

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

GEORGE BRADHAM

INTERVIEW OT1601

This is Isabelle Burbank representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. The date is October 26, 1992. I am interviewing George Bradham at his home at 8919 Park Road, Charlotte, North Carolina. My number is OT1600. The number of the interview is OT1601.

ISABELLE BURBANK: Mr. Bradham, what was your birthdate?

MR. BRADHAM: November 21, 1907.

IB: And you were born in New Bern?

MR. BRADHAM: New Bern, North Carolina, yes.

IB: Were you born at home?

MR. BRADHAM: I understand that I was born at home and not in the hospital. That was the custom at that time.

IB: What were your parent's names and where were they from?

MR. BRADHAM: My father's name was Caleb D. Bradham from Chinquapin, North Carolina, which is a village in Duplin County. My mother was Sarah Charity Crater and she was born at Lake Mattamuskeet, Hyde County. She grew up in Beaufort, North Carolina, married my father and moved to New Bern.

IB: How did they meet?

MR. BRADHAM: That I don't know. My mother was a registered nurse. At that time they weren't registered nurses. She and her sister and my father's sister were nurses. They graduated from Philadelphia General Hospital and became registered nurses. She was working in a Rochester, New York, hospital. Then my father went up and talked her into marrying him and they got married in Rochester by a Methodist minister. Then they moved to New Bern and set up housekeeping in New

Bern. I don't know what she was doing in Rochester, but she was a trained nurse and she had a good job as supervisor or something, I don't know what.

IB: What were the names of your siblings?

MR. BRADHAM: I had one sister named Mary McCann Bradham, later married Dossy Pruden. Her name was Mary McCann Bradham Pruden Tucker. She was married twice to two lawyers. Both of them died from heart attacks. My brother was married to a girl named Haydee Morris from Philadelphia. They'd been married less than three years when they separated. They have one daughter. She lives out in Salt Lake City, Utah. That's the family.

IB: Where did you live in New Bern?

MR. BRADHAM: Where I was one year old my father bought this big house and it was known as the Slover House. It was built by Mr. Slover about 1840. It's federal architecture. It's supposed to be the finest example of federal architecture in North Carolina. A very big house, huge rooms. It's now occupied and owned by the Stith family. We lived there about thirty-five years. My mother sold it to Rodman Guion, an attorney, for \$10,000. I understand now the house is on the market for \$600,000.

IB: I read somewhere that this was the house that was the headquarters of General Burnside.

MR. BRADHAM: That's right.

IB: How did the family feel about that?

MR. BRADHAM: We don't know, except I have read that some of the

people from New Bern didn't like the occupation of the town by the northern troops, so they left. Some people went to High Point, which was just a village at that time. You know, the northern troops occupied New Bern the whole war, that's why it wasn't damaged. There wasn't any shell fire or fighting in New Bern so far as I know.

IB: I didn't know that.

MR. BRADHAM: The big houses are all there. There are many pictures taken during the war with the northern troops sitting around in front of these houses with the local girls. Some of them married these southern girls and spent the rest of their lives in New Bern.

IB: How did people feel about that, the New Bern girls?

MR. BRADHAM: I don't know. I imagine some with animosity.

IB: I would think so. Who were your friends growing up?

MR. BRADHAM: Well, I guess you might say Elisha Bunting, Isaac Taylor, Lee Reid, George Harper, Louis Foy. I can't seem to recall at the moment.

IB: Were they neighborhood friends?

MR. BRADHAM: Yes, they lived not far away. Of course you know New Bern hasn't changed a lot. It still doesn't take up a lot of land. People live pretty close together.

IB: What did you and your friends do? You were close to the river, did you play at the river a good bit or do you remember anything?

MR. BRADHAM: We spent a lot of time on the river. We did a lot of swimming. There were some piers, docks, off of East Front Street and we swam there. My father didn't like it because the river was

polluted. New Bern had no modern sewage system. He just hated for us to be in that water. I remember I had one friend who caught typhoid fever and died. He and some friends were across the river and went up one the creeks and didn't have any water to drink, so they drank some of the creek water. He caught typhoid fever and died.

