

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

HENRY JOHN MACDONALD

INTERVIEW 422

This is Marea Kafer Foster representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 400. I am interviewing Henry John MacDonald, interview number 422. This interview is being conducted on Saturday the 12th of September, 1992. We are at 1607 Tryon Road, Mr. MacDonald's home.

Marea Foster: Mr. MacDonald, if you'll give me again your full name please and your birth date.

Mr. MacDonald: Henry John MacDonald born May 1, 1909.

MF: 1909, the same year my mother was born. Where were you born?

Mr. MacDonald: I was born in New York City.

MF: New York City?!

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

MF: How about that!

Mr. MacDonald: It just happened that my mother was there.

MF: And you decided to appear.

Mr. MacDonald: Right.

MF: Well, what was your mother's name?

Mr. MacDonald: Her maiden name?

MF: Her full name.

Mr. MacDonald: Her name was Elizabeth Linden Schafenberg.

MF: Okay. Was she from Pennsylvania by any chance?

Mr. MacDonald: She was a Linden and they were in the brewery business in New Jersey.

MF: Oh! I didn't know there were any breweries in New

Jersey.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, evidently.

MF: Evidently, yeah.

Mr. MacDonald: That's a long time ago. I have no memory of that.

MF: Then what was your father's name?

Mr. MacDonald: Henry Parry MacDonald.

MF: Okay, and where was he from?

Mr. MacDonald: He was born in New York City.

MF: And so they lived there?

Mr. MacDonald: They lived there. My father was in business there and he owned the Atlas Express Company in New York City.

MF: Now is that a delivery type service?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. It's a more or less delivery; a urban, municipal, primarily right in New York City.

MF: Oh, I see. Sort of like a UPS service, would it be?

Mr. MacDonald: That and pick-up and delivery. For instance, loading baggage for the boats, as far as I know. I have no recollection of this, except, one recollection I have was that I was very proud of the head lamps on my father's delivery truck which were massive brass, shiny brass lamps. I thought they were beautiful things. That's about all I can tell you about his background except that his brother was chief engineer of the New York Edison Co. and my grandfather, a stone mason, was one of the contractors in the building of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New

York.

MF: Well then, how did you come to New Bern? Did you grow up in New York?

Mr. MacDonald: Oh no. I left there as a very young child. World War I came along in 1917. I would be eight years old at that time. I started school in elementary school in New York City and then my father was stationed was at Camp Upton, Long Island. That was a large military center which now has been replaced by a nuclear development and center known as Brookhaven. When we moved out to Long Island, Brookhaven consisted of a general store which included the Post Office of Brookhaven. Then a group of homes, and it was a very small town. But it is now an internationally known center. They took over the Camp Upton facilities probably on the same basis as they're talking about this Oak Grove development out here. It had to be offered to other government agencies for use. Of course now, I haven't been there since I was a child, so I have very little recollection of it.

MF: Well, since your father was in the Army during World War I, are there any special memories you have about World War I?

Mr. MacDonald: No. We lived in a small town, Bellport. Bellport was primarily just a residential area sixty-four miles East of New York City. At that time, the Merrick Highway went from New York City out to the Montauk Point and it was, I would imagine, the road would have been probably about a twenty-five foot width highway. It was the only paved highway on the south

shore. And then there was a paved highway on the north shore of Long Island, those were the only two paved roads going out. I was told just recently by someone who is familiar with that area up there, that it has another name now. I forget what they call it, but it is an expressway.

MF: Yes, it is. Merrick Expressway, I think.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I don't know. She told me something other than Merrick. But it is now so densely populated that you wouldn't recognize it.

MF: Probably wouldn't. Well, when your father came back from the war, did he go overseas?

Mr. MacDonald: No, he was stationed permanently at Camp Upton. When he was discharged, he opened two photography and camera shops. Bellport at that time, had summer camps and it was a real nice area. Many of the homes were only occupied in the summer time. There are larger estates there and the homes were on several acre sites on the bay. It was a very delightful time in my memory.

MF: I'm sure it was.

Mr. MacDonald: We had some good friends there, my parent's friends. One did hunting guiding. A guide for the hunting groups that would come down in that area during the duck season and all.

As a child, I used to be fascinated with him. He took me with him on a couple of occasions, and it was a great thrill because I had never been exposed to that as a younger child, real young. I

used to trap. I'd go out and tend my trap line before sunup and before school. I was in the third grade. I can recall some of the names of the fur companies the boys sold their furs to.

