

Bernard F. Gipson, Sr., M.D. Papers

**Blair-Caldwell
African American Research Library
The Denver Public Library
2001**

Provenance: The collection was donated to the Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library, The Denver Public Library by Bernard F. Gipson, Sr., M.D.

Ownership: Literary and copyrights have been assigned to the Denver Public Library.

Call Number: MS-ARL9

Size: Shelf space occupied: 1 cubic foot
Number of Containers: 1 cubic foot

Processed By: Tammi E. Haddad

Date: June 2001

Autobiography of Bernard F. Gipson, Sr., M.D.

I was born September 28, 1921, in Bivins, Texas. My parents, John Tom Gipson and Alberta Rambo Gipson, were married July 10, 1915. This was the second marriage for my father, who was left with nine children on the death of his first wife, Ella Mitchell Gipson. I was the youngest child of the Gipson clan and got much attention from my half brothers and sisters when I was growing up. They have all passed now, and I am the only one left.

My parents were farmers and owned their own farm. They were hardworking, law-abiding citizens in the community. My father was a deacon at St. Paul Baptist Church and sang bass in the church choir. My mother was a quiet woman who worked hard preparing the meals and washing the clothes for this large family. She was the stepmother for my nine brothers and sisters, and they all treated her with respect and love.

I attended St. Helena School, a rural school in our community that went from the first through the ninth grades. The school session was six months out of the year. This short session allowed the children to help their families with the chores on the farms.

My father died suddenly from a heart attack when I was ten years old. The night he died, when we were standing at his bedside, he told my brother Claude, "See that your little brother gets an education." I never forgot that statement made that night. My brothers and sisters gave me encouragement and support after my father passed.

Christmas day was a very special day at our house when I was a child. My parents, brothers and sisters enjoyed seeing me empty the gifts from my large bag which I always left hanging by the fireplace on Christmas Eve night. My family would work hard to help me keep my toys and gifts together on Christmas Day.

My parents finished the third or fourth grade, but were determined to see that I received an education. I am grateful to them for their vision for me. I was never out of school to work on the farm. There were school years when I was never absent a day from school.

My sister Hazel and I had to walk two miles to school each day. When the heavy rains came, the creek would rise and my brothers would have to carry us in the wagon across the creek to school. When my father died, my mother had to assume the responsibility of managing the farm. She had very little experience in this area, but it did not take her long to develop skills and assume the responsibility.

I made good grades in school and was provided a quiet place to study my lessons by kerosene lamp at home. My family encouraged me and kept in contact with my teachers.

My mother loved children and was always cheerful around them. She was a person who

enjoyed her work at home with cooking and caring for the chores around the house. You could hear her singing all over the neighborhood as she worked. I was her only child, and she was overly protective of me. She would carry me to the doctor if I had any complaints. It was mainly for her reassurance, I am sure. When I was a teenager, I heard my mother tell the doctor that she had had three or four miscarriages and that I was her only surviving child. My mother was 41 years old when I was born, and I am sure that accounted for a lot of her concern.

I was 12 years old when I told my brother Claude I wanted to be a doctor. HE states that he thought this was a good idea. I knew only one African-American doctor. He came to our church and gave lectures on health issues about twice a year. The physician who came to our church of Marshall, Texas, a town of 30,000 people, was Dr. William Watts. I developed appendicitis when I was 13 years old, and Dr. Watts did an appendectomy on me in the hospital. I told him while I was in the hospital that I was going to be a doctor. He smiled, and I am sure that he felt he would never live to see me finish medical school - but he did.

Uncle Marcus M. Rambo was my mother's youngest brother, and he took a special interest in my education when I was a child. We called him Uncle Bub. He was born in the country, just as I was, and was the first member of his family to finish high school in Cincinnati, Ohio, at that time. In the summer, when school was out, he would drive down to Texas to visit his family and friends. I was impressed with his pretty car and nice clothes. I wanted to grow up to be like Uncle Bub.

I heard him tell my mother one summer that he wanted me to go to Morehouse College when I finished high school. I did finish Morehouse many years later.

After I finished St. Helena High School I went to Central (Penberton) High School in Marshall, Texas. I was 15 years old when my mother and brother took me to room with a family in Marshall and attend high school. It was quite a challenge for me to attend school in the city with students who had the advantage of a school session nine months each year. The teachers put me in the accelerated division of the junior class at Central high School, and I am sure they were observing my work to see how I would perform. I had very good grades from my rural school and good recommendations from my teachers and principal. I always remember that on my first chemistry test at Central High School in Marshall, I made 95. My homeroom teacher and chemistry teacher were so pleased. I continued to keep pace with my class. My senior year, I was elected president of my class and graduated salutatorian in my high school class of 1940.