IB: That's terrible. Do you remember his name?

MR. BRADHAM: No, I don't. But I do remember a boy name Taylor whose family was in the coca-cola bottling business. He and somebody else were off hunting up the Trent River near where the County Club is located now. Some ducks came over and this boy swung his gun around and the gun fired, hit the Taylor boy in the stomach and killed him.

His friend had to row home and get somebody to take him home. We had a few fatalities. Another fellow was drowned. He and another guy, Tom Bayliss, and a couple of girls were swimming up the river at a place called Bradham's Bluff which is above the Country Club.

Did you ever hear about that?

IB: No.

MR. BRADHAM: Well see, the bank's high, twenty feet high, and it was a good place to swim. The water was deep, you could dive off the bank. Tom Bayliss and these others were swimming but something happened to him, he had a cramp and he drowned. Bill Dunn and I were playing golf at the Country Club which is only about a mile or two away and somebody came riding up in a car, blowing the horn, and said, " Come help us. Tom Bayliss has drowned and we can't find him." They wanted to see if we could help him. So we got in the car and went

right down to the river and dove into the river and went down, but we never found him. Later they found him that day. The fire department or somebody came out and they wrapped the equipment and located him, and he was dead. It was too bad.

IB: It is too bad. That's terrible.

MR. BRADHAM: A lot of things happened. I had another friend who was duck hunting and he fell off a boat. He had on heavy winter clothes; heavy boots that laced up, he couldn't swim a stroke. He just went right down to the bottom dead.

IB: Something like that happened to someone I knew when I was growing up too.

MR. BRADHAM: That's the way New Bern was. It was dangerous.

IB: It was. Well, let me ask you about Pepsi-Cola. How did Pepsi-Cola come about?

MR. BRADHAM: Well, the story is in that book that I gave you there, I think, isn't it?

IB: Uh huh.

MR. BRADHAM: My father studied medicine. First he went to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After being there a while, I don't know how long, he went to the University of Maryland and studied medicine. His father didn't have much money. They were having a pretty tough time. My father when he was at Maryland had a moonlighting job making a little extra money working in a pharmaceutical manufacturing plant or drug store. He learned a good deal about being a pharmacist and working in the drug store. So, it just changed him. After he

left Maryland, he didn't graduate, never got his MD, but he came back home and stayed a few months. During that time he practiced medicine in Duplin County because there were no doctors in the county. People called on him because he had had some training. Then he went to New Bern and got a job teaching penmanship. At that time people were taught how to write in beautiful script. They don't do that anymore.

But he did that in the city schools. Then he went in the hay and grain business. That wasn't too good apparently. So there was this drug store there that was available and he decided to go into the drug business. He bought the drug store and named it Bradham's Pharmacy.

My father was a great experimenter, liked to fool around with chemicals and flavors, so he decided to make up a drink for the boys and he manufactured this cola drink. It was called "Brad's drink" because the guys liked it so much. Well, it was so successful that he decided to franchise it and they changed the name to Pepsi-Cola.

IB: How did he get the name Pepsi?

MR. BRADHAM: There was a firm in Newark, New Jersey, that had the "Pepsi" copyrighted and they went broke. He got in touch with them or went up there and he bought the name Pepsi from them for \$100.

The name was Pepsi-Cola, this drink. He changed the name to Pepsi-Cola and decided to put it on the market. The first bottler that he authorized was in Charlotte, North Carolina. The fellow's name was Henry Fowler. Incidentally, they started the Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company of Charlotte. Mr. Fowler's granddaughter whose name is Dale Halton.

IB: You told me and I've forgotten, but we can look that up.

MR. BRADHAM: Maybe I can find it. She's the president of the Charlotte company now. She owns the company which according to one of the Charlotte employees who told me it is worth one hundred and fifty million dollars.

IB: Good heavens. Now who were the guys that he made this drink for? You've mentioned these people.

MR. BRADHAM: In New Bern?

IB: Yes.

MR. BRADHAM: I don't know.

IB: Were these the men he's pictured with in the book?