MF: Oh, did you sell your furs?

Mr. MacDonald: Oh yes.

MF: It was a way to earn some money.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. I started early. I was brought up to save. If you had ten cents, you saved five of it.

MF: That's right.

Mr. MacDonald: I can remember my mother's separate sugar bowl in which she kept all her change, and that bowl was her pin money.

MF: Oh, that's interesting. I'd heard of people keeping their money in sugar bowls.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, that's right. She had a special sugar bowl for her money.

MF: Well, Mr. Mac, how did you get down south?

Mr. MacDonald: All right now. My family moved to Cumberland, Maryland, and I finished high school in Cumberland. After graduation, that was during the twenties, and in the twenties no one had much money. In fact, if someone had as much as \$10,000 insurance, he was wealthy at that time because that was the relative value of money. Then came along the '29 Depression. I had to work. I took a job after I graduated from high school as general bookkeeper and office clerk, and white coat assistant,

and just a general utility boy for a doctor. He had been a surgeon in the Army in World War I. I was the one and only assistant for the doctor.

MF: Well then, you wanted to be a doctor?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. I was deficient in some of my units in high school because I had taken too many commercial subjects. I was very fond of books and bookkeeping and accounting but I didn't have enough science to qualify for college. I went back to high school as a post-graduate part-time to take two science courses to qualify me to go to the University of West Virginia. I had two years at the University and lo and behold, what did I major in? Science! I began in a program of pre-med. You know, it wasn't too far from the past when you could become a doctor by working under a doctor for a given period of time and taking an examination after studying his books and all that. I can remember Dr. Homer, I can remember the first name, Homer; anyway, I can remember the Osler system of medicine. The series he had me reading when I wasn't busy doing other things. I was very fortunate with what now would be a very good high school record. I was also fortunate in my first two years of college work and received a scholarship to go to Duke.

MF: Wonderful.

Mr. MacDonald: So, I continued with my pre-med. I was a Chemistry major; I graduated from Duke in 1934 with a double major in Zoology and Chemistry. At that time, the banks of Maryland had

closed. There were no student loans. There were no programs for loans to be available. You could apparently get entrance into most any of the colleges with required credits and grades, you needed money for your tuition and board and room, and all of your expenses...If you had the money...

MF: You could go.

Mr. MacDonald: You could go. And apparently there was no such things as SAT's or entrance examinations. If your prior work was in a Southern Association of Schools and Colleges, you could transfer all your units to another member of the organization and there was no problem at all. So, I finished. In my last semester of my senior year Dr. A. S. Pearse who was head of the Zoology Department at Duke, called me over to his office. We had become very well acquainted on field trips we took in zoology. In fact, Dr. Pearse was the founder of the Duke Marine Laboratory. He began taking groups of students. Well, I went on field trips with him up to the mountains and went up into the "Balds". These are mountain tops where there was no vegetation. There was just a meadow over the entire top, no trees, and they were known as the "Balds". We went to those and collected, and of course, he was a great teacher. Someway or another, he used to pick me for his roommate.

MF: How nice.

Mr. MacDonald: In the summer time, he took the groups to Beaufort. He had a vacant store on the waterfront. That was set

up as a laboratory for collecting and identification of sea life in the area. That was before Piver's Island was purchased by Duke University. Half of Piver's Island was purchased from the federal government, which already had an installation on the island that was run by, I forget what branch of the service it was. They purchased about half of the island and then began building a laboratory. I was just trying to recall whether there were two or four. I believe there were four person living areas, and a dining room. When I finished, well, let's get back to '34.

MF: Yeah, when you graduated.

Mr. MacDonald: He called me over to his office my last semester and said, "Mac, what on earth are you doing taking these?" I will omit saying what he called them, but he was not very impressed with fact that I was taking education courses, and I said, "Dr. Pearse, when I finish here in June, I am going to have to get a job, and there are no jobs. No one is hiring anyone in any field, and so, what I'm doing is trying to put all my electives into education so that I can get a teaching certificate." Which I did, to his dismay. I did my practice teaching in Durham High School which was quite a creditable institution at that time, no matter what you've been reading about the schools in Durham. But at that time, that was a very good assignment, and I did my practice teaching over there and I was very fortunate in being recommended through Dr. A. M. Proctor who was head of the education department. I had my first job in the

school year, that would be the school year '33-'34, '34-'35. The legislature of 1933, at that time the legislature met every other year, and they met in the off years, the legislature of '33 was the first legislature to take over the support of the public schools in North Carolina.

