</sup> thru 4<sup>th</sup> grade and her teachers name was Mrs. Elliot. She remembers walking to school with a group of her classmates. It was about three miles. Then from grammar school they would go to elementary school. Her earliest memories would have been from when she reached school age. It was very rural country back then. A bus did take them to elementary school. The school house itself was shaped like a pill box and all her brothers and sisters were there. As they advanced in age they would move up and move on. There were only the first four grades. There was no kindergarten and she remembered how the teacher was very warm and friendly, sort of like a mother figure. There was a pot bellied stove in the corner. The teacher would use it for lunch when she would heat up a big bowl of soup or beans for the children and they'd have a slice of bread (from home) and that would be their lunch. They were all asked to bring to school a slice of bread from home (if they had it), and a bowl. That was a big deal because it provided them all with a sense of family. Annie thought it was more of a local community school drawing students from the immediate area, although the funding came from taxes and the district offices were in a separate building located quite a way from the community where they attended school. Annie still has a number of friends from the area that she sees when she returns each year to visit her mother and family; some of the teachers, doctors and neighbors. The times she was describing took place during the 1950's since she was born in 1944, and graduated from High School in 1962. She has memories of her father taking her with him to work in what they called "*the fields*" picking beans, when they would take a few of the children with them. Annie's mother and father would be picking vegetables for 50 cents a basket. That was how they made a living. It was their impression at the time that all of that was just an everyday part of life. They really didn't put any 3.

significance to it. He later applied for a job at the Norfolk Naval shipyard after the war and was able to get a job there. He was there for about thirty three years until he retired.

She knew that her own father's mother died when he was about two years old. During his life he set out to find his family. He was able to find his mother's sister; his aunt. There were several aunts and uncles that he found and visited. Then he also found his grandparent's but from that point on his search became almost impossible. Her father had been born in Philadelphia, so his family had all been northerners. Her mother's folks had all come from southern origins; ie. North and South Carolina. She had died when Annie was about a month old at which point her grandmother raised her. When Annie was born her grandmother was gone. They lived in an area where most of her known family lived on the same block, maybe four or five houses one after another. Her uncle lived next door, her aunt after that, then another aunt and they were all related to her mother. That's how they grew up. In each of those households there were at least seven to ten children. We all grew up with friends that were cousins. It was so funny that each house would have a boy at the same time, a girl at the same time or separated only by a few months here and there and we all had friends that were cousins. And that was how we all grew up. As a matter of fact when Annie came to New York she came with her two cousins at the same time. One ended up in Rochester and one ended up in the city. She acknowledged having had a wonderful childhood. She said *"I had a beautiful childhood."* She spoke of the hard time she experienced coming to Brentwood and hearing stories about the early life experiences of children she'd encountered here. The type of family history they had experienced was very difficult for Annie to relate to. They would tell her stories and she would say, *"Oh no, that can't be, because your mom and dad wouldn't allow that -* But it would happen.

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Annie's mother loved cooking and church above all else. Her father was the more dominant figure in the home because they were all biblical students and attended Sunday school and church and sometimes would even be in church all day long. Whenever there was a problem her mom would say, "*Wait till your daddy gets home*". And that was all she'd have to say. Her mom took great pride in her cooking, her rolls and her children. That happens to be one tradition that Annie' doesn't emulate. She stated emphatically that she does not enjoy cooking. She cooks when and because she has to. Fortunately for her, her husband loves to cook.

As Annie told us earlier, she's been born smack in the middle of a large and loving nuclear family of nine siblings. She being the fifth child, was the first of all her brothers and sisters to finish college. Her oldest brother was attending college but was then drafted into the military. Her oldest sister was also in college but then left to get married. Both her brother and sister went back and completed college. They've all graduated now from college. Her youngest brother and sister are still matriculating but planning to complete their educations but they have families and are doing quite well.

Her oldest brother is an electrician, her oldest sister is a nurse and has taught nursing. Her next brother was in the US Air Force during that era and he came out of the military with an emotional issue and died tragically in 1990 of complications from the fighting. Her next sister was in data processing and she has another of her sisters that is teaching in Maryland. She has a brother whose career is in the field of nuclear energy. Her youngest sister is married and has babies; little boys and little girls and doesn't have time for school right now. Her baby brother works in Management and is doing well. Her father's wish for his family was that everyone learn to do something. He didn't care what it was but he hoped 5.

that each of them would eventually contribute their own unique skills and considerable talents someplace by doing something for their wider community.

