

**AUGUST 2012**

**Volume 6, Issue 1**

**SPECIAL  
EDITION**

**SUMMER**

**Stronghold Civic Association**  
"Working together to build our community"



**EDITOR'S NOTE:**

***Welcome back  
to the SCA  
newsletter!***

*After a long hiatus, I  
am happy to begin  
again with this spe-  
cial edition because  
of the subject and  
the fine gentleman  
that I had the privi-  
lege of interviewing!*

*As you will read,  
three neighbors-kids  
at the time-played a  
big role in our com-  
munity's name, but  
don't let me get  
ahead of the story. I  
will let you hear from  
someone who was  
there...!*

**HAPPY  
Back-to-School  
celebration for all of  
us kids-Big and  
Small!  
ENJOY THE Block  
Party!**

*Doris J. Newton  
[phenomw@msn.com](mailto:phenomw@msn.com)*

***HOW THE STRONGHOLD COMMUNITY GOT ITS NAME***

I had the privilege of meeting Mr. Malcolm Taylor, Jr. when he visited our Stronghold Civic Association monthly meeting back in the spring. He had been invited by someone who thought that he could lend his voice to help with some community issues-just as he had done "back in the day." Malcolm spoke at that meeting and said that he had lived in the neighborhood as a young adult, but had moved on and lived away for many years. He had returned to his residence in the 2400 block of North Capitol Street, NE where his mother, Mrs. Mary L. Taylor still lives. He had heard various stories on the origin of the Stronghold name. He wanted to share what he knew first-hand about the name. I was delighted!



*Malcolm Taylor, Jr. today*



*Coach Malcolm Taylor (standing-white  
hat) and Midget Coats Football Team,  
1960. Johnny Parrish, sitting*

I'm sure I was not the only one who had wondered how our community became known as the Stronghold community. After all, Stronghold did not sound like other local community names that I had come to know in my 28 short years of residency (compared to the "longer time" residents). There is Bloomingdale, Eckington, Edgewood, LeDroit Park-all familiar community names near our area. I had done some research and learned about a Stronghold baseball team. I had even added this bit of history to an organization brochure created while I was president of our association. However, no one could recall why the word "Stronghold" is used. Then Malcolm came along...

Afterwards, every time the boys were away from the neighborhood with other friends, when it was time to go home, they would say “we’re going back to the stronghold” meaning to home base or to the neighborhood. This became the saying of the whole community over time as these younger kids grew up. Malcolm then began telling me about the group of young kids and their parents that had lived in our community back in 1960. Some are still there.

“There were several gangs throughout the city back in 1960. However, because of the unique layout of the Stronghold neighborhood—one way in/one way out—none of the gangs of the day would dare venture into the neighborhood. Everybody protected their turf,” Malcolm said. “If you asked anybody from the community where they lived, they would say “I’m from the Stronghold,” with pride in their eyes!”

### **The Neighborhood Midget Coats Football team and cheerleaders**

After serving in the U.S. Air Force from 1956-1959, Malcolm had returned home to the neighborhood and began working at the U.S. Library of Congress. When he got home after work, Malcolm would observe young boys playing two-hand touch football in the alleys behind North Capitol and between Bryant and Channing Streets, NE. and the cemetery wall. Malcolm says “they were really good football players; a “rough and tumble” group of boys, especially the 15 year olds and older.” Malcolm recalls that the boys took pride in playing football. He realized that if they could play that well in the alley, then what would they do on a real football field?

He wanted to maintain the boys’ engagement in positive activities, so Malcolm approached Eddie Myers, one of the older teenagers, about forming a team in an organized league. Eddie and the other kids agreed; contacted the manager, Mr. Wyatt, at the local Boys Club on New Jersey Avenue, NW, , and the Midget Coats Football team was formed!



***Neighbor Midget Coats football team members, 1960***

More than 350 kids in the neighboring communities tried out for the team when the word got out. Malcolm had to screen out potentials so required that eligible boys had to live within the boundaries of North Capitol, NW to 1<sup>st</sup> and W Streets, NW to Channing, NW then back to Michigan Avenue, NE and towards the cemetery. Some kids from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, NW also tried out. The final count was about 35-40 players.