MF: I didn't know that.

Mr. MacDonald: Up to that time the cost and operation and the employment of the teachers was strictly on the basis of county and city units. They were paid through the county taxes. Counties at that time were defaulting and going bankrupt right and left. And Craven county defaulted on its bonds at that time. Teachers were being paid by...

MF: By script?

Mr. MacDonald: Script. And the script could be used for people to pay their taxes and so often the script was sold to merchants in order to get the cash. But local counties and communities were bankrupt and the legislature of '33 decided to fully support public education. Well, believe it or not, my first job, and I had an A certificate in science, I received the magnificent sum of \$70 a month.

MF: Seventy dollars a month!

Mr. MacDonald: Seventy dollars a month. That was in Plymouth which is in Washington county. However, everything is relative. At that time we were poor, but we didn't know we were poor. We didn't know how poor we were. It took television to

have people learn that they were poor and they yearned to be like everybody else who had everything. When we were poor and didn't know we were poor, we weren't poor at all, because for that \$70 a month, I received room and three meals a day, board, at Williford's Tavern which was the only hostelry in Plymouth at that time. That was where all the salesmen who came through used to stay, where the Superior Court Judges when they came for court week, they stayed at the tavern. That was the only hostelry there. I had room and board for \$12.50 a month!

MF: Gracious sake, Mr. Mac.

Mr. MacDonald: \$12.50 a month!

MF: Then you had a lot left over to spend.

Mr. MacDonald: Oh, I had a car, and then I seldom missed a game. We'd go up to Durham for the games. Everything was sort of normal, but we were poor.

MF: But you didn't know it.

Mr. MacDonald: We lived in poverty, but we didn't know it.

MF: Well, it sounds like you did okay.

Mr. MacDonald: Then the second year, the salary was raised to \$76.00 and by the way, that was for eight months.

MF: Oh, so you had to support yourself the four other months. You had to save enough to live on for four months.

Mr. MacDonald: That's right, for four months. I had some musical background in that coming along I got to playing a trumpet and I was in a band of maybe two or three different groups. I

found out that there had been at one time a town band over there in Plymouth, and I just set about starting the youngsters hunting to see if they could locate the instruments that had been in the town band. We were able to discover enough of them, I had enough background in music so that I could teach most of the instruments and I started the band.

MF: That's wonderful.

Mr. MacDonald: That was the first high school band in the far east here. That was a very small group. Let's leave them over there and get to the end of that second year over there. Mr. H. B. Smith, Superintendent of New Bern City Schools, contacted me. He had been told by the same Dr. A. M. Proctor where I was, and Mr. Smith was in dire need of someone to take over the science department at New Bern High School. So, he called me over and asked me to come to New Bern, and he offered me what at that time was a very creditable sum of \$25 a month bonus if I would come to New Bern.

MF: Now what year was this?

Mr. MacDonald: In '36. So, I came to New Bern.

MF: How nice. I'm so glad you did.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Smith had me in his office which was over there in the Bell Building on the second floor. It has its' name because the bell was up on the top and that bell was sounded for morning and recess time and for lunch time because everybody went home for lunch then.

MF: I remember that.

Mr. MacDonald: And he was telling me about some of the problems they had there. He said, "I don't know whether you can handle it, but I'm going to give you a chance."

MF: Mr. MacDonald, you wanted to tell me something about Plymouth.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Plymouth supplied me with the first opportunity to apply for membership in the Masonic fraternity. I had a tutor. I took my first degree in Perseverance Lodge in Plymouth, and I had a tutor there who ran a one man store two miles out on Highway 64. A little one man store, in fact, he actually lived in the store, in the back of the store, had his abode there. But he did almost all of the tutoring for the Masonic Order. I was raised, or received, my third degree in Perseverance Lodge. Later on, I had every reason to recall my Masonic experiences while in Plymouth. Now, back to New Bern and Mr. H. B. Smith. I taught all the biology, chemistry, physics. We then alternated physics and chemistry every year so that the students could get both of those if they wanted. I think the general science was taught over in the eighth grade. You know the eighth grade was then the first year of high school because we only had eleven years, and the eighth grade was the beginning of the high school course of study. I don't recall exactly what year the state authorized the addition of a ninth grade to the high school course, or program. Actually what it amounted to was they

took the eighth grade program and moved it into the ninth grade so that it gave a four year high school. I forget how we solved the void. I believe that the students were given an option whether they would skip to the tenth grade or whether they would repeat the ninth grade. Of course there was one year there that we would have really no graduating class. We had a graduating class but that's gone from my memory. But we solved it anyway. Let's see now, in New Bern.

