

University of Mississippi

eGrove

---

Oral History Project (all interviews)

Oral Histories

---

11-13-2008

## Annette Dupard

Annette Dupard

Institute of Child Nutrition. Child Nutrition Archives.

Follow this and additional works at: [https://egrove.olemiss.edu/icn\\_ohistories](https://egrove.olemiss.edu/icn_ohistories)



Part of the [Food Science Commons](#), [Other Education Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Dupard, Annette and Institute of Child Nutrition. Child Nutrition Archives., "Annette Dupard" (2008). *Oral History Project (all interviews)*. 16.

[https://egrove.olemiss.edu/icn\\_ohistories/16](https://egrove.olemiss.edu/icn_ohistories/16)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Oral Histories at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oral History Project (all interviews) by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact [egrove@olemiss.edu](mailto:egrove@olemiss.edu).

## Annette Dupard Oral History

Annette Dupard is a native of Vacherie, Louisiana. She is a graduate of Southern University and a retired Food Service Manager for the East Baton Rouge Parish Child Nutrition Programs.

MH: This is Thursday, November 13, 2008 and my name is Melba Hollingsworth. I am interviewing Annette Dupard. Annette, welcome. Tell me a little bit about where you were born and your earliest recollections as a child of the child nutrition programs.

AD: I was born in a small town called Vacherie in St. James Parish, Louisiana. My earliest recollection is going to lunch in the school cafeteria in St. James at school, Magnolia Elementary. And the food was wonderful. The ladies were wonderful, and they made everything just pleasant and easy for us. The food was good, and so that is my earliest recollection.

MH: Do you recall a particular menu that you liked?

AD: Jambalaya.

MH: Jambalaya?

AD: Jambalaya. They made great Jambalaya. Yes.

MH: Do you remember how much it cost to go to eat?

AD: I don't. I honestly don't at this time.

MH: How did you become involved with the child nutrition program, especially with schools?

AD: As I was attending Southern University, we rode the bus every day. And I went to college to become a school teacher. There was one young lady on the bus. She was the only person in child nutrition. But, she had such enthusiasm. Every day, she got on the

bus excited. She was reading. She was talking nutrition to everyone. She was just different. I could not understand why she was always so happy. She loved child nutrition and it sparked my interest. So, I then chose child nutrition as a result of her excitement and enthusiasm when she spoke about child nutrition.

MH: Do you recall who she was?

AD: Her name was Joanne Ciano at that time. She is the cause that I ventured out into child nutrition, she is.

MH: Did you finish at Southern?

AD: I finished at Southern in Foods and Nutrition in August of 1975. I then proceeded to food service here in East Baton Rouge in 1977. When I entered an application, they sent me immediately to a school and I have been in the program and it is one of the best decisions that I have ever made.

MH: Do you recall what school you went to?

AD: I went to Howell Park Elementary. One of the managers was out and the supervisor was filling in so they sent me over to relieve that supervisor and it started from there.

MH: How long were you at Howell Park?

AD: I was at Howell Park for maybe about two months and then they sent me to Kenilworth Elementary to fill in as an assistant manager because that person was going on maternity leave and I finished the school year there. The following year I applied at my own school in nineteen...it had to be in August of '77 I went to North Scotlandville Elementary and that is where I really started my career as a cafeteria manager.

MH: How long were you there?

AD: I stayed there for three years and within the three years I ended up multi-uniting with Allison Elementary and so in 1980 I moved a little closer to home. There was a school that became available near my home which was Merrydale Elementary and I applied and got that school and I stayed at Merrydale until I think it was 1998 or '99 when I came into this office. So it has been wonderful.

MH: Now, what title did you get when you came here?

AD: Area Supervisor.

MH: Area Supervisor. And how many schools did you have to supervise?

AD: I started out with about twenty schools as best as I can remember and it averaged anywhere from twenty to twenty five but maybe three years ago it went up to about thirty schools that I ended up with and was supervising and multitasking because I was also working with new school construction with engineers and contractors on the school food service side to make sure that the layout of our cafeterias was what we needed them to be and that the right equipment was put in. And I also worked with hood renovations with both city and state fire marshals and so making sure that all of our cafeterias here in our public school system met the necessary codes to stay open so that was all in addition to supervising the school cafeterias.

MH: Tell me a little bit about mentoring. Can you tell me about any mentors that you can think of during your thirty years?

AD: Naturally, role modeling, the leaders in this organization...as I was a manager you know that I observed Ms. Walker and she was always very neat, clean...I mean starched down and still is and Ms. Johnson and Dr. Mann and I realized that if I was to climb the

ladder, the career ladder, that I needed to mimic what I saw. And so that's what I did, that's what I did.

MH: So those were your mentors that were influential.

AD: Yes.

MH: Is there anything unique about child nutrition programs in Louisiana?