MR. BRADHAM: Yes, the picture is in there. That's my father back of the soda fountain and sitting in front of him on the stools are a bunch of the local guys that hung around the town. They were the ones who drank "Brad's drink."

IB: Where was the store?

MR. BRADHAM: The corner of Middle Street and Hancock Street?

IB: Pollock Street? Not Simmons.

MR. BRADHAM: No, you got Middle Street. And the street that crosses that at the Elks Temple.

IB: I believe that's Pollock.

MR. BRADHAM: Starts down at the river and goes right on pass Tryon Palace.

IB: Right, and goes pass the Episcopal Church. I believe that's Pollock.

MR. BRADHAM: Yes. That's where it is.

IB: Do you remember going there as a child?

MR. BRADHAM: Oh yeah.

IB: Did he have a store as Pepsi got more successful?

MR. BRADHAM: I worked there part of the time. I didn't get paid very much. I volunteered to put up prescriptions, which I did.

IB: Did you actually make up the prescriptions?

MR. BRADHAM: Well at that time, you didn't have all these pre-packaged medicines, like aspirin. Aspirin is a derivative of salicylic acid. It was a powder. At that time a doctor prescribed aspirin, you'd put the doses in these pieces of paper, folding them over, and you'd roll up maybe twenty-four and you would put it up for sale. Then my father would pour out the proper amount of aspirin and put it into capsules and he'd put it in a little box and paste the instructions on the top. I worked around the drug store delivering medicines and prescriptions. I jerked soda, ran the soda fountain of course. People would come in to drink "Brad's drink" or a milkshake. I'm trying to think what we had in the back of the soda fountains, ice-cream.

IB: Was it famous from the beginning, this "Brad's drink?"

MR. BRADHAM: Oh no. It took years to it build up. We started out with just a few bottles. Just put soda's in. Sometimes about twenty-five bottles, is that right?

IB: I'm not sure.

MR. BRADHAM: (looking at pictures in a book) There's the plant.

IB: Now where was that? That's the Pepsi-Cola plant where they manufactured and bottled it, is that right?

MR. BRADHAM: That's right. They made the syrup there. It was on that street you pass where the school buildings are located, across from the schools.

IB: Central School?

MR. BRADHAM: Yes. That was run by the Pugh Company. The top floor burned off and they put a new roof on it and it burned again.

IB: The year you were born.

MR. BRADHAM: About fifteen bottling plants, that was the business. Before 1906, less than fifteen bottling plants.

IB: So you remember it as a small family business that grew?

MR. BRADHAM: I didn't really remember it all to tell you the truth. When it was growing up, I was not involved in the business.

IB: Was the drug store more what you remember your family doing?

MR. BRADHAM: I do because I did work there. I got paid working on Saturday and jerking soda.

IB: Do you remember someone that's mentioned in the book, Uncle Dick Butler?

MR. BRADHAM: He was a druggist. His picture's in here.

IB: I looked for it and didn't see it. I looked through it last night. He was with your father for a long time wasn't he?

MR. BRADHAM: Yes. (looking through a book) Well, I don't see it. What he did was to turn the drug store over to Butler. He went into the business of running the drink. (See picture in book) That

was some house, I can tell you that.

IB: That's a beautiful house. Were you considered wealthy living in that house in New Bern?

MR. BRADHAM: Oh sure. Everybody thought we were wealthy as the devil, and at one time we were. Wealthy men had their farms and horses and boats and dogs and everything. At a time like that everybody's pitching in. A whole book could be written about this. I guess they will get all this stuff together and somebody can put it in a book.

IB: What happened to Pepsi-Cola? Your father had started it and built it into a thriving company.

MR. BRADHAM: Pepsi-Cola one of its principal partners was Senator Simmons, your grandfather or great-grandfather.

IB: My great-grandfather.