My academic status provided a good scholarship for me to Bishop College in Marshall, Texas. My mother felt that I was too young to attend Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, at this time, as my Uncle Bub had suggested. This would be a long way from my home. I attended Bishop College my freshman year and two quarters of my sophomore year. I was a premedical student, and the chairman of the biology department at Bishop resigned and left the college. Uncle Bub wanted me to transfer to Morehouse

for my continued premedical education. I worked in a defense plant in Texarkana, Texas, the last quarter of my sophomore year and also in the summer of 1942. I saved my money and entered Morehouse College in September 1942, where I worked in the Atlanta University System Woodruff Library to help with my college expenses. There also was working in the library a Spelman College student, Ernestine Wallace, who became my wife five years later. At Morehouse, I was on the dean's honor roll my junior and senior years. I also became a member of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity in 1943.

World War II had been declared, and the only students left on the campus of this small male college were premedical students and ministers. I was accepted at Howard University College of Medicine for the 1944 freshman class. After I was enlisted in the Army at Fort Meade, Maryland, I entered medical school as a private first class. Upon completion of my medical training, I served as a medical officer in the US Air Force.

My senior year at Howard University Medical School, I was inducted into Kappa Pi Honorary Medical Society, which represented students in the upper 10% of the class. After graduation, I did my internship at Harlem Hospital in New York City and was followed by my residency in surgery at Howard University - Freedman's Hospital and the U.S. Public Health Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts.

It is interesting that a classmate of mine in 1946 at Howard University Medical School asked me if I knew Ernestine Wallace, a social worker who was working with his sister in Philadelphia. I told him that I did, but that I had not seen her since we were working in the library together when we were in college. I got her address and sent her a special delivery, and our courtship began.

On December 19, 1947, Ernestine and I were married in Sal Hall Chapel on the campus of Morehouse College by Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, the president of the college. I was an intern at Harlem Hospital, and Ernestine was a social worker in Philadelphia when we were married in Atlanta, her hometown.

In 1948, I was one of the residents selected by Dr. Charles R. Drew, Professor and Chairman of the Department of Surgery at Howard, to begin my surgical residency. Dr. Drew was an outstanding teacher and motivator of young people. He had international recognition for discovery of blood plasma preservation, which was responsible for saving many lives, particularly in World War II. Dr. Drew was killed in an automobile accident in 1950 in North Carolina at the age of 45. I completed my surgical residency under the direction of Dr. Burke Syphax, Professor of Surgery at Howard.

In 1954, I entered the U.S. Air Force as a captain and was assigned to Lowry Air Force Base Hospital in Denver, Colorado, as Chief of Surgery. I became a diplomat of the American Board of Surgery and received a commendation from the Secretary of the Air Force when I completed the surgical board examination at the University of Kansas.

I was discharged from the Air Force in 1956 and entered private practice in Denver. In

addition to my practice, I was member of the faculty of the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in the Department of Surgery, where I served for over 25 years and retired as a Clinical Associate Professor of Surgery.

My involvement in the practice of medicine in Denver included membership in the Denver Medical Society, where I served as treasurer and also as a member of the House of Delegates. I served in the House of Delegates of the Colorado State Medical Society, as well as a member of the Denver and Colorado divisions of the American Cancer Society.

I retired from my medical practice in November 1995, after serving the community for 41 years. I am now involved in volunteer health care in our city.

Other organizations to which I belong are the American College of Surgeons, Denver Academy of Surgery, National Medical Association and American Medical Association. Included in my civic activities is the appointment to the Trustee Board of the Denver Botanic Gardens in 1992 by Mayor Wellington Webb.

I have been a member of New Hope Baptist Church since 1955 and a member of the Board of Deacons for over 30 years. My wife, Ernestine Wallace Gipson, a social worker, is also retired. She held positions as a social worker at Fitzsimmons Army Hospital and the Denver Public School System. We have two children, Bernard F. Gipson, Jr., M.D., who is a family practitioner in Denver, and Bruce E. Gipson, who is employed in the home office of American Airlines in Dallas, Texas, and two grandchildren, Heather B. Gipson and Brandon Gipson, both college students.

Scope and Content

The Bernard F. Gipson, Sr., M.D. Papers (1947-1998) includes information acquired during his career as a doctor and throughout his life. The collection possesses material that reflects his career in medicine. This collection is rich in correspondence, lectures, newspaper articles, and publications that relate to the African American Community. This collection enhances the African American historian and researchers; perspective of a professional's perspective of Denver in the 1950s-1990s.

Series

Personal Papers

- 1. General**
- 2. Lectures**
- 3. Newspaper Articles**
- 4. Publications**

*Material from: 1947-1990s
cubic feet)*

Box 1 and Folio 1 (1.5

The Bernard F. Gipson, Sr., M.D. Papers have been organized into four subseries: general, lectures, newspaper articles, and publications. The first subseries, general, contains correspondence, genealogy, financial materials, and papers from his medical career. The second subseries, lectures, consists primarily of lectures given by Gipson during his medical career. The lectures reflect topics of medicine. The third subseries is made up of newspaper articles from 1958-1992. The topics of the articles include African Americans in medicine, Gipson, and miscellaneous topics of interest to Gipson. The fourth subseries consists of various publications pertaining to medicine and the African American community. All subseries are arranged alphabetically.