MF: Right. How long did you teach before you became Principal?

Mr. MacDonald: Well, you know at that time the Principal had to do what the Principal had to do. The Principal had to fill in and do some teaching as well as being a Principal. I think it was about...

MF: 1940?

Mr. MacDonald: I came in...

MF: You came in '36.

Mr. MacDonald: I came in '36. It was '37 and '38, and the spring of, I believe it was '39; it would be '36-'37, '37-'38, that's right, Mr. Shields was principal of the high school. He went to Duke Hospital for an examination. No one had known that he had had any problems at all but when they examined him, they put him right in the hospital. He had advanced cancer. In fact, Mr. Shields never returned and died in Durham. I was acting as Principal for the remainder of that term and then was elected to

fill the Principalship for the following year.

MF: Mr. MacDonald, let me ask you a question here. When you say you were elected to the Principalship, did the Board of Education elect you, or how was that?

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Smith recommended me and the Board of Education approved it.

MF: Approved it. I see. How many teachers did you have under you?

Mr. MacDonald: Let's see, I think there were 14 or 15. I'm not real sure about that number. You see, unfortunately the school didn't have an annual back then during the days of bank closings. Before I came to New Bern, all the banks had closed and many people who had substantial interest in the banks found themselves rich in the night and poor the next day. But of course I wasn't here for that experience, but during that time they had a high school annual. I have no recollection of what year that was, but they had an annual that had been ordered by all the graduating class. Then they had the bank closing and all the problems. They had failed to have the annuals paid for when they were ordered, which I was reminded was a very important thing to do, because none of the seniors took their annuals because they didn't have the money to pay for them. The Board of Education had to come up with the money. So, the Board of Education said there will be no more annuals, and so there was a long period of time when there were no annuals at all.

MF: Well, I'm holding an annual in my lap, 1945, and you have fifteen teachers in the high school.

Mr. MacDonald: Is that right? 1945?

MF: Un huh, 1945. There you are. There's Mr. Smith who was still Superintendent.

Mr. MacDonald: Well now, let's see.

MF: That's New Bern High School - 1945.

Mr. MacDonald: Let me get the dedication of this annual. Yep. This is the first annual.

MF: This one, 1945, was the first annual?

Mr. MacDonald: This is the first annual and these three girls said that they would be willing to work and do all that was necessary to create an annual if they were permitted to do so. I went to Mr. Smith, and as I said, with the understanding that these annuals would never be sold without prepayment again.

MF: Money in advance. Well, the three ladies Mr. MacDonald is referring to: Miss Kathryn Montague, Miss Grace Robbins, and Miss Celia Hall, and the annual was dedicated to them. The 1945 annual dedicated to them.

Mr. MacDonald: They were the three and that was the first annual.

MF: That's the first. I'm so glad I brought this.

Mr. MacDonald: That's the first annual we had in New Bern High School in years. I never had any of the old annuals.

MF: Well, I had some when daddy was in high school. You

know, in the teens. They did have them.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

MF: But this was the first one after the Depression.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, this was the first one after the Depression.

MF: Oh how interesting. That's fascinating. Well, while we've gotten to 1945 and it's on my mind, I would like for you to tell me how my daddy and Nicky Simpson and Mike Jowdy began to coach the football team and the baseball team. You and my daddy were the dearest of friends, I think from the time you met until the day he died.

Mr. MacDonald: That's a fact. That's right.

MF: You had a wonderful and beautiful friendship.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, at that time, we had no coach. The coaches years ago were not necessarily a part of the faculty. The coach could be an complete outsider. This created a myriad of problems for everybody, and it became necessary that the state had to require that the coaches be a part of school faculties. But at that particular time there were no coaches available, and we did not have the money to employ a coach. So, Shorty Kafer and Nicky Simpson, Nicky Simpson was a member of the school board, and Mike Jowdy who participated in assisting in the athletic program; anyway, the three agreed that they would take over the coaching responsibilities. I remember at the end of that year that they did the coaching, they were really remunerated - by having a

leather jacket. A leather jacket for each with their name on it.

