

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

MRS. DOROTHY HAWKINS BRYAN
(MRS. SAMUEL DOUGLAS BRYAN)

INTERVIEW 910

This is Dorothy Richardson representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 900. I am interviewing Mrs. Dorothy Bryan, interview number 910. This interview is being conducted on October 21, 1992. We are at 1711 Dillahunt Street, New Bern, North Carolina.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Mrs. Bryan, could you give me some facts about where you were born, your maiden name, your family, brothers and sisters.

MRS. BRYAN: My maiden name was Dorothy Hawkins. Now, I'm a Bryan. My mother was Minnie Fulcher Hawkins. Her parents were Christopher and Marina Fulcher. My father was William Hawkins and his parents were Sally and Baylam Hawkins. There were five of us in the family. My older brother William, who is now deceased, was probably about thirteen years older than I. I had a second brother, Clinton Hawkins, who is also deceased. Then I have an older sister, Helen Hawkins Lewis. She is about nine years older than I. Then I have a twin sister. We were born in 1922, November 19. My mother says we were about two weeks old when the great fire in New Bern occurred. My twin sister's name is Minnie Hawkins Scott. Of course, I am married to Samuel Douglass Bryan and we have one child, Gwendolyn Bryan and one grandchild, Adia Coleman.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Where were you born, Mrs. Bryan?

MRS. BRYAN: I was born in New Bern, North Carolina. At that time a large number of babies were born at home. I've often heard my mother speak of a Mrs. Williams that stayed with her for several weeks after we were born. I also remember her recall the doctor who

was in attendance at the time and that was a Dr. Jackson.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What street?

MRS. BRYAN: We were born at 15, now 1010, Williams Street, which was a part of the Duffy Town area. Now, I believe they include a large section in Duffy Town, but at the time we lived there, this was confined to a limited area. There were other sections such as Pavie Town and Larksville, but now they lumped all three and they call the whole area Duffy Town. My father was a carpenter. My mother was a housewife. I guess that's about as much that she could do with 5 children.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Who were some of your playmates? Do you remember?

MRS. BRYAN: Let me go back. My parents moved away during the Depression and we lived in East Orange, New Jersey for about seven years. So, I will have to consider playmates from that area. My closest playmates were two sisters, Vivian and Barbara Smith. This is in New Jersey. There was a young lady across the street from us, May Jones, that we played with quite a bit. Then, there were two other sisters that were close friends. They were Mildred and Marian Jefferson. Of course when we moved back then, most of my playmates were, I guess you could not hardly call them playmates because we were about to go into high school, but my close friends were Gwendolyn Howard, Mary Bell, Eloise Williams and Marie Lancaster Jones. We were very close throughout high school. In fact, three of us attended the same college.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Where did you start school?

MRS. BRYAN: We started school right here in New Bern, North

Carolina. I think our church had a school at First Missionary Baptist Church. We attended that for a year, but then we started first grade at West Street School.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Do you remember your teacher's names or who was principal?

MRS. BRYAN: Mr. Barber was principal at that time and he was also principal when I finished. I remember my second grade teacher's name. I can't remember the first grade, but the second grade teacher was Mrs. Willie Blackledge Mumford. When we returned, at the end of seventh grade, a Mrs. Mary McIver was my teacher and a Mrs. Bland. I think she taught here only one year. I remember most of my high school teachers.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Who were they?

MRS. BRYAN: Mr. F. R. Danyus. His wife, Mrs. Danyus, taught me History and French. Mrs. Blanche Sparrow Rivers taught History. There was a Mr. Harrison who taught me Math; Mr. Earl Lewis and Mrs. Carrie Roach Fisher. Mr. Earl Lewis taught Science and Mrs. Carrie Fisher taught Home Ec. Then, Mrs. Loretta Smith taught me English all four years. There was an Archine Quinn who taught English, also. Mr. Booker was there, but he did not teach me. DOROTHY RICHARDSON: 1931.

MRS. BRYAN: Was he there in '31? I did not realize that.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: He left for a while, but he came back.

MRS. BRYAN: Well, if he was there in '31, he did not teach me, at that time. When he came back, probably, I was in high school.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What were some of the activities as a young person in school that you remember as part of your social life?

MRS. BRYAN: As a high school student, we may have skated sometime. We always enjoyed the Friday night socials.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Where were they held?

MRS. BRYAN: They were held, generally, and that building is torn down, now, but it was referred to as the Red Cross Hall.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Where was that?

MRS. BRYAN: It was located on the corner of Bern Street and New, I believe. I think Dr. Daves later bought the building.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What were some of the other things? Did your church play a large part?

MRS. BRYAN: Yes. My grandparents attended First Missionary Baptist Church and my parents attended, so naturally, I attended. In fact, I have not moved my membership in all these years and this is probably why. As a child, I attended Sunday school, Baptist and Training Union. We also had other activities out of the Sunday school like annual Sunday school picnics, Easter egg hunts, the Christmas programs and this type of thing.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Were your parents active in your school?

MRS. BRYAN: I don't believe parents were as active as they are now. One of the things about it, now, you probably attend PTA to make sure you meet your child's teacher and keep up with the progress of your child. When I came along, my parents knew the people who were teaching me. So, you could get this information at a social gathering

or you could get it if you met the teacher on the street.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How did you get to school?

MRS. BRYAN: Well, believe it or not, I walked.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: From