MR. BRADHAM: That's right. He put in a lot of the money, and they were very close. As a matter of fact they were from the same part of the state. Senator Simmons came from Onslow County and my father came from Duplin, which was the next county. They were both brought up on farms and believed that farming was the best business of all. World War I came along and things got tough. Instead of putting their money into negotiable securities, they bought farm land. They had two thousand acres under cultivation. Senator Simmons advised him to do it. That's what they did, had farms. They thought the farms were for the wealthy. They always had been. They didn't save any capital, put aside any funds for a rainy day. They bought farm lands for pretty big prices. About 1921 we had what we call a farm recession.

Do you know about this?

IB: No, I don't.

MR. BRADHAM: The farm recession, strenuous farming business went down and many farmers went broke. Well, Pepsi-Cola company had made money, especially during World War I, but they didn't put any of it aside for possible emergencies, because my father and Senator Simmons both were agriculturalists by heart. Then the price of sugar, sugar was a very important ingredient in the drink Pepsi-Cola, so in order to get sugar they had to pay inflated prices for it. Well, the war ended and they were paying something like twenty-five cents a pound for sugar, then it dropped down to five cents a pound, they were unable to meet their obligations and the company went out of business. It went broke. The bottlers went broke too. But there were two bottlers who never stopped bottling Pepsi-Cola. One was Mr. Fowler in Charlotte and another was the Burnette family in Durham. What they bottled we don't know exactly, but they manufactured something. They really did, kept selling it. Pepsi-Cola had every chance of being a big success, but my father just did not know enough about finances and he didn't have the proper advice. Senator Simmons didn't know anything about it either I guess.

IB: But Pepsi continued on. Was it carried on by the people in Charlotte and Durham?

MR. BRADHAM: Yes, they carried it on. I don't know what kind of syrup they used. They may have been manufacturing something themselves.

IB: Did this provide a real hardship on your family or did the drug store carry you through?

MR. BRADHAM: Yes, we never had any real problem about living. We did drop our scale of living. At one time we had five servants in that big house. We even had a chauffeur and a Cadillac. But this farm depression things got so that we went down and had one or two servants and didn't live very fancy. But we got through it.

IB: I've heard my grandmother talk about the servants that she had back around the same time. Was this fairly common to have a lot of help?

MR. BRADHAM: Yes, it was. But we had plenty of money, because we had a cook, a chauffeur, a yard man, and a couple of maids. "Black hands in the kitchen." That's the best thing you can have if you can afford it. Well, then the Pepsi-Cola Company went into receivership and was later bought by a firm in New York and brought back on the market. (Interruption)

IB: The firm in New York bought Pepsi and brought it back?

MR. BRADHAM: Yes. And the thing that really got it going was this 12 ounce bottle and a little ditty about Pepsi-Cola, the drink for you, you know.

IB: "Pepsi-Cola hits the spot."

MR. BRADHAM: "Pepsi-Cola hits the spot, 12 full ounces and that's a lot. Twice as much for a nickel or two, Pepsi-Cola's the drink for you." That really was a great boost too. The 12 ounce bottle, the working class guys would drink that instead of buying a six ounce

Coca-cola. I was working in Baltimore on the Hearst paper. It was terribly hot, especially in that printing plant. I'd see these fellows drinking these great big tall drinks. What they did was to put the Pepsi-Cola in beer bottles. They didn't have any Pepsi-Cola bottles so they put it in beer bottles and sold it to them that way. It came back to today. I think the last years sales were something like twenty billion dollars.

IB: Good heavens. How did that make you feel being up in Baltimore and seeing these guys drinking Pepsi and knowing that your family had started it?

MR. BRADHAM: Actually it didn't affect me at all cause it didn't look like anything. Just a bunch of blacks and people like that sweating it out and drinking Pepsi-Cola. But it didn't have a lot of advertising.

Pepsi-Cola took off from there and has grown steadily until now it's the second largest drink company in the world. In all the bottling plants and all the other plants, they've got something like 600,000 employees.

IB: That's amazing.

MR. BRADHAM: It takes a lot of people, you know, to deliver it and all that.

IB: Did you ever consider going into, or taking over the family drug store, or going into pharmacy yourself?

MR. BRADHAM: Well, I thought about going to work for Pepsi-Cola.

IB: Did you?

