

## Jody Town Neighborhood (“Plantview Subdivision”) Research Paper for Georgia Historical Marker

Military members, who were stationed at the base, boarded in the homes in the neighborhood and lived in transported “barracks” from the base because there was a shortage of housing in Wellston, currently known as Warner Robins. Black workers lodged in homes and received their meals from these same residents. This comfort of belonging allowed these workers to be productive members of the initial military and contract workforce of Georgia’s current, largest, single industrial employer, Robins Air Force Base.

Based on the tenets of the Wilcox-Wilson Bill in 1940-1941, civic leaders convinced the War Department to locate the army air depot near Macon, which would become a part of a long range plan to prepare American defenses in case of war (Head, 2016, p. 2-5)<sup>1</sup>. Concurrently, President Roosevelt asked Congress for monies to build 50,000 new airplanes a year. A telegram from U.S. Congressman Carl Vinson of Milledgeville announced that the land on the other side of the rail line near Wellston, GA was the new site for the base. The sleepy Southern Railroad whistle stop was rich with 3108.4 acres of farmland which also bordered the Ocmulgee River to the east. The original War Department directive for the Georgia Air Depot approved the building of permanent buildings and facilities at Robins Field with the first contracts awarded to Griffin, Mion and Shepherd of Atlanta for construction of the supply and repair depot; and to Aqua Systems for an aircraft refueling system at Wellston, Georgia (Head et al., 1996).

On 14 August 1941, the land opened to approximately 350 workers, by October there were over 1,000 workers and in May of 1942, at the peak of the base construction, there were more than 6,000 laborers at work which included local men from near- by counties in Georgia (Head, 2016, p.2-5). Construction moved slowly initially, but after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 and the U.S. Declaration of war the next day, the pace of construction increased. With construction increase became the need for more workers and these workers needed local housing. The word spread fast and local landowners were enthusiastic and willing to develop their individual acreage to accommodate this growing need for housing, especially the growing Black population of men from across the Southeast and military members and their families. Additionally, local Black families who once were sharecroppers, eagerly seized the opportunity to now, not only own their own land, but to become civil service and contract employees.

The Jody Town neighborhood (Plantview Subdivision) was developed by Mary and Loyd Perdue and Fred W. Carter between 1941 and 1943 (City Map, City of Warner Robins, 1943) with more than 100 lots. The street names of Amanda and Leroy were named after the children of the Carters and Garman and Simon were named for the first residents, who were Black (City Map, City of Warner Robins GA, 1943, 1948, & 1951). Other neighborhood streets were Washington, First, Second and Third. The name Jody Town was given by military members from the southern song, chant: “Jody’s got your girl and gone.” This name became synonymous with the neighborhood and remains today.

Jody Town's location was ideal because the workers could cross the railroad tracks and walk to the base main gate entrance. The early housing was modest, made of any materials that were left over from base construction which included packing crates and metals. Barracks were constructed often referred to as The Dormitory, because the civilian and military men lived in this single dwelling building, almost immediately upon arriving in Jody Town (Head, 2016, p. 2-5). The streets were filled with solid, red Georgia clay and when it rained, the people of Jody Town could see mud up to their knees.