When she was asked if there were other adults during her formative years that had as profound an effect upon her growth and development as her parents she said, “Yes”, and then Annie cited her Sunday School teachers who were part of something she, and her sisters and brothers did religiously, were not forced to do, but embraced as a normal part of their routine existence. She said, *“I remember the things that they taught us over the years like – “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” – These were values that were reinforced in her home. She returns periodically and visits some of those people from their church. As a matter of fact she was speaking with one such person recently because the woman had lost her husband while Annie was there. As they spoke she said she sometimes wondered if anything she had done over the years ever mattered to people and to the children. That was when Annie told her, “Oh yes it did. It matters a great deal and it was because of you I have taken some of my values up north to certain situations. I’m in my church and I’m there in school and what they hear in that school has helped them hearing about those values. You don’t have to preach to them either especially when you live the things that you are taught. Annie said “I give much of that credit to the teachers of my Sunday School”.*

Eventually, we got around to asking what for me was a burning question. I was anxious to learn what made Annie decide to become an educator and who it might have been that inspired her to teach. She explained it this way. *“When I was in high school I had a teacher that I greatly admired. She was a business teacher, very stern woman, Mrs. Spenser. I looked up to her when I took typing and I said to myself – I want to be like that lady. She didn’t smile much, I didn’t know why but there was something about her that I liked and I wanted to be like this lady Mrs. Spenser”.* 6.

She was my role model. When I walked into her class the class was full. There were just so many people in the class. Mrs. Spenser walks in and says, *"Get over there!" You sit over there. You do this. You go there"*. She appeared to be angry with the world. Eventually her class got smaller until the number of students in the class equaled the number of typewriters in the room she made a complete turn. She was the sweetest, nicest person you could ever want to meet. Eventually she explained, *"Well I had to do that until I got my class down to the size that I wanted it to be"*, and I remember that to this day. I do remember.

Annie attended Norfolk Division of Virginia State College and graduated from Norfolk State University. She couldn't find an available job where she was still residing at home in Virginia when a friend told her about positions in teaching that were available and being advertised in her field up north. When she graduated in 1969 that friend had seen a flyer for teaching positions opening on Long Island in Lindenhurst. By the time they arrived in Brentwood the job opening had already been filled but Annie had a sister who was living in Brentwood at that time. She and her friend moved in with her sister for a couple of months while they looked for work in Nassau County until they learned that there were then two new openings for teachers in the district. They went to Brentwood, Annie's friend was interviewed. She got the job, Annie was interviewed next but the person who had been interviewed before her was chosen first and got the job and Ann was left out. She told her sister, *"I'm going home. I'm going back to Virginia"* but her sister convinced her to stay, mainly because she needed the company. She continued to stay but decided to try for a different kind of job. She applied in Wyandanch but only for the position of Secretary, not as a teacher. Then the person who interviewed her went away for the weekend and never informed her she had gotten the job. The Secretary told her to wait a couple of days and we'll call you on Tuesday. Well on Monday, the contract arrived from Brentwood and she signed it. When the person from Wyandanch called on Tuesday

to say she had gotten the job, she said *"Thanks very much but No thanks"* informing him that she had already signed a contract with Brentwood. Annie has been in Brentwood ever since (September 1969) and has enjoyed being there from then on.

She remembered her first paying job which had occurred in 1965. She came to Westchester, New York as a live-in maid. She knew nothing about the city and nothing about New York. She and two cousins had approached an employment agency in Virginia who had connected them with an agency in Westchester to find them fulltime employment as housekeepers or live in maids. After two weeks there were three little girls who had become very comfortable with her and one day one of the little girls called her a maid and that was it. She said *"I'm going back to school. I'm not a maid."* She asked herself why she had reacted that way. Maybe, she thought, she was just part of their family, but she sure wasn't a maid." So she Left and went back to Long Island and worked as a switch board operator for about a month. After that, in August, she went back to Virginia to finish her college education resuming it in September. She had two more years there and once she started working and collecting a paycheck it was very hard for her to go back to school. Because she'd worked out here and it hadn't worked out well as a switch board operator that seemed to be the push she needed to go back to college and finish her education.