MR. BRADHAM: I was working in Greensboro on the Greensboro Daily News. The President of Pepsi-Cola Company lived in Baltimore. His name was Charlie Guth. I went up to see him about going to work for the company, but nothing happened. I think he just wanted to see if I knew anything that he didn't know. Just let me spend the night and go to Baltimore and sat around all day Sunday waiting for him. But that's one of those things. This is a typical American story. It's happened to thousands of companies. When I was in the Navy, the commanding officer of the squadron I was in, a fighter squadron, was named Bill Cole. His father had invented an automobile called the Cole Eight. It was very popular at that time. He and I would sit around in the Officers Club having a drink talking about our bad luck. (laughter) We lived through it.

IB: How did your father take the loss of Pepsi-Cola?

MR. BRADHAM: So far as I know it didn't upset him terribly. He was a quiet type of fellow. He went right back into the drug store, right back to the prescription counter and started filling prescriptions again. It probably kept him alive for a while, the exercise. His problem was that he smoked too much. He smoked a couple of packs of Camel cigarettes a day. (Interruption) What was I talking about?

IB: Your father smoked several packs of Camel's a day.

MR. BRADHAM: And he had arteriosclerosis and the angina pectoris down this arm. He had trouble with his blood vessels and he finally had a stroke or two and died at the age of sixty-three.

IB: So he died fairly young. Now your father was older when you were born, wasn't he? Was he in his forties?

MR. BRADHAM: Yes he was. He was older than most fathers. I was the third child, so I came on a little late. But I've outlived them all. I'm eighty-five years old. I never could understand how anybody could be that old. I used to think that fifty and sixty would be old and seventy-five was impossible. Here I am, I'm eighty-five.

My health is good except I've got this Parkinson's, but they tell you that doesn't kill you. It affects your locomotion. You have to watch how you walk cause you could fall down and break your hip. It happens here about every day, somebody has a broken hip.

IB: Well, that's bad.

MR. BRADHAM: But we've got a complete hospital up on the third floor here.

IB: So they can handle that. Let me ask you some questions. Living near the river, do you remember any of the hurricanes that came through New Bern? Anything unusual? They would come with no warning wouldn't they, pretty much?

MR. BRADHAM: Well, we didn't have the warning system that we have now. We didn't have all the radar and the weather stations out on these coastlines. We didn't have the planes flying out watching the hurricane. A hurricane in New Bern would always come from the northeast because it's a clockwise progression. Here's New Bern and the hurricane would come around, so that means the part that hit New Bern would come from the northeast and would blow up the river.

Sometimes create some flooding because it blew the water out of the river and into the streets. But it never did much damage. We didn't call them hurricanes at all. We'd just call them Northeaster's.

IB: Oh really?

MR. BRADHAM: The only I remember that was any devastating was the one in 1933. I was working on the Greensboro Daily News as a reporter. They had the hurricane down in New Bern and the paper sent me down there to cover it. The bridge across New Bern to Bridgeton before they built that concrete bridge, well, the hurricane took that bridge out. It destroyed most of it except for some pilings. And there was a lot of damage along the waterfront. There were boats and yachts blown onto shore. Just the usual litter from a hurricane.

IB: Was your family still living in the house that you grew up in?

MR. BRADHAM: Yes, they were there. I think they sold it about 1935. Sometime I wonder about if we may have kept all that money, kept that house. It was pretty elegant. My father did another thing.

His business abilities were not very good. A group of men in Baltimore with lots of money wanted to buy in the Pepsi-Cola Company and wanted him to move the whole thing to Baltimore, which would have been a good move because they have a deep water port where they could bring in sugar. You see, getting sugar to New Bern you had to bring it in either Norfolk or Wilmington and truck it to New Bern. But in Baltimore they would just put the ship right up beside the plant. As a matter of fact they did that in New York in the, called Long Island City,

Pepsi-Cola plant was right on the water. The ships would just dock there and get the sugar out. The office was right there too.

IB: He didn't want to leave New Bern.

MR. BRADHAM: That's right. He loved to hunt and fish and fool around the water. Had these hunting camps down there you know, Camp Bryan. Are you familiar with that?

