

**Bobby Benjamin**  
**Former Rosegate Resident**  
**Route 9 Oral History Project**

Interviewed by: Michael Emmons and Catherine Morrissey, Center for Historic Architecture and Design, University of Delaware  
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**Abstract**

Bobby Benjamin is a former resident of Rosegate, a community along the Route 9/New Castle Avenue corridor. Having previously lived in the City of Emporia, Virginia, Benjamin moved into his Rosegate home around 1965 where his sister, Juanita Krump, had been living. Benjamin, his wife, and their daughter lived in the home until around 1990 when they relocated just outside of the community on New Castle Avenue. Having lived in the area for nearly 50 years, Benjamin offers some perspective on the changing demographics, visual layout, and community activities in Rosegate. Having served as president of the civic association in Rosegate, Benjamin provides insight into community upkeep and how that has changed over time.

In this interview, Bobby Benjamin recalls life in Rosegate from 1965 until the late-twentieth century. He remarks on the transition from owner-occupied homes to the increased presence of rental properties in the neighborhood and the general attitude of Rosegate members towards other communities in the area, and vice versa. As one of the first housing developments in the area that allowed people of color to own property, Benjamin reflects on the prevalence of Black families that lived in the community. Towards the end of his time in the community, Benjamin recalls a general decline in home upkeep and maintenance, lamenting on the visual quality of Rosegate.

Benjamin describes the general demographic of Rosegate as predominantly working-class African American families, both younger and older. He recalls that a large population of Rosegate community members worked for Chrysler and General Motors at the time, as well as the Dupont Chemical Company, with some teachers and hospital workers living there as well.

When Benjamin purchased his Rosegate home in 1965, he recalls feeling immense pride in being a homeowner. He believes that many people in Rosegate felt similarly. Although he notes that communities such as Oakmont were typically considered more “upscale” than Rosegate (mainly because they were larger, independent houses), Benjamin enjoyed living in Rosegate as did his family. He does not recall making any major renovations or alterations to the home, noting that he was content with the house as it was. Over the years, many Rosegate families had chain-link fences installed around their property; however, Benjamin suggests that these must have been later additions, and he never had nor installed a fence.

Functioning as a community center, Benjamin recalls that the formal center and later civic association operated out of the Rose Hill Primitive School. Children in the area generally attended either Rose Hill or Dunleith elementary schools, and most highschoolers went to De La Warr. The Coleman Memorial United Methodist Church in Dunleith also functioned as a community center

where members would gather to discuss local affairs. Describing recreational opportunities in the area, Benjamin recalls a popular nightclub adjacent to Rosegate that burned down, formerly located where the United House of Prayer Church now stands.

Benjamin recalls very few major changes to the subdivision or its infrastructure during his time as a Rosegate resident. The most prevalent change he notes is the addition of a parking lot in the community, which came about after he had relocated to his home on New Castle Avenue.

In the final five minutes of the interview, Benjamin discusses his reasonings for moving out of the Rosegate community and his later move to North Carolina, where he currently resides. Although he considers his life in Rosegate as “something in the past,” Benjamin attributes this sentiment to his friends and acquaintances in the community who have largely moved out of the subdivision. He remembers his time in Rosegate fondly and notes that had his wife not developed health issues later in life, he would likely still be living in Delaware.