



Shelia E. Harris

~ Executive Housekeeper at the President's House

Hometown: Charles City, Va.

Family: Son Lorenzo Harris Jr., three grandchildren

How long have you worked at the College? This year makes 24 years, so it has been a long time. I actually was hourly for a year, so if they counted that I would have been here for 25 years.

Why did you come to work here? My mother, Elenora Robinson, was a housekeeping supervisor and she let me know they were hiring at Yates dormitory, where I worked hourly. My friend and sister in Christ, Catherine Bartlett, was working at the President's House. After her assistant left, she asked the housekeeping manager to bring me over to work with her. I really didn't want to come, but the manager said I was the only one she knew would make it here. "With your attitude you can work with anybody," she said.

What's the transition like between the four presidents you have worked for? For me, it's fine. I don't let anything get next to me. I just go with the flow. A lot of people say, "I don't see how in the world you do it," but I always put God first. As long as I have God in my life, everything else follows.

Who was your favorite visitor to the House? It was very, very exciting meeting Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. She was awesome. She shook my hand with her glove on and I was the one who gave Nick the gift he was going to be giving to her — President Nichol, but everybody called him Nick. The whole family was on a first-name basis. They were just low-key.

What does your average day look like? I come in running and go straight to work. There are challenges to cleaning an old house, but it comes so easy to me. I enjoy doing it. I also run errands and go to the grocery store to pick up things. I know what each and every president likes and doesn't like. President Reveley, his favorite is navel oranges. There is never a dull moment. If we have a student lunch, then I will take a break from the ironing board and the cleaning because I go up and help. I am usually in the back of the House. I don't care that much for being out in the front.

What do you like to do when you are not working? I enjoy reading and relaxing and looking at movies. I have all of Tyler Perry's movies and I just read Steve Harvey's book. I am going on a cruise to Bermuda and I am taking my grandson with me. I go to all of his basketball games too.

Interview by Melissa V. Pinard