IB: Um huh.

MR. BRADHAM: He belonged to that. He just didn't want to move to Baltimore. I can't blame him. New Bern is a very pleasant town. But Baltimore, I worked there for three years at one time. It's a hell of a nice city. It's a southern city. People have a good time and we could have been part of the community in no time, but he just didn't want to do it.

IB: Well, let's see. Another thing that I just jotted down that sounded interesting to me, the flu epidemic of 1918. You would have been eleven. Do you recall that and what precautions would your family take, if any?

MR. BRADHAM: I just recall it vaguely. I heard stories about Chapel Hill students and how many students died. They had coffins stacked in Durham in the train station waiting to be sent home. Of course there's lots of things been written about that. But I wasn't in school. How old was I, let's see, eleven. It didn't bother me a bit.

IB: Do you remember the fire of 1922?

MR. BRADHAM: Oh yes, very vividly. We were playing football

in the state championship in Raleigh. We were playing Fayetteville. You know about this?

IB: No.

MR. BRADHAM: We didn't have 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A's. So a town like New Bern, a player played a city like Durham, which wasn't fair. We played Ashville for the state championship. The first time we did it I remember it rained like the devil. Then later we played Fayetteville and it was fair. Had a special train from New Bern to Raleigh. During the game we received word that there's a big, big fire in New Bern and the town was burning down. So we all got on the train to get back to New Bern. We got back in the middle of the night.

We could see the devastation and smell it, and of course naturally we could see how many houses were burned. It was a very spectacular thing. It really cleaned up New Bern. I thought it was a good thing.

We lost five or ten houses my parents owned. Everybody owned houses and rented them out to the black families for about a dollar a week; that's right, two dollars a week a house.

IB: Did you rebuild?

MR. BRADHAM: My brother built two or three houses. Where the Kafer Park is, that was full of houses on that side of the cemetery. It was sort of a ghetto. The people whose houses were burned, got their furniture out, some of them, and they brought it down the street as far as our house and left it on the lawn; beds and chairs and stuff like that. It was quite a spectacular event. It's in that paper you gave me.

IB: Right. I had seen that there. Now what church did your family go to?

MR. BRADHAM: First Presbyterian Church.

IB: Who was the minister at that time, do you remember?

MR. BRADHAM: Dr. J. H. Summerall. He's a famous kind of a preacher. His uncle or his cousin, or maybe it's his nephew, I don't know, was Dr. Elisha Mitchell. Did you know this?

IB: No.

MR. BRADHAM: Mt. Mitchell is named for Dr. Elisha Mitchell. I don't know where he came from, but his brother or his son was pastor of the first church in New Bern. Dr. Mitchell surveyed, he was a surveyor. He got the height of the mountain and found it was the highest in the East. He was up there one day doing some of his work and apparently he got in this stream and some of the rocks were slimy and he fell and was killed. He's buried up there on top of the mountain. He came from down in New Bern somewhere down there.

IB: Were you active in Sunday School there?

MR. BRADHAM: Oh yeah, but I didn't set any examples. I did go to Sunday School.

IB: And which schools did you go to?

MR. BRADHAM: I went to all the schools they had there.

IB: Was that Central School?

MR. BRADHAM: All of them right on the same lot, first grade through the eleventh. Did you do that?

IB: I went to junior high there.

MR. BRADHAM: They're tearing down some of those buildings aren't they?

IB: They converted some to condominiums. They preserved several of them. I think maybe one's been torn down and they moved a house there.

MR. BRADHAM: The Moses Griffin building that's a historical museum.

IB: Um huh. Did you have any teachers that you particularly remember as being influential in your life?

MR. BRADHAM: I appreciated the efforts of H. B. Smith, who was the superintendent of the school. I appreciate his effort for trying to make a good student out of me, which was impossible. I was strictly a "C" student everywhere I went. I'd get through but that's about all. I'm no Phi Beta Kappa. Hugh McColl, his picture is in the paper this morning, he was not a good student either. You know that?

IB: I didn't know that, no.