Annie had always loved to read and she did a lot of it. Much of her information came from newspapers, about whatever interested her, or listening to friends.. They didn't have electricity or television until much later. They were a very close knit family but believed that reading was the one activity they most often enjoyed doing. Having lived through several dark periods of American History she remembered being part of some the memorable cultural historic events several of which were also traumatic. She could remember Klan rallies, cross burnings, Civil Rights demonstrations and sit-ins' some of which her father didn't know about or of which he might not necessarily have otherwise approved.



She also remembered hearing about or learning of cross burnings in certain neighborhoods. Her community was set off by itself and was mainly a black community that was very strong in their faith. The men were all very protective of their families and although she heard about fatherless families that was not part of her experience growing up. There was a father in every house on her block. She believed that all the kids she knew were very much protected from a great many of things that they could have otherwise been involved in. When they went to the movies one of the daddies on the block took them. If they went to the theater or to a play or some other cultural event, it was done with or including the involvement of their church. All their extra-curricula activities were either in conjunction with, or run by, the church. Much of what went on in her father's history had also served to protect them from what was going on in their world. Her father had come from an interracial background, since his Grandmother (Annie's Great grandmother) was a white woman. He himself was a man of very fair complexion. In her home growing up Annie and all her siblings were not allowed to use any profanity, they were not allowed to use any sort of racial name toward any group of people regardless of where they came from because if you talk about the whites, her father would say, then you're talking about my ancestors and if your talking about blacks then you're talking about all of us. His father was black and he had Indian in him. Annie's mother had part Indian ancestry although she was predominantly African black and her father's history was quite varied. He didn't allow any talking about anyone's family within the household. Her mother would add, *"If you can't say something nice about someone then don't say anything at all."* Ann told us that was the goal toward which her entire family tried to realize by their behavior.

Annie readily admitted to being a *"night person."* Getting up early in the morning for school when she was in college and during her teaching years had always been especially difficult for her. She never had a problem staying up late however.

Having committed to living “*up north*” she said, while acclimating to four seasons she thought the autumn was her favorite. Summers she didn’t care for, winters were too cold.

Had she continued pursuing her formal education once she settled in to her new life? She did, she said, and attended several different schools in the area. She went to C.W. Post, Hofstra University, Long Island University, and a number of other local schools never quite completing a Masters Requirement but almost attaining enough graduates credits to achieve a degree in Special Education. She however, chose not to complete her course work leading to the Masters Degree in Special Ed because she had changed direction by then. It is her present intention upon retiring to return to school to finish what she had started or perhaps to take up another interest. That’s what she really wants to do.

Were there particular teachers you have met over the course of your life that given the chance you would like to thank for their contribution to your unique preparation to teach and pass along the subjects and life lessons you’ve imparted to students? Annie said, “*You’re right, and there are so many that I could name. Mary Baber, was a Business teacher here when I arrived. She had been here about eight or nine years when I started. With her, she was so open and friendly and she was really the first one that I had encountered once I was introduced to the Department. She made things so much better for us by giving us information and showing us what to do. We’d never been in a classroom other than for student teaching. She was one who helped a great deal. There were other teachers along the way that in every instance along the way I was able to gain something from them. I was here in the Ross and Sonderling Building during the earlier part of my years. I was with the tenth graders and with Everette Reese who meant a great deal to me. Especially, his encouragement since I didn’t want to stay. I had come in contact with so many negatives in general, in terms of the kids and their lifestyles. I’d learned more from them about “the world” than I had in all the years I’d been growing up to that point.*10