MF: I remember that jacket.

Mr. MacDonald: That was the total cost of the coaching staff for that particular year. We did everything about that period of time that was a little different. New Bern High School didn't have a band and I had had the experience of that two years of starting the one over in Plymouth, so on the basis of that experience and with the help of Mr. George Fuller of the Fuller Music Company here, and with the assistance of W. C. Chadwick. Mr. Chadwick headed up a little campaign and had raised, for that purpose, a thousand dollars. Mr. Fuller purchased the basic heavy instruments in the amount of nine hundred and some odd dollars. It wasn't quite a thousand, nine hundred and some odd dollars, and gave them at his cost. That included a base, trombone, baritone, the tenor, alto horn. The heavy horns, and of course drums, which were very important. We practiced over in the home economics building over on Johnson Street after school. And lo and behold, a number of the children's parents were able to purchase the cornets and the clarinets and the lighter instruments. That little group performed at the graduation exercise back in...

MF: 1943 or '44?

Mr. MacDonald: Earlier than that I think it was. I stayed with it for over a year and then went to Mr. Smith and told him I was not qualified to give them, the youngsters, the instruction and all that was necessary for a good music program, that with me

it was just a hobby. He told me if I could find somebody to do it that he would try to find the funds to pay his salary. So, I found a young man who had just finished his training up in New York State with sort of a broad musical background who was seeking a job in the South. And that was when Donald Smith came to New Bern.

MF: He was wonderful

Mr. MacDonald: He was great.

MF: He was. He was wonderful.

Mr. MacDonald: He came primarily to do the band. At that time Rosalie Smith had the chorus, the choral groups.

MF: Now she was Mr. H. B. Smiths' daughter?

Mr. MacDonald: Daughter. And she taught music here in New Bern. I don't know on what basis she stopped the choral work, but Donald took over the choral along with the band and did both. In the succession of years, the programs changed dramatically and we had a series of excellent directors for both instrumental and choral music.

MF: He was wonderful.

Mr. MacDonald: By the way, our band was marching, and white shirts, and dark skirts and trousers. Different ones began to wonder why our band couldn't have uniforms. My good friend, Buck Blandford who was in Rotary, as well as I, and with the great assistance of John Ormsby who was then manager of the J. C. Penney Company, we started a campaign in New Bern to uniform the band.

The Rotary took this as a program. I don't know how long it took us but anyway all the uniforms were ordered through the J. C. Penney Company at cost. We finally had uniforms. The group had then grown to, as I recall it, that we had thirty uniforms. By the way, I have no idea how much uniforms are today, I would say, I would guess it cost about \$150 to uniform an individual now. But those first year uniforms carried the Rotary emblem on their shoulder and they cost \$30 each. And we had four majorette. The majorette by the way were; Mary Moulton, who is now Mrs. Graham Barden, Elizabeth Kennedy, and

MF: Was Betty Jo Shipp a majorette then?

Mr. MacDonald: Let me see. Mary Louise...

MF: Yes, Mary Louise Moulton and Elizabeth Kennedy. I'll look in here while you're thinking and see if this shows them. This is 1945 but you're talking about the first ones. I bet one of them was Betty Jo Shipp. Oh, I know who it was. It was Peggy Gillikin. Pattie Shipp was one and Peggy Gillikin was one. Elizabeth Kennedy, Pattie Shipp, and Betty Jo Ship, and Peggy Gillikin used to be a majorette. That may have been later. Well, Mr. Mac I still want to ask you while we're still on fund raising and things like that, when daddy and Mr. Simpson and Mr. Jowdy coached, they did this for three years if I'm not mistaken. Is that right? I know two.

Mr. MacDonald: They used to be out there. Maybe that was when Frank Alston left.

MF: It might have been.

Mr. MacDonald: Because you see Frank Alston had been the coach for many years and when he left, we had no person that was qualified for coaching.

MF: I think they did it '44, '45, '46. Joe Doak came in as coach in '47. But what I wanted to ask you, how did you get football uniforms and baseball uniforms for the players? Did the school provide them or did they have a Booster's Club? Do you remember? I know they had them.

