

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, July 4, 2005

**Clifford Murray (1896–1981) Tribute:** Clifford was a black man (we never would have called him that) who worked at Auburn Heights for 50 years. His mother, Ida Murray (1866–1953), worked for my mother as a cook, laundress, and house cleaner, and lived in the apartment over the garage from 1928 to 1933. She was a wonderful woman of the “old school” and excellent at the jobs she undertook. When my parents were looking for an outside handyman in 1929, her only son, Clifford, was looking for a job. Ida said she could not recommend him, but she knew he was honest. One Sunday afternoon in early September, he came for an interview, which was held on the front porch of Auburn Heights (it had summer outdoor furniture, rope rugs, awnings, and rose trellises in those days). The next thing I knew Clifford was washing one of my father's Packards under the shed in front of the garage. We soon became fast friends, a relationship that lasted until his death in January 1981.

Clifford thought he had lost his job on New Year's Day, 1930. He had taken my grandmother's cousin, Gertrude Whittock, back to her apartment in Media and was returning alone in my mother's 1929 Packard sedan when he turned over on the ice on Miller's Hill, just east of Kennett Square. He was unhurt, and the car was restorable; he made up for this mishap many times over in the years to come. My mother called him “Clifford,” my father “Cliff” or “Murray,” and I had many names for him, as he did for me. Some of mine: “Cliffey,” “C. Murray” (the way he signed his name), and “Crimmin.” His names for me included “Jack” and “George.” He was known all over Yorklyn as Cliff and very popular with the local population. He was a pillar in Chippey Chapel A.U.M.P. Church and the black community in Hockessin. I got him into trouble more than once, such as the time I dared him to jump across the mill race in his hip boots. He made it but sprained his ankle.

During World War II, Clifford could have gone to work in the mills for a lot more money than he was making here, but he stayed with my parents because he knew they needed him. In the 1930s, he had helped my mother with her rock gardens, and after the War he helped my father with his antique cars, in addition to his other duties including some house work. When he could no longer work everyday, I encouraged him to come when he felt like it, and this he did until 1979, 50 years after his first visit. At his funeral service, the family asked me to sit with them in the front row, and I was honored to do so. I've been wanting to tell you about my friend Clifford for a long time; he was very special.