*I think it was because so much of my upbringing had been protected from outside influences during my childhood and my father still thought of me as a child at the age of twenty two and twenty four. Whether beginning teachers know it or not, one of the most important lessons acquired as newbie's in the Brentwood district were the lessons about pain and suffering we learned from our students simply by watching and listening. Annie said it was one of the most difficult of all the things she learned from her students that almost caused her to leave the district. Because there were many times she would see a child in pain and not be able to do anything about it. She wanted to help while at the same time knowing as a teacher you could not interfere. When Annie started here and many people didn't know it, was one of the reasons she came locally going to church. She started attending the churches because that was one of the ways of getting to know the families and knowing the kids that she worked with. She could get to know the families and what they were doing. And many times when the parents saw me in the church or in the community, they had a different respect and a different outlook for that child in terms of what he or she was doing in that classroom. She said she thought that was one of the benefits, but there were so many other things that extended her influence. She could remember many times when she would walk in or on kids in the corridor with a language,... foul language, problem, and the minute they saw her they changed their tune because they knew that I knew their mom or their dad from the church. So it was a great influence and made a big difference with the children. But as she said, there were so many times....she didn't know at that time what foster care was....she learned all those things once she was here...and to know of the heart ache and know what the kids were going through as foster children, and not be able to do anything about it...It was very difficult".*

When she was a student one of her least favorite subjects was Social Studies - and trying to remember all of the dates. I asked her, before she came, "Did she have any preconceptions about what it would be like teaching in Brentwood?" No, not in Brentwood, 11.

but *in the North*, Yes, she did! When she was in high school she had been taught that all the kids up north were so much smarter than she was. She was told, “*You’re going to have to work harder. You’re going to have to do great things in order to compete or go to school or to teach.*” When she came here that was her greatest fear – that she would not measure up or that they would spot it right away, by the way she dressed and she was not as well traveled as they were up north. She thought that she couldn’t compete. When she started teaching here she owned one skirt, two dresses, two blouses, one pair of shoes and that was it – the extent of her wardrobe. That was one of the things that caused her to be reserved because she felt she was not cut out to be in this part of the world. She wondered why she had come here. It was a humbling experience for her. Eventually she learned that everything about her expectations about coming north was not really the truth.

For the life of her, Annie could not recall who interviewed her for her job. She said there were two people but she didn’t come in contact with that many administrators and therefore wasn’t familiar with who they might have been since she tried to handle problems on her own without seeking the help of administrators. She tried to stay with the kids but remembered Mr. Yankowski, and Mr. Weaver who was still there for a little while. She knew Mr. Reese and Mr. Puleo of course, she said and had met Mr. Martz. Besides which, when she came for the interview in Brentwood, believe it or not she said “*I didn’t want the job*”. She wasn’t interested in staying in New York. All she wanted was to go back to Virginia and that’s why she was so surprised when she successfully completed her interview and was offered a position in the Business Department and then got the job.

While some of your early years in Brentwood as a non-tenured teacher in (1969,1970,1971) were no doubt stressful and at times difficult to endure, there were positive times as well, were there not?

*“Oh, yes there were but those had been stressful times during the sixties with the Civil Rights Movement and then the kids here were angry and they wanted to express the feelings that they had about certain issues and there were quite a few unsettling moments here in the building. There was also a war going on in Viet Nam but on the other side there were quite a few joyous moments. As a matter of fact at a retirement dinner I spoke and referred to a couple of incidents during that time. My first year in 1969 I told them that I was probably the only teacher running to the front office at the end of the year*

*looking for my letter telling me that I couldn't come back. There were a couple of years like that. I just wanted to be back with my parents. My first year here, one of my students came in at the end of the year when I was looking for my letter that said – “Get out and don't come back” – a little girl came in and asked me if she could sit in and do some work and I said, sure. – She came in and sat and she was working, and when she finished she got up to leave, turned to me and said, Miss Boone, I've never had a black teacher before. And Annie said, Really? And then the girl said, but I'm glad you came because now I'll know that I'll never be the same. Annie said she never forgot that when the little girl said, “I'll never be the same again.” She remembered telling the assembled colleagues that she had always been asking God to tell her ....Why was she here? Why did I come this far....and why am I here in Brentwood? When she said that to me that's when I realized, maybe that's why I'm here...to be a role model to the black kid; to the black student. .Well, that satisfied her for another year and she said to herself, okay then if they have me back I'll stay here another year. But of course the next year I saw the same little girl and she had changed, she had completely changed. Before she had looked like she'd just taken her blouse out of the wash and put it on. The next year she was starched and pressed and neater and went on to school to study psychology but she lost touch with her after graduation. At the end of that year she was thinking she was here for the Black image. I told them that when I started I was a little colored girl. That was true – shy,* 13.