MR. BRADHAM: We belonged to the same fraternity at Chapel Hill, The Betas. Familiar with them?

IB: Um huh.

MR. BRADHAM: Okay. He sat around and played bridge and poker when he was at Chapel Hill. He turns out to be probably America's most successful banker. He came from a small town in South Carolina called Bennettsville. Okay, what's else you got in that thing?

IB: Let's see. Do you remember any sort of trouble you may have gotten into with your friends, any pranks you played on anyone, anything

outstanding, any kind of trouble? Anything you want to tell us about?

MR. BRADHAM: There wasn't anything really, we did that was unusual or very spectacular. We just did the hunting and fishing, playing golf. When they built the Country Club it had nine holes and sand greens. That club was built from property owned by my father and I think that Senator Simmons owned some of that land. I think he did, I'm not sure, but Senator Simmons is all through this story.

IB: Did you remember Senator Simmons?

MR. BRADHAM: Oh yeah, very well. He was not a big man, but a very neat man. He always gave me a quarter every time I saw him, which was very nice to have hold of.

IB: It was a good sum of money.

MR. BRADHAM: Sure. You could have lunch off of that. A can of sardines, box of crackers, and a Pepsi-Cola.

IB: Was he a local celebrity? Was he held in high esteem in New Bern having been senator for so many years?

MR. BRADHAM: Oh sure. He was the town's outstanding citizen and a prominent United States Senator. He's not known but he should be known, he was the father of the inland waterway. You know that?

IB: No, I didn't know that.

MR. BRADHAM: He pushed the inland waterway through Congress. Having an inside passage all the way from New York to Miami, a huge ditch, you've been in I know. Then you can go all that distance without going outside. It probably saved many lives and it's been a great thing for tourists.

IB: It has. (Interruption) Well, I'd never heard the story about the inland waterway before.

MR. BRADHAM: Well, I think somebody did some studying and found out he wrote the bill or he co-wrote it or whatever, I don't know. But he was involved in the inland waterway.

IB: He was a neighbor of your family too on East Front Street.

MR. BRADHAM: Yeah. Sure. Right down the street just three blocks. I'd see him around. Of course I was just a kid. But I know when he was defeated. He opposed Al (Alfred) Smith, that's right, and the party kicked him out and wouldn't support him anymore. Well, let me see. That's about all, I tell you.

IB: You getting tired?

MR. BRADHAM: No, I'm not getting tired, it's just the fact that it's awfully hard to get into some area that people in New Bern don't already know.

IB: Well, it's interesting to hear your viewpoint, and being a child how you might have viewed events and you know what struck you as interesting maybe in the fire. You might have seen someone that made an impression on you. Your remark about how people would bring their furniture from the fire, that's something. There aren't many people around that remember that anymore.

MR. BRADHAM: The fire was spreading. There was a high wind blowing and the fire was spreading rapidly. So the fire department dynamited houses.

IB: Oh really? To stop the spread?

MR. BRADHAM: To keep the fire from spreading. I think the people carried their furniture out first, most of it.

IB: Did you hear any of the dynamiting or were you still out of town?

MR. BRADHAM: No. We were in Raleigh. We got back in the middle of the night. The town was smelly. It smelled like smoke and the fire. (Tape picks up here) Not anymore than anybody else down there did. I think that Dr. Patterson. Of course he's not as old as I am, but it's been someone near my age in New Bern, they'd know it, cause the town was so small.

IB: Right.

MR. BRADHAM: Word got around.

IB: Do you remember the baptisms in the Neuse River near your house?

MR. BRADHAM: Oh yes.

IB: That's sounds interesting to me.

MR. BRADHAM: That's an interesting thing, but that's typical. My wife's from Tarboro and they did that in the Tar River right there. I'd talk about it and she'd talk about it. It happened in all those towns. I think it's spectacular. Are they planning to do a book or what?

IB: (Tape picks up here) Now you're talking about a big house?
(Talks about the Slover-Guion-Stith House)

MR. BRADHAM: A big house. That's interesting because the evidence of the Civil War is still there.

IB: How so?

