



STAFF PHOTO BY ADITHYA SAMBAMURTHY

SLIP SLED Sled hockey players Adrian Burnett, left, and Jonathan Eckbold collide while attempting to secure the puck at a game during the 10th annual Special Hockey International Tournament at The Gardens Ice House Friday. The tournament, hosted this year by the Washington Ice Dogs, annually brings together more than 400 developmentally challenged athletes from the both the U.S. and Canada. Washington Capitals goaltender Olie Kolzig dropped the first puck in the opening game (see Sports, page 28).

gency medical services.”
 The Laurel Volunteer Rescue Squad “is not doing a good job covering EMS,” Robison said.
 The group filed papers in December to create The Laurel Volunteer Emergency Medical Services Inc.
 Robison, a former chief of the Laurel Volunteer Fire Department

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Recalling the end of segregated schooling

BY DIANE REYNOLDS

“Let’s ... go to the Board of Education because Brown just won his case,” Nancy Matthews Daniels remembers her minister announcing as he entered her family’s house in the Grove neighborhood in 1954.

“He was so happy,” recalled Daniels, then a first-grader.
 The cause of his, and her relatives’, joy was the Supreme Court’s decision in Brown vs. the Board of Education to strike down “separate but equal” schooling for blacks and whites.
 With the Brown decision, the door opened to integrate the nation’s schools.

Fifty years later, some local blacks applaud the landmark decision, but also note that problems of school equity have not disappeared.

In 1954, Daniel’s mother had to petition the Prince George’s school board to let Daniels and her brother attend Laurel Elementary.

Daniels remembers accompanying her mother to Upper Marlboro. Her mother testified before the Board of Education that “all kids deserve a decent education.”

The following fall, Daniels left the two-room Laurel Grove School and entered “homogenous” Laurel Elementary, which had a whole second floor.

“We had a cafeteria,” Daniels recalled. “That was incredible for us.”

She said that she and about 10 of her relatives were the only blacks at the school. “There was some prejudice, but we didn’t see it,” she said.

At the all-black Grove School, she had found it hard to concentrate on first-grade work with second-graders doing different work in the next row, she said. At that school, first through third grades were combined in one room with one teacher.

“It was really distracting,” she said.

At Laurel Elementary, the classes were divided by grade, making learn-

ing easier, she said.
 At Laurel Elementary, she read the all-white Dick and Jane readers, some of which she still owns.

“I didn’t think anything about it until I got older,” she said. “Later, I laughed. It was just part of the past.”

She remembers playing with white students at their homes, including Ricky Raymond, who lived off Fifth Street. “His mother would give us soft drinks and lemonade,” Daniels said. “She was really, really nice to us.”

At a talk Friday at Howard Community College commemorating the

See **Brown**, page 20

EDUCATION

Grove residents remember how Brown changed lives

Brown, from page 1

50th anniversary of the Brown decision, Howard County resident Dr. Lemeal Henderson provided a context for desegregation that underscored how Daniels' experience differed dramatically from that of blacks in U.S. schools before 1954.

If she had been in school a decade earlier, Daniels would have spent her entire primary education in the two-room black schoolhouse where she began. This was the norm for blacks

in Prince George's County. Her textbooks would not have been bright new Dick and Jane books, but cast-offs from white schools.

Margaret Moore, a Laurel Grove resident who graduated from high school in 1942, "knew a girl who was attending Laurel Elementary ... reading a book on science we didn't have."

Daniels would have had to travel more than 15 miles away to Fairmount Heights to attend the black

Lakeland High School as Moore did. Students had to "leave home very early ... and got home very late, when Laurel High School was walking distance," noted Sandra Johnson, a historian for St. Mark's United Methodist Church in the Grove.

Transportation problems sometimes meant that blacks were forced to drop out of high school, she added.

The "separate but equal" doctrine upheld in the Supreme Court's 1896 Plessy vs. Ferguson decision was so engrained in people's thinking about education, Henderson said, that even progressive presidents such as Franklin Delano Roosevelt didn't bother submitting legislation to fight it.

Black leaders — including Maryland's Thurgood Marshall, the lawyer who argued the case before the Supreme Court and later became a justice on the court — realized that only through the courts could they hope to get access to the better facilities and materials available to white students.

With Brown came a "momentous"

"I think that (Brown) was the greatest decision that was ever made," Daniels said. She wonders, "How far we would be back without it?"

Daniels attended Laurel High School, starting in the current building when it was brand new. She has good memories — and some bad, though she did not elaborate — of her school career in Laurel.

What made it good was the strong sense of community.

The Laurel Elementary cafeteria lady, Miss Kidwell, would give a hot lunch to children who had forgotten their lunch money, and the crossing guard, who knew their names, made sure they got home safely, she said.

At Laurel High, she was part of a small, local and close-knit community. "You couldn't do anything at school because they'd tell your parents," she said. "The principal knew everybody's name."

"Today, the principal can't know everybody's name," she said.

The black community fought to keep open the Laurel Grove School,

The pre-Brown black schools had their strengths, Henderson noted, sometimes offering "very strong ethics training." He said they felt a sense of "mission" to serve the entire black community, not only school children.


Once these schools were closed, it hurt the whole community, he said.

Closing the black schools caused some losses, agreed Dr. Jerry Seals, a Columbia physician, including the dispersal of many "overqualified" black women teachers who availed themselves of a broader spectrum of opportunities afforded by integration.

"We still have to resolve ourselves ethically on equality," Henderson said. "Race relations continue to be an explosive issue in this country."