*reserved, and I imagined backward. Then I guess I became a negro as they called us, It was a different type of feeling for me and then a Black woman. That was an even different feeling. Now we were hearing about Black Power and being told "We were going to take charge. Be in control and be the leader, and you shouldn't pay attention to what some others might say. And then another year passes, I'm still waiting for that letter to arrive and at the end of the year another little boy comes in and says he had to do a report and can he come in? I said come on in, so he came in sat down and did his report and as he finished he got up to leave "déjà vu", he gets to the door turns and says, "Miss Boone" I never had a Black teacher before....and I'm looking at him because this is a little white kid. And she asks, No? He replies, "No, I've never had a black teacher but I'm glad that you were my teacher." And she said, well thank you baby." Then he left and I realized, I'm not here for any one child. I was here for any child that needed me. And after that she settled in, blinked and suddenly it's thirty years later. Over the years "I've met beautiful kids." she said, Of course I've had my share of knuckle heads, but the majority of kids I met were beautiful kids."*

Annie taught everything from Business Math to Introduction to General Business, Keyboarding, Typing. She served as an advisor to the Future Business Leaders of America. She started that when she was in the Northwest 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Center until last year and she was there for about fifteen or sixteen years.

There was only one year that she cited and could remember as being better than any other year. That was the instance when she had as a student an exceptional girl who she remembered quite well. That year she had a little girl who went as far as the New York State competitions in the FBI. She won first place in Suffolk County and third place in the State for Keyboarding and she was on a typewriter when all the other kids were on a computer. Then something happened and she was called to represent our State in Washington but by that time we had spent all of our money and 14.

we couldn't go. She thought that was so wonderful mostly because she felt so proud of her student and what she had been able to accomplish.

Did she think her teacher training had adequately prepared her for what she experienced upon her arrival to her Brentwood classroom? "Yes, *in a way*", she said, but most of her training took place on the job in real time because all that had been learned before went out the window. She didn't remember too much of it. Then you were under the guise of an advisor or the teacher in the classroom. Annie, said she was fortunate in that she had gone back home to Virginia to do her student teaching. Most of her training she said had taken place right here in the classroom because every child is different and every class over the years is also different.

Could she in her own words, describe for us what she saw as her reason or mission for continuing to teach and do what she did? When Annie first heard her student tell her that she had never before had a Black teacher she heard that as her mission or reason for being here, to provide them with a good role model. When she went to church as she told the group at her retirement dinner, after that child spoke to her, she was really puzzled because she wanted to be out of here and back in Virginia. As she sat there on that Sunday, the preacher preached on the good shepherd to the assembled congregation where the shepherd left the flock – the ninety nine – who were secure - His concern was not about the safety of the ninety-nine because they were secure. It was the one (child) that was missing that he had gone in search of. At the end of his talk he said "*If you have helped one then you are where you were supposed to be or, you are where God wants you to be*". Ever since then, it comes back to me frequently that I am where God wants me to be. From that point forward I always tried to do the best I could with what I had to work with.

She spoke of having had contact with a young lady who, although she was not a student, many former teacher colleagues had got together and attempted to help her by providing funds she was lacking for her housing tuition after she graduated from high school to be accepted at Cornell. She didn't know if everyone else who helped received a letter of thanks from her but Annie received a letter. It was an invitation to her graduation. She was a law student and then Annie got another invitation to her wedding and all these things happened within a certain period of time and she wasn't in town, she was away because it was during the summer, when she did get the information after she moved from one address to another, the information had gone to the old address and she didn't receive it, but she did get a letter that said she had gotten married, had married an attorney and was working with a law firm and was doing quite well but hadn't heard from her recently. There was another who had written from the southland somewhere and there were so many of them that say they are "*doing beautifully*" and that's a really good feeling when that happens.

Observing occasions of needless waste makes Annie angry as does seeing children who are gifted and then don't use the gift is another example . She spoke of seeing food discarded when it could be given to someone who is hungry. I asked what it is that makes her laugh. As she responded with "*Life itself, I guess*". It's important to have a sense of humor and she certainly has one so I enquired as to what makes her laugh? She told me "I enjoy the things I do and I think they enjoy me too". Yes, she enjoys "*the kids*". "*I'm sometimes tough with them but I believe they know it's because it's for their good and not just for the sake of being tough. I like being here and I really didn't want to retire but it's something that I felt I needed to do. I have a mother that's eighty three and my husband's parents are in their seventies and eighties.*"



She choose not to become active in our professional organization because others among our numbers she believed were more suited to what would have been required of them and besides, she felt that working closely with children in her classes and getting to know their families more intimately was something she was not only here to do but something through which she could make her own uniquely personal contribution to our communal efforts here in this district. She was probably right.