AD: I found that Louisiana child nutrition to me was unique in that the flavor of the food was very close to what the kids were used to at home. Not over seasoned but well cooked with homemade gravy. The yeast rolls and red beans and rice...I mean some of the menu items were very much like what the kids were accustomed to getting at home. And it was presented with care and with love and the staff just added to it. I took a genuine interest in what they did and the student body.

MH: What about working out there with the folks in the field?

AD: In the field it was good. I found that with school food service as with anything else that people need encouragement. When they did a good job I did not hold back to encourage them and to praise them and to thank them; let them know that they were appreciated and that I found was very crucial because then when people know that you care and are concerned, they will work harder for you. And so that was a successful tip for me in getting people to come to work and do a good job at work because they knew that it felt like they were appreciated.

AD: Do you remember any memorable stories?

AD: The most memorable were that the kids at elementary level at Merrydale Elementary, it didn't matter who you were but you were always grandma or mom or auntie or something. Your real name didn't matter. The kids related to you as

grandmother or mother or as someone in the family that they felt cared for them and so that I will never forget. And now as I go around town these same students are serving me at McDonald's or different places that I go and they never forgot the cafeteria lady. And so that is a good feeling. Sometimes they remember me when I may not remember them. [Laughter] Kids don't forget.

MH: Can you think of other things that have happened in the cafeterias because certainly you have worked in several. So do you recall some things that happened in some of them?

AD: The thing that I remember too was that it was a bonding for even the ladies in the cafeteria. We made friends. We were not only co-workers or manager and workers but there was a bond that came about that still exists today. You know, a friendship bond came out of it and even teachers and faculty; we even became a family. And that's the one thing that I think across the nation as you go to school cafeterias is that the school cafeteria ladies or staff are people who will make you feel good about you, and like family, when maybe no one else will because most times they remember your name, especially your first name, and something about you.

MH: So what changes have you seen in the profession over all of these years that you have been here, for thirty years?

AD: In the profession, I think that the most changes that I have seen is the type of food that is served.

MH: Ok.

AD: Even though it is still healthy there is not a whole lot of home cooking. You know, times have changed. The kids got to a point that they did not want as much home cooked

food because that is not what they were getting at home because mom, dad...everybody works and so pizza became the favorite and hamburgers became the favorite thing and we had to kind of, to keep the students eating here we adapted our menus, but yet kept them healthy. You know, whole wheat pizza crust and low fat cheeses. We did things here where we would have half ground beef and half ground turkey to keep the meal healthy, yet to keep the kids eating. And I think that was one challenge that East Baton Rouge Parish faced but yet came out on top, because our numbers increased and the kids wanted to come to lunch and they came and they ate well. And we were able to introduce them by the time I left to wheat rolls and brown rice and the kids, they liked it. So selling your program and yet keeping the kids coming to lunch I think is a big challenge for school food service but one that we met.

MH: So you have seen a lot of changes in the child nutrition programs over the years haven't you?

AD: Yes, yes I have!

MH: Can you think of other things that have stayed in mind maybe as far as the personnel or staff?

AD: Well one of the things that stands out for sure is that the older generation of staff are a little more into home cooking where as to now everything is kind of fast paced and to train new employees, or to make bread, the interest is just not there, and I would have to say not to the level that it used to be. And so the workforce has changed. But we adapt and we make it work.

MH: What advice would you give to people who are thinking for the future to go into the child nutrition profession?

AD: It's a wonderful profession, it's a wonderful profession. I think that it is one of the best and I would encourage anyone to go into child nutrition because when you are a part of feeding children a healthy nutritious meal that is one of the greatest rewards that you can live to see or be a part of. Being aware of what it takes to make a healthy meal and to make sure that our kids are eating well, especially now that there is so much out there to offer the children you know as alternate choices. A lot of vending, which the vending has changed, but I think that a hot wholesome meal...you can't beat it! And to be a part of a program that supplies that, be it breakfast or lunch or both, that's a reward within itself.

MH: Can you think of any other things that you would like to share with us?

AD: I have enjoyed my career! I did and I would like to commend anyone, be it any director or supervisor, to continue the work that has been done for child nutrition because it is one of the greatest and rewarding careers that you will ever have.

MH: Well, are you married and have children?

AD: I have a son; I'm divorced. He's thirty-two now and doing well.

MH: Doing well; well, congratulations.

AD: One other memorable thing...I remember when as I was a manager and Mrs. Gail Johnson came to my school and she thought that I had one of the cleanest schools and I was challenged to keep that up and set an example for other schools in our area. And I didn't know at that time but I was being watched to become a potential supervisor and they sent me to NFSMI...

MH: Oh, did they...?

AD: Yes, for a two-week crash course on how to become a successful supervisor or director. That was a good experience. And I am so glad that I took it because it really



helped me when I became a supervisor here at East Baton Rouge. It really did and you all are doing a fantastic job over there and thank you.

MH: Thank you!