Container Listing

Series I: Personal Papers

Subseries I: General

Box 1	FF1	Alloth, Gordon, United States Senator	1969
Box 1	FF2	Applications	1954-
Box 1	FF3	Brochures	undated
Box 1	FF4	"Catch II" KNGN-TV	10/09/1973
Box 1	FF5	Certificates	1954-1998
Box 1	FF6	Clinical Records	undated
Box 1	FF7	Colorado Medical Society - articles of Incorporation, Constitution and By-Laws	undated
Box 1	FF8	Correspondence: Business	undated
Box 1	FF9	Correspondence: Personal	undated
Box 1	FF10	Correspondence: "Thank You"	1947-1984
Box 1	FF11	Curry, Reverend Lacy Kirk: Installation Services	07/07/1968
Box 1	FF12	Denver Medical Society: Trustee	undated
Box 1	FF13	Drew, Dr. Charles R.: Life and Funeral (Newspaper articles, compiled by Dr. Gipson)	04/16/1950
Box 1	FF14	Film: <i>African-American Doctors</i> (Denver Public Schools)	02/19/1996
Box 1	FF15	Financial Statements	undated
Box 1	FF16	Genealogy	undated
Box 1	FF17	Howard University - Alumni	undated
Box 1	FF18	Howard University - College of Medicine: Class Reunion	01/01/1968
Box 1	FF19	Human Relations Council	undated
Box 1	FF20	Internship: United States Public Health Hospital, Washington, D.C. (was: United States Marine Hospital, Boston, 1951)	undated
Box 1	FF21	Lease Agreement: 56 Saville Street, Cambridge Mass.	09/01/1951
Box 1	FF22	Lowry Air Force Base, Constitution	undated
Box 1	FF23	Memorandums	undated
Box 1	FF24	Mercy Medical Center	undated
Box 1	FF25	Mitchell, Maurice B. - Inauguration, University of Denver	undated
Box 1	FF26	Morehouse College Alumni	undated

Series I: Personal Papers

Subseries I: General

Box 1	FF27	National Medical Association, Washington, D.C.	undated
Box 1	FF28	Photographs	1965-1998
Box 1	FF29	Press Releases	10/29/1968
Box 1	FF30	Prospectors Club, Minutes	06/18/1968
Box 1	FF31	Retirement Luncheon - Red Lion Hotel	05/30/1992
Box 1	FF32	Spellman, Dr. Mitchell W.	undated
Box 1	FF33	United States Air Force School of Aviation Medicine - Graduation Exercises	08/27/1954
Box 1	FF34	University of Colorado School of Medicine - 7th Annual Conference	09/28-10/02/1970
Folio 1		Charles R. Drew Scrapbook	April 1980

Series I: Personal Papers

Subseries II: Lectures

Box 1	FF35	“Families Remembering the Dream” (Martin Luther King, Jr., Celebration)	01/18/1993
Box 1	FF36	“Hemophiles”	undated
Box 1	FF37	“Intestinal Destruction” (General Rose Hospital)	07/08/1958
Box 1	FF38	“Medicine as a Career” (West High School)	11/17/1967
Box 1	FF39	“Negro in Medicine” (Estes Park)	10/01/1970
Box 1	FF40	“Soft Part Sarcomas” (3rd Annual Charles R. Drew Seminar)	03/19/1973
Box 1	FF41	“Splenic Cysts” (Lowry Air Force Base Hospital)	08/03/1956
Box 1	FF42	“Welcome Reverend E. Wade” (St. Luke Christian M.E. Church, Denver, Colorado)	10/17/1965

Series I: Personal Papers

Subseries III: Newspaper Articles

Box 1	FF43	Newspaper Articles	undated
Box 1	FF44	African American Doctors in Denver	1969
Box 1	FF45	Gipson, Sr., M.D., Bernard F.	1958-1992

Series I: Personal Papers

Subseries II: Publications

Box 1	FF46	<i>American College of Surgeons</i> (Newsletter)	Oct 69
Box 1	FF47	<i>Denver Medical Bulletin</i> (Volumes 58, 60, and 61)	undated
Box 1	FF48	<i>FACS, Newsletter</i> (Volume 2, Number 2)	Apr 67
Box 1	FF49	<i>Fact Letter</i> (Volume 7, Number 2)	May 63
Box 1	FF50	<i>The Freedman's Auricle</i>	03/15/?
Box 1	FF51	<i>Horizons Unlimited</i>	1966
Box 1	FF52	<i>In the Black</i> (Volume 24)	Winter 1999
Box 1	FF53	<i>Jet</i>	11/08/1972
Box 1	FF54	<i>Kappa Alpha Psi</i>	Dec 77
Box 1	FF55	<i>Medicannales</i> (Volume 7, Number 3)	Jul 62
Box 1	FF56	<i>The Mercy Day</i> (Volume 20 and 24)	undated
Box 1	FF57	Nedco Nursing, Inc (Stovall Care Center)	undated
Box 1	FF58	<i>Mesa Messenger</i>	Oct 76
Box 1	FF59	<i>Participating Physicians Bulletin</i> (Volume 8, Number 2)	1969
Box 1	FF60	Publications and Awards	undated