Over the years talking to friends and other teachers from neighboring school districts and listening to them talk about their unions she had learned while talking about ours that they couldn't compare to what the BTA had accomplished with and for us with our Administration and the Brentwood Board of Education. She had decided that the wiser course of action for her would have been to not to monkey with success and leave "well enough" alone. Our Union had been doing quite well without her involvement. She told us that "*Life Changes*" and the whole world changed and this Board and this union has done well with all of it. "*I know,*" she said, "*that there were times that funds were scarce, and the District and our union held on to what we had*".

Asked if she had hero's when she was growing up, she thought for a minutes and then admitted that it was surely her father who was her hero. Her mom was a hero too but she was at home whereas her father was the bread winner. "*He was*", she said, "*by far one of the smartest men I knew. I just regret today that I did not listen to much of what he had to say*". She remembered buying her first car. She called her father and told him, "*Daddy, I'm buying a car*". And he said, "*Well, you just make sure it's an American car and not a foreign car.*" And she said, "*Why dad*"? "*Because*" he said, "*when you buy American you keep a job in America and don't forget you have children coming up; brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, who will need that job and when you start buying outside the country you're sending that money outside of the country.*" 17

He was so aware, but I think he was a little ahead of his time. And she did stay with that GM car until last year when she no longer knew where the parts that were needed to make repairs were coming from. Her dad could talk on any subject. He read the bible through and through several times, but you could ask him about any topic and he would be able to give you information.

She was asked to name a few of the formative leaders she had known during her time in Brentwood. She singled out two people; Mr. Everette Reece and Mr. Peter Galendez. Mr. Galendez was in the afternoon session and Mr. Reece was assigned to the Tenth Grade Center.

Annie was never afraid to come to work. One time she was afraid to leave school. That was the time when there was a shooting at East Junior High School. She said people had often asked her that very same question, *"Had she ever been afraid to come to work in Brentwood?"* And she said to them, *"Brentwood has been good to me and there has never been a time when I have been afraid to come here. I've always felt secure within the building and with my students, although we've always gotten a bad rap in the newspapers and in different places...even from people in the community but I've never been afraid to come here. I've never been afraid to stay after and I've been here some nights as late as five or six o'clock so that I could finish my work."* Most importantly she has never had a single regret concerning anything she has done and for which she was responsible.

She met her husband when she first came to Brentwood and years later when they were both assigned to the Tenth Grade Center. I was going to Virginia and learned that he was also going to go to Virginia and he asked me for a ride. I said *"Okay"* and he told me he would pay for all the expenses. I told him that was not necessary. I was going to Norfolk or Suffolk and said I'd drop him off in Richmond. So when we arrived in Richmond, I dropped 18.

him off and I went on. He said *"Let me pay you the extra for the rest of the trip"* and I said, *"No, that's quite alright."* and he said, *"That's not fair. You're leaving here"* *"Well I'm not getting out of the car unless you promise me you'll have dinner with me when I return"*. And I did, I thought okay I'll promise to have dinner with you but I knew that when I left I wasn't going to have dinner with him. When I did come back I did have dinner and I found him to be the sweetest, gentlest man that I knew. And after that we started seeing each other. From the outside it must have appeared to be rough and rugged and insensitive to my feelings but it wasn't that way. He was a very gentle man and we were married maybe eight or nine years later.

But in terms of retiring one of the main reasons I wanted to retire was because of my husband because he has a visual impairment. He is visually impaired and I wanted to travel and take some time with him, perhaps find a doctor who can help him or simply travel with him so that he can see as much as he can while he can because we don't know what the future is going to bring.