MR. BRADHAM: Well, the soldiers at that time carried a very heavy gun. When they would come into a room they would slam it down on the floor in the corner and the marks of all these gun butts are all in the floor. That was one thing. Another thing, there was a small room down on the first floor. It was kind of a nurses station. There were pieces of paper that somebody had written things on; like "Superintendent of nurses report at six a.m.," see operating officer, do this, instructions, day by day instructions. They were very interesting. I mean that was just history.

IB: Did the family that lived there have to move out to make way for the Yankees?

MR. BRADHAM: Oh yeah, sure they did. The Yankees kicked them out. I don't know who was there. But anyhow, my mother got somebody in to do some painting in the house. That fool went in there painted all over those things. All you can see is a piece of paper.

IB: Oh really? Now they had put the paper on the walls?

MR. BRADHAM: Stuck it on the wall. Just like you see right here; special services, new offices, number 465, they stuck up on the wall. You see that thing right up in the corner?

IB: Uh huh.

MR. BRADHAM: You know what that is? That's a list of the poker hands that you can hold. We play poker and if we have any arguments we just look at that.

IB: You refer to that sheet. (laughter) That's a good thing

to have close by.

MR. BRADHAM: That's the way people do, stick things on the wall.

IB: Um huh. And they painted right over it.

MR. BRADHAM: Painted over it.

IB: I wonder if that can be taken down.

MR. BRADHAM: No, I don't think so. The paint is so thick you can hardly see it's paper.

IB: I remember that house growing up, people entertaining there when the community concert series. I remember as a child going to parties in your boyhood home and how beautiful the house was. Did you entertain a good bit or was it just a family house? MR. BRADHAM:

Oh, we entertained depending on what was going on. My sister got married and I remember champagne being shipped in in barrels. The bottles were wrapped in straw and put in barrels. My sister and her crowd had a dance there about every Saturday night.

IB: There would be dances but they were usually at the Shrine Club.

MR. BRADHAM: Well, these were these pick-up dances. They just take up the rugs and just have a good time dancing.

IB: At that house.

MR. BRADHAM: That house was a center for my sister's crowd. She went to Salem College and Salem Academy and she knew all these boys at Chapel Hill and they'd come down there in the summer time to play baseball. It was a lively place. I wish I had kept it. Sometimes I feel like, "you made a big mess in your life, you should have stayed

in New Bern and studied medicine and taken that drug store and that big house." But those dreams are not practical.

IB: You never know how things will turn out anyway.

MR. BRADHAM: Our daughter is married to Ed Kizer. He's recently been appointed Vice-Chancellor for Development in University Relations for the University of North Carolina in Charlotte. He and his wife are planning to build out on the lake. I don't know where abouts. But anyhow, they got to build a house, so anybody that wants a job can see him. Well, anyhow, he's an awfully nice guy.

IB: It's wonderful that they're going to be here.

MR. BRADHAM: That helps, see.

IB: Yeah, good for you to have family here.

MR. BRADHAM: My whole family is funny about that. So, Ed Kizer's sister is calling, first name Nancy. She married Eddie Crutchfield.

IB: You have strong banking ties.

MR. BRADHAM: Yeah. They roomed together at Davidson. Then we have Ed Kizer's mother out at the Pines. You know Graham Holding?

IB: I do. I saw Jane recently at a football game. Our sons play football together and I sat with her.

MR. BRADHAM: Her grandmother, my wife Bessie, who takes care of our financial matters, so everybody has kind of gotten down here.

IB: It's been a good place for you to retire then, for them to come here and ya'll gather together again.

MR. BRADHAM: That's right. They can help take care of us up there on the third floor.

IB: Is that what you all call the third floor? (laughter)

MR. BRADHAM: Sent to jail. It's very nice up there. It's an eighty bed hospital.

IB: I didn't know it was that large.

MR. BRADHAM: Oh yeah. They've got registered nurses and everything else.

IB: Well, hopefully that won't come to pass.

MR. BRADHAM: I hope not.

IB: Mr. Bradham, thank you so much. This has been wonderful and it's a tremendous help to New Bern.

END OF INTERVIEW