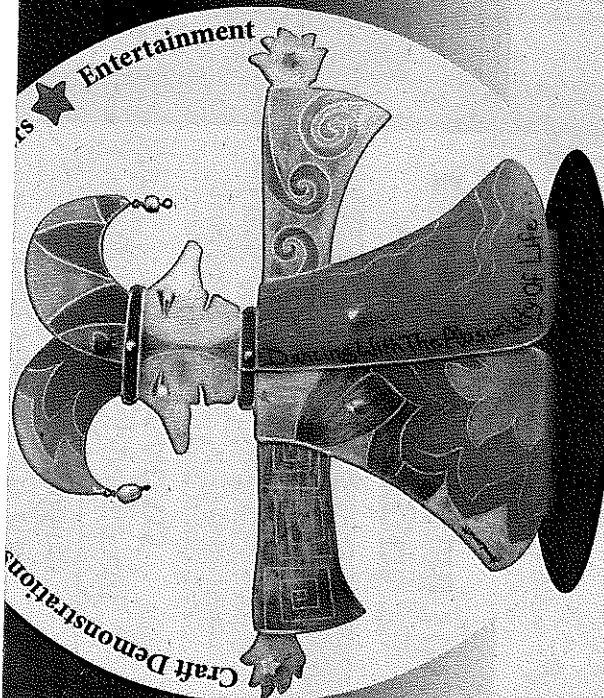
For Daniels, the struggle for educational equity continues. A member of Stand for Children, a children's advocacy group in Laurel, Daniels testified in 2000 before the school board in Upper Marlboro in support of greater education funding and more safety in the schools.

She took her grandchildren with her and used the same words her



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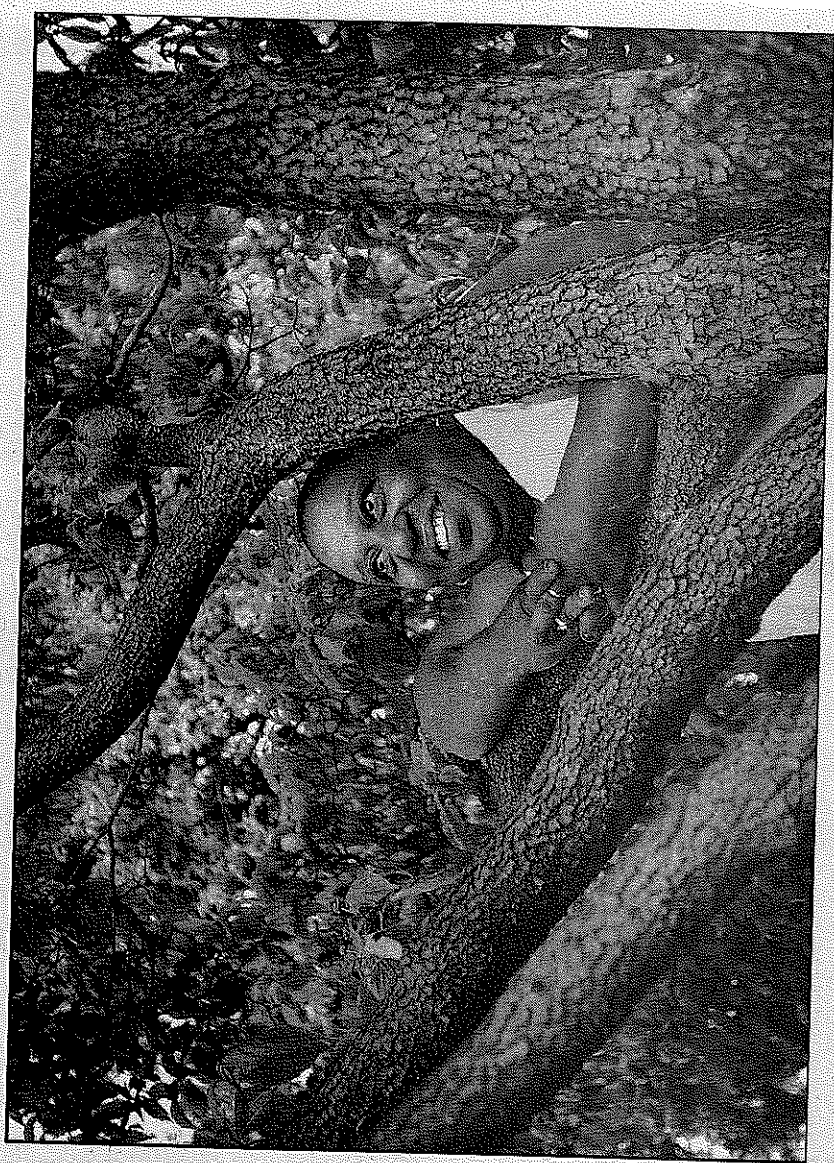
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change in ethics, Henderson said, a shift in what people thought constituted "appropriate race relations" from segregation to the idea that integration is beneficial to society.

Matthews remembers, "but nobody wanted to send their kids anymore." The school was torn down and Emancipation Park was created on the site.

mother had used 46 years before. "All kids," she said to the legislators, "deserve a decent education." E-mail Diane.Reynolds@drey-nolds@pauuxent.com.



Nancy Matthews Daniels was a first-grader at the all-black Laurel Grove School in 1954 when the Supreme Court ruled an end to public-school segregation in Brown vs. the Board of Education.

FILE PHOTO BY FRANCIS GARDLER

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