We did go to Switzerland at the end of last year and then to New Orleans and traveled stateside. The official date of her retirement was July of 1999. Yes, she did have a definite and much bigger plan until she recently adopted two little girls. Her plans have changed. They promised the girls that they will be here until they both finish college. One is in Binghamton, is pre-med and hopes to become a medical doctor which means another six or seven years. The other is in English Education. We're here until they go back to school in September and then we'll visit my people, my family and my mother, for a couple of weeks or so, my husband's people for a couple of weeks and I told them that whenever they want to come home from vacation we'll come back to Long Island and then we'll leave again. Her greatest ambition is to get to Jerusalem; to get to the Holy land and they plan to get there by the year 2000 or 2001. That was the greatest plan they had. 19.

Her first year in Brentwood earned her \$7,300. She considered that a huge sum of money at the time. Her favorite time of year while she was in the classroom would have to have been Christmas because of the involvement of her students. The least favorite time of year for her would have been the marking period when grades were expected to be assigned. What would she have done differently with all those years given the opportunity to do something else? She said she had considered that very question several days ago with a group of other teachers who were talking about investments and recalled thinking that if she knew then what she knows now she might have become a wealthy woman. "*Youth is truly wasted on the young*". Speaking from the perspective of her profession she said she believed she couldn't have done any better than she did because right now and given her experience "*she feels she is exactly where she is supposed to be*".

We spoke of the impact that reading the Bible has had on her life. Her primary choice of reading today tends to steer her in the direction of inspirational works. She is currently reading "*The Color of Water*" a book about life as she knew it growing up in Virginia.

What was she going to miss from Brentwood? "*The kids*" she said. She sees them when she shops in the stores. She tries to shop locally now because that's where they are working and she tries to encourage them to do the same – shop locally to support local merchants who provide jobs for our children. She doesn't patronize their shops because she's looking for them to give her a "a break." She encourages them to do likewise. Sometimes when she gets home she finds extra food in her shopping bag. "*I don't need any extra food,*" she says. But they feel that close; they see her and they try to show their affection for her. Her encouragement is to help them see how they should leave their money in their own community.

What won't she miss? Grading! Getting up at five am to start her day by 7. *"Once I'm here, it's like being with family and I'm home, and I really mean it's like a family."* She spoke of Jean Lally, one of the many former colleagues now deceased with whom she had grown close over the years and from whom she had learned a great deal. She missed her dearly as she did others like Mae Meagher who inspired her with such determination that she will never be forgotten.

Her least favorite thing to do, she repeated, is to cook. Her favorite word is *determined* because that word best describes Annie when she assigns a goal to accomplishing something she intends to complete.

What advice might she offer to teachers who were only just commencing their own lifelong educational journeys? She thought on it for a moment before relating a story to me about a student she had once had in her Homeroom. *"Look at every student from the inside out rather than from the outside in."* She told colleagues at her retirement dinner about having made the mistake of not doing that only once in her career but never making that same mistake twice. When she started here there was a young man in her Homeroom who came late to school every day and she looked at this kid with chains hanging from his belt to his pocket and tattoos on each of his shoulders, wearing a short black leather jacket and leather helmet, clad in all black leather boots and she looked at this kid and was absolutely petrified. She was scared of this little boy; I mean he was a big kid, with long red hair, a moustache and scruffily unshaven. He was late to her homeroom every single day. *"So, if they (the Administration), thinks that I am going to say anything to this kid to make him come on time to my Homeroom, forget it. They have another think coming"*.

But eventually he caused other kids to hang back or come late to Homeroom also, so she said, *"I can't do this, otherwise the Principal is going to be on me. So I have to say something to this kid"*. Well, when she did, that child was the most humble child she had ever met. She asked him directly, *"Why are you always late for school? Why do you always come late to my Homeroom when you're supposed to come on time"*? And he said, *"I'm so sorry Miss Boon. I'll try to do better but I work all night and my father's ill. My mother doesn't have the income and I'm trying to help out at home"*. At that point in time I felt so small that I vowed from that day forward I would never look at any kid *"from the outside in instead of from the inside out to judge what he can or cannot do."* She lives by that today and doesn't care if his pants are falling off or whatever, she tries to see the child first from the inside because she knows that the child is always trying to do what his environment tells him or her to do, to be just like all the other kids. If his pants are hanging low or his shoelaces are untied in order to fit in he has to do that too. But as a teacher you can't look at that and believe that this youngster doesn't belong. They all belong. They all fit in someplace; maybe not to our mold but someplace. And should you ever forget, like I once did, so do you!