The requirements included being 14 years of age and younger for this 145 pound weight class. Some of the boys were as young as 9 years. The older teenagers like Johnny Parrish, Eddie Myers, Albert A. Aiken a.k.a “Cement,” and Emory Washington stayed around to help as assistants to Coach Taylor. The Coach said “Johnny couldn’t play because he was older, but was known to keep a newspaper in his back pocket. So Johnny became the team’s statistics keeper and knew all of the rules and regulations.”

“There were other junior league football teams in the city, but we were the first to have cheerleaders,” says Malcolm. There were 15 girls age 14 and under. The other teams wanted to see the pretty girls! The midget Coats were also the first team to be fully uniformed. Malcolm says that he paid out of pocket for most of the uniforms.



*Midget Coats Cheerleaders, 1960*

### **Community Spirit and Support for the Midget Coats**

Malcolm said “If you could not tackle between the ankles to knees you could not play on the team.” Practice was Monday-Thursday afternoons at the Edgewood playground.

Training included meeting at Malcolm’s house and running from North Capitol to the Edgewood field, then 1 lap around the field and back to his house on North Capitol Street. Penalties for cursing-2 laps; for smoking-3 laps.

The team met at Malcolm’s house on Fridays for “skull practice” –practicing game plays on a blackboard. Team members were required to bring an adult 18 years or older to the skull practices. The adults had to sign their names and addresses and had to arrive by 7 p.m. This way Malcolm developed an adult transportation team for the Saturday games. Malcolm’s Mom would have snacks prepared for the meetings. Adult involvement was really good!

The games were a major event in the community and a source of pride. One photo shows a gathering of parents and friends and team in Malcolm’s front yard as they prepared to leave for a game. All of the parents and community would assemble. Several times, Mr. Wyatt from the Boys Club would have to send 3 police officers to escort the caravan of cars from the community to the games in other areas. That is how much the community demonstrated that they cared.

From 1960-1963, under Malcolm’s leadership, the Midget Coats would play against city teams from River Terrace, Greenleaf, SW, Marshall Heights, Benning Heights, Parkside, Berry Farms, and Lincoln Heights. Malcolm moved on in 1963 and the team continued for a while. Eddie Myers also started the Stronghold baseball team for the older teens that could not play in the junior football league. **...and that’s how the Stronghold got its name!**

**Editor's Note:**

Malcolm wanted to tell this story so that the grandchildren of these dedicated kids who played in the alleys and for a neighborhood team over 40 years ago would remember them and do their best today to continue positive actions for our community ...and that's how the Stronghold got its name!

Ok, so now I know and hopefully you have learned something, too. Please tell your story, especially those reading this that can identify some of the kids in the photos. Maybe you are one of them!  
*I'm going back to the Stronghold!*

*Doris*

\*\*\*\*\*

*History is really made in community. History is a communal enterprise, and the best way to capture that history is through the stories that people themselves tell.*  
-- Tomás Atencio, sociologist

*I think history is inextricably linked to identity. If you don't know your history, if you don't know your family, who are you?*  
-- Mary Pipher, psychologist and author, *Reviving Ophelia*

*HEARTFELT THANK YOU!*  
SCA thanks Rev. James Coleman and staff at All Nations Baptist Church for your continued support and demonstrated commitment in our community!

\*\*\*\*\*

Special thanks to **Faith Bynoe** for scanning photos for this edition; **Vivian Rouson** for editorial comments; and **Malcolm Taylor** for preserving the Stronghold story!

*Mark your Calendar for the next SCA Meeting \*September 10*

***"Stronghold Civic Association NEEDS YOU!!"***

*Meetings held monthly,  
1st Monday (except holidays)  
at 7:00 pm  
All Nations Baptist Church  
(corner of N. Capitol & RI Ave, NE)*

*Contact Block Captain for more info.  
\*Date change for September meeting  
due to holiday*

**SCA Officers:** Ann Brooks-**President**; Kit Young, **Vice President**; Faith Bynoe, **Secretary**; Gloria Burns, **Financial Secretary**, David Scott, **Treasurer**; Kirby Vining, **Director of Planning**