When the Base was built, the U.S. military was still racially segregated; and the U.S. Census of 1940 did not include local Black families, thus the Jody Town neighborhood became not only a place to live, but a community for a race of people with common needs, interests and values. Jody Town was a community of residents who loved and supported each other and their nation through World wars: World War II, the Korean War, the tumultuous years of the Vietnam era and the economic ups and downs of the south and throughout the country. These residents; our parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, were determined to share their resources and faith to ensure that Jody Town thrived as they became residents of Warner Robins which was incorporated March 5, 1943 (Head et al., 1996). In Jody Town, there were churches (including the present day First Baptist Church of Garman Street founded in 1944), Dixon Tabernacle Christian Methodist Episcopal (C.M.E.) Church, which was a weekly Sunday School ministry (affiliation of present day Warner Robins C.M.E. Church ), Girl Scout Troop 333 which emphasized cooking, sewing, writing and the arts for girls; and Boy Scout Troop 163, the first Boy Scout Troop in Warner Robins, founded, May 25, 1951 under the banner of The Warner Robins Adult School for Colored, which trained boys to focus on school work and learn technical skills which allowed little time for participation in juvenile delinquency (Boy Scouts of America, 1951). This school also taught adults who needed to obtain their GED diplomas in order to qualify for civil service jobs at Robins Air Force Base in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s (Scott Family History Records, 2020). Jody Town also had thriving businesses which included: Grocery stores, the only Black barber shop, beauty salons, restaurants and cafes, ice cream parlors, taxi service, a radio and TV repair shop, a hotel, a teen center, apartment complexes, a laundry and a brick masonry business which trained men for positions with Air Force contractors and "The House of Soul", a popular Georgia night club that hosted bands which included: Grammy nominated Third World Reggae Band, (hit song: "Now that we have love, what are we going to do with it")(Third World Band, 2020) and young entertainers from Macon, GA; such as "Little" Richard Pennyman and Otis Redding. The only Black Funeral Home in Warner Robins was in Jody Town, R.N.T.; which honorably, guarded the bodies of our fallen servicemen; which included the first Black Purple Heart recipient in Warner Robins (Online obituary, Turner. W, 2020) Richardson and Son Family Funeral Home remains in Jody Town.

From Boy Scouts to Baseball, local leaders in Jody Town had experienced the benefits of formal, organized, activities for youth from low-income, single family households so they decided to organize a baseball team for youth (Scott Family History Records, 2020). Earlier in the community there was a team for adults called The Rams and since semi-professional Baseball leagues were forming across the South, the Warner Robins Jets were formed in 1964 at Memorial Park (Dixon, 1993, p. 119). This team is credited, for hundreds of boys and girls not

becoming juvenile delinquents in the 1960s and 1970s. This wholesome fun in sports provided a structured, social outlet for the entire family to get outside, enjoy the sunshine by day, cool evenings by night and also exercise by walking in the park and using the playground. Baseball also served as a respite for Jody Town residents from working long hours on construction crews, as aircraft and sheet metal mechanics at the base for the men and from maid service of the women, in many homes of the base military leadership. The Warner Robins Jets and Jody Town residents, built their team from the ground up and built their Baseball field at Memorial Park, which was before Warner Robins had an organized Recreation Department. In 1967, the Warner Robins City Council increased the Recreation Department's Budget and for the first time in history, assigned resources for Memorial Park. Light poles were added, additional lightning and steps; and a hot water heater for the concession stand was installed (Memorial Park monthly minutes, City of Warner Robins, 1967). These enhancements greatly enhanced the Park and made night games more enjoyable for the fans. On any given week night or weekend, The Warner Robins Jets packed Memorial Park. People from across the region lined up in front of the park entrance, awaiting their turn to get a ticket and hear the announcer say, "Play Ball." Kids rushed to the concession stand to buy hotdogs, popcorn and of course peanuts and young women eagerly saved seats in the bleachers to share news about new "airmen" coming to Jody Town. As integration slowly expanded in the South, Memorial Park became a showcase (The Houston Home Journal, 1969). The City added a state of the art swimming pool and upgraded the concession stand and playground. By the early 1970s, the recreation department added Memorial Park to the little league and recreation department baseball schedule for all ages. (Dixon, 1993, p.119)

Jody Town was more than a neighborhood, 1941-1973, it was a community entrenched with economic success. From dirt roads and homes made of crates; to birthing a Georgia State Senator, an owner of an international cosmetics company, the first Black Purple Heart recipient, the sister of two Tuskegee Airmen, the first players in the County to sign with a major league baseball team, the first black postman (Simon, 2011), and hundreds of career civil service and military members serving their country by building the Wellston Army Air Depot/Warner Robins Army Air Depot (WRAMA) at Robins Field //(Warner Robins Air Logistics Center/Robins Air Force Base, GA) ( Jody Town residents, personal communication 2016-2020).