Mr. MacDonald: I was just wondering how we did it. I believe we paid for the uniforms out of the funds for the athletic association because they were kept separate. I remember ordering the sweaters and all that directly from the factory, from the Champion Knitwear Company up in New York State. The cheerleader's sweaters and all that. I think that was taken care of from income.

MF: From admissions to the games and things like that?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes because we had good attendance at Kafer Park.

MF: Yes, we did.

Mr. MacDonald: Mrs. Brinson

MF: Mrs. Albert Brinson.

Mr. MacDonald: Mrs. Albert Brinson.

MF: Margaret Brinson. She handled the money.

Mr. MacDonald: She handled the money and she made everybody

account for it!

MF: She was the nicest lady!

Mr. MacDonald: She was.

MF: I was crazy about her.

Mr. MacDonald: Mrs. Brinson stayed on. We at that time had a mandatory retirement age and Mrs. Brinson stayed on. She was hard to replace.

MF: So you just kept her on?

Mr. MacDonald: Kept her going as long as she possibly could go. She was great.

MF: Talking about teachers, Mr. Mac, if you had a teacher who was not performing satisfactorily and you did not want to rehire her, did you just tell her that you would not renew her contract?

Mr. MacDonald: That's right.

MF: Were teachers hired by the year?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

MF: Each year they had to sign a new contract?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

MF: It was a yearly thing?

Mr. MacDonald: That's right. It was an annual contract.

MF: With you as Principal, was your contract an annual contract, or was that a five year contract?

Mr. MacDonald: It seems to me that the Principal's contract back then was a two year contract. I had forgotten about annual

contracts. There inevitably had to be problems, you know, whenever you employ a number of people. It was just a matter of everybody being reasonable. If you are not able to fill the bill, you're going to have to make a change.

MF: Did you ever have any serious problems with teachers?

Mr. MacDonald: Individual teachers, yes. When they were serious, I had the unfortunate task. We had some experiences that I had to call the person in and explain what the situation was and say, "I want your resignation as of now."

MF: That's pretty serious. But you did have to do that on occasions? I'm not going to ask you who. I don't want to know.

Mr. MacDonald: No. I don't know. I don't even remember the names of people. I have a very convenient memory!

MF: I think that's wonderful. Well, what about serious problems with students? Was there much drinking among high school students when you were principal?

Mr. MacDonald: No. Well, we had a problem in the very first years I was in New Bern because we had a carry over of football players who were allowed to take post-graduate courses, and some of them were too old to be in high school. But we gradually eliminated all of that type of thing, and there was no post-graduate work. A couple of them I can recall, actually flunked one subject so they couldn't graduate in order to play football.

MF: I've heard of fellows doing that. Did you have summer school for high school students that flunked any subjects or did

they have to repeat the whole grade?

Mr. MacDonald: No, we had summer school. There was in existence a system here of tutoring and you could be tutored by one of the teachers or either by a person who had been a former teacher and then granted a credit on the teacher's certification that you had completed the work, but not by any examination. I mean there was no examination by the school. We found that we needed a regular summer school.

MF: Well, Mr. Mac, when you had summer school, did the students have to pay to attend?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

MF: They did.

Mr. MacDonald: The summer school was paid by tuition.

MF: And then if you passed the summer school, you could continue on with your class, is that right?

Mr. MacDonald: Right. That became the only means of getting actual credit rather than from a private tutor. These are little things.

MF: I know. There's so much I can ask you, but I don't want you to get tired and we haven't even gotten to you being superintendent yet. But I'm going to ask you now if there is anything else you would like to tell me about being a Principal. You were Principal at New Bern High School and that was all in the Moses Griffin building.

Mr. MacDonald: Eight years. You mentioned your daddy, and

of course that immediately brings up the recollection of our association in the Scottish Rite. I was honored some years later on. I took the Scottish Rite right after I came to New Bern. In later years, I was honored with the Thirty-third Degree of Scottish Rite, and at the same time, two other members of the Scottish Rite were also so honored. One being Major Tom Brown, and, oh goodness gracious, he was Pastor over in Washington County.

MF: Was it Mr. Brown?

Mr. MacDonald: Brown?

MF: Mr. Adrian Brown? He used to be a Pastor over in Bridgeton.

Mr. MacDonald: No, he was over in Plymouth.

MF: We received the Thirty-third Degree in Washington, D.C., the three of us. As I said, Major Tom Brown, and Dick, I can't recall his name. Wait, his name was Lucas! It was not until we were actually in Washington that we discovered that our first names, the three of us, were: Tom, Dick, and Harry, and all three of us had been members of Perseverance Lodge that I had joined when I first when to Plymouth.