The skills, determination and sacrifices of Jody Town civilian, contractor and military residents, serve as a reminder of hope and give rise to honor and reverence for present and future generations to witness. These citizens embraced and performed global responsibilities for all aircraft assigned to Robins from 1941 to 1973 until their individual retirements. The Federal Urban Renewal Program demolished the original Jody Town in 1973, (Mitchell, undated, p. 254-275) but the contributions of the families to the United States Military, city of Warner Robins, the state of Georgia and the fabric of the world; will live forever through the Jody Town Neighborhood Historical Marker.

## Footnotes

1. Head, Dr. W. P. (2016). *A photographic history of Robins AFB, 1941-2016: 75 years of power projection*. (78 Air Base Wing (ABW) History Office: Robins Air Force Base, GA, 2016), pp.2-5.
2. Time Capsule: A Chronology of the Role of the Warner Robins Air Logistics Center and Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, in World History, 1935-1995, ed. Dr. William P. Head, Diane H. Truluck, MSgt Dean Corey, Christine Mcleod and Dr. Richard W. Iobst (Office of History: Warner Robins Air Logistics Center, Robins Air Force Base, GA, 1996), p.16.
3. Head, Dr. W.P., *A photographic history of Robins AFB, 1941-2016: 75 years of power projection*. (78 Air Base Wing (ABW) History Office: Robins Air Force Base, GA, 2016), pp.2-5.
4. City of Warner Robins, GA and Houston County GA, (Warner Robins, GA: Clerk of Superior Court, March 31, 1943), City Map.
5. City of Warner Robins, GA and Houston County GA, (Warner Robins, GA: Clerk of Superior Court, May 31, 1943, July 21, 1948 and December 19, 1951), City Maps.
6. Head, Dr. W.P., *A photographic history of Robins AFB, 1941-2016: 75 years of power projection*. (78 Air Base Wing (ABW) History Office: Robins Air Force Base, GA, 2016), pp.2-5.
7. Time Capsule: A Chronology of the Role of the Warner Robins Air Logistics Center and Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, in World History, 1935-1995, ed. Dr. William P. Head, Diane H. Truluck, MSgt Dean Corey, Christine Mcleod and Dr. Richard W. Iobst (Office of History: Warner Robins Air Logistics Center, Robins Air Force Base, GA, 1996), p.27.
8. Boy Scouts of America, National Council, Application for Troop Charter, Warner Robins Adult School for Coloreds, (Warner Robins, GA: Central Georgia Council, Peachbelt District, National Troop Number 163, Chartered May 25, 1951).

9. Proclamation/Obituary for Rev. Milton Scott, February 25. 2005. (copy obtained from Scott Family History Records, February 2020).
10. Third World Band “one of the longest-lived Reggae bands”, (Third World Band.com, accessed online, June 10, 2020, Internet).
11. Spec Willie George Turner, US Army Vietnam Wall Panel 16W071 and Thorpe Cemetery, Warner Robins, GA. Accessed June 10, 2020. Available from <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial>
12. Proclamation/Obituary for Rev. Milton Scott, February 25. 2005. (copy obtained from Scott Family History Records, February 2020).
13. Dixon, C.M. (1993) *Warner Robins the second 25 years*\_(Alpharetta, GA : WH Wolfe Associates). p.119.
14. Monthly Minutes of the Governing Body. (Memorial Park), City of Warner Robins, State of Georgia, February 6, 1967.
15. “LA Dodgers Sign Three Perrys”, The Houston Home Journal , July 10, 1969. (accessed, June 10, 2020, houpl.org
16. Dixon, C.M. (1993), *Warner Robins the second 25 years*\_(Alpharetta, GA: WH Wolfe Associates). p.119.
17. Simon, H.E. (2011) *The bridge to the pathway of hope, Memoir Essay: Telling the stories of people who might otherwise not be heard.*
18. Jody Town Reunion Data Sheets-2020 (Families, business owners and members of The Jets baseball team from 1941-1973). Information accessed from 2016 -June 2020 from living family members).
19. Mitchell, J.P. (undated), “Federal Housing Policy and Programs, Past and Present”, pages 254-275.