MF: Oh, that's so interesting! I like that.

Mr. MacDonald: Tom, Dick, and Harry!

MF: You're right about that.

Mr. MacDonald: We were already up there. Tom Brown, I loved that guy!

MF: Oh, he was the nicest man, and for the record, Mr. Tom Brown, was a Major with the North Carolina State Highway Patrol and just an outstanding gentleman.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. In fact, your daddy and I went to visit him in the hospital on two occasions up in Chapel Hill.

MF: Well now, Mr. Mac, is there anything else you would like to tell me about being Principal?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. I have discovered in these later years, the social value of schools. The schools become a social institution. Schools are not just a function of government, as they later became, but during the years of my serving as principal I found a real joy in the association with the student bodies. There were very few problems, and the problems when we had them were easily solved. Some of the social unrest began to appear during that period by the way. You know it became fashionable to have "sit down" strikes and we had a sit down strike in which all the students went out too. They had recesses at that time and on one occasion they all sat down outside and refused to come inside.

MF: What did you do?

Mr. MacDonald: I let them sit!

MF: I didn't know that.

Mr. MacDonald: Yep, they sat there. I can remember the youngster who led this group, and I wonder whether he remembers his role in this great society movement. I can also remember some experiences I had when I had to personally escort some young

ladies to their homes for their own protection. The joy of those years has continued right up to this time when we're having our fiftieth anniversaries year after year now and all these people are coming back, and now we've gotten to the point they are looking almost as old as I look!

MF: You'll never be old. What about when you were Superintendent of the city schools? When did you become Superintendent?

Mr. MacDonald: In 1946. Mr. Smith underwent some surgery that left him partially impaired and he became disabled in the spring of 1946, I was appointed by the Board of Education as acting Superintendent. Then in 1947, the Board appointed me as Superintendent of Schools.

MF: And you had all the city schools under you at that time?

Mr. MacDonald: Right.

MF: This would be Ghent and Riverside and Central School downtown.

Mr. MacDonald: Then West Street and Duffyfield. And that was the total number of schools.

MF: And with the high school. So, this was really a new experience for you having white and black schools.

Mr. MacDonald: Definitely. A real experience because there had been no association between the white and black schools for other than as it existed through the Superintendent's office, the black principals handled the black schools and managed all their

matters among themselves. West Street School was a consolidated school in that West Street had a high school and a elementary school as well with one principal.

MF: Who was the Principal at that time?

Mr. MacDonald: Fred Danyus. No Professor Barber was Principal when I became Superintendent and he was over at West Street. He was a middle aged gentleman and a fine gentleman and J. T. Barber High School is named for him. What was the high school and is now an elementary school.

MF: Was Duffyfield an elementary school?

Mr. MacDonald: Duffyfield was grades one through four. The old, old Duffyfield school was formerly a school for girls that had been abandoned, for a number of years ago. In other words, Duffyfield school was a very serious problem in that it needed replacement as soon as possible. The facilities were tragic in that you could see the sunlight through the walls in certain places. Water was available only through a pitcher pump that was located in an alcove, sort of an outside alcove out of the building. The sanitary facilities were non-available except...

MF: Did they have privies?

Mr. MacDonald: They had privies which were in terrible condition to begin with. It was a major renovation when they were moved to a new location further away from the building and they made as good as they could be. You have to realize that there was little money in 1947. Building schools was a county proposition

and until more recent years there had been no state money available for school buildings until the state finally had a large bond issue and did provide building funds. But all of that had to be done by the counties and the counties were destitute. For thirty years there had not been a brick laid in the New Bern schools with the exception of a new front put on the high school which included four classrooms; two on the first floor and two on the second. There was a typing room. But that was the only building that had taken place in thirty years. Our first improvement came in '47. My first experience in building renovation and so on was the expansion of the Eleanor Marshall school. The remains of that expansion is now what was the old YMCA. That was added on to the original nine room school. A duplicate of which was located in Riverside. These two schools were built from the same plan.

MF: Yes they were.

Mr. MacDonald: Identical. It was amazing that later on as we made additions to each, how we discovered that. They were built from the same plans but they conformed more to the terrain than they did to the plans.

MF: I attended Ghent School, when it was still Ghent School, before it was Eleanor Marshall. Miss Eleanor Marshall was the Principal.

Mr. MacDonald: That's right.

MF: She taught sixth grade and was the Principal there when

I went.

Mr. MacDonald: Bless her soul.

MF: A wonderful lady. Mr. MacDonald, when you were Superintendent, did integration come about during this time?

Mr. MacDonald: Oh yes.

MF: Was that a problem? Was integration achieved peacefully?

Mr. MacDonald: No. We had some very unfortunate experiences with the integration program. That is in itself another tape. There's a sequence there that needs to be followed and then the construction of the additional schools, purchase of the properties, and all the facts of planning.

MF: Well, I'll come back and get that information.

Mr. MacDonald: We ought to have that separate because I might get on the bandstand with it.

MF: Well, I'm gonna come back and get all that. But before I conclude the interview today, I do want to ask you when you met Mrs. Mac.

Mr. MacDonald: When I met Mrs. Mac. Grace Robbins, when she came to New Bern, had a room at the home of Howard and Elizabeth Mims. I came in 1936 and New Bern had a Teacherage. The Teacherage was located...

MF: It was on Pollock Street.

Mr. MacDonald: On Pollock Street where now is located the Raleigh Federal.

MF: I think it was on the other end where Dr. Richardson built the office building.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, it was that property in there. It was a large rambling house I had my first room there. Well, everything was so new and I was new. This was my first experience after leaving college. I didn't remain at the Teacherage. I think I left the second month.

MF: Then where did you go?

Mr. MacDonald: I went out to Mr. and Mrs. Mims' home on Spencer Avenue. Mrs. Mims taught in the high school. She was the French teacher. She had the most beautiful blue eyes.

MF: I didn't know her.

Mr. MacDonald: You don't remember her. I've never seen anyone who knew her that did not remark about the blue of her eyes. She was a beautiful woman. Her husband worked at the Sun Journal, a linotype operator. I roomed there.

MF: Did they introduce you to Mrs. Mac or did Grace?

Mr. MacDonald: Neither. Grace invited Kathryn to play Bridge at the Mims and told her I would be her partner. We often said that was probably one of the last times she and I played Bridge. At the time Mr. Dillehunt was dating Grace Robbins.

MF: Oh, he was?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, he married...

MF: He married Maude Gwaltney.

Mr. MacDonald: Maude. He was then dating Grace Robbins. I

had gone down and introduced myself to Kathryn and brought her out to the Mims. When the game ended Dilly said he would be glad to take Kathryn home. I said, "Thank you, no." That was the beginning.

MF: And when were you all married?

Mr. MacDonald: We weren't married until 1940. August 10, 1940 because in the meantime her father suddenly died in 1937. She worked at the Sun Journal. His retirement from the railroad lacked just three months of the time necessary for eligibility for his railroad retirement.

MF: Oh, that's terrible.

Mr. MacDonald: She had two brothers in school, college, both were on scholarships. She was the only support, so it was put off quite a while.

MF: And you have one son.

Mr. MacDonald: One son.

MF: And he is Henry John MacDonald, Jr. When was Harry born?

Mr. MacDonald: He was born on December 28, 1942.

MF: And I know you have three wonderful grandchildren.

Mr. MacDonald: Aye.

MF: You sure do.

Mr. MacDonald: The oldest one is now down at Wofford.

MF: Wofford in South Carolina?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, Spartanburg.

MF: I can hardly believe they've gotten that grown up.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, and that's a small school.

MF: It's a nice one too. I think that's great.

Mr. MacDonald: Hovey Aiken graduated from Wofford.

MF: Yes he did, and so did one of Dr. Rawls' sons graduate from there.

Mr. MacDonald: His daddy felt that he needed a small school.

MF: I think they're nice.

Mr. MacDonald: He's a splendid chap, but he's not a science-math student. Makes "A's", straight "A's" in French.

MF: That's where his interest is.

Mr. MacDonald: And English, "A's". Science, math...

MF: Not interested. Well, Mr. Mac, at this point, I want to thank you very much for participating in our oral history of New Bern, and I will be back for us to talk about the integration. I sure will. I don't want to tire you, so again, thank you very much.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, it's a pleasure. I've had some serious difficulties.

MF: Well, you're doing beautifully.

Mr. MacDonald: And I've come a long way.

MF: You sure have.

END OF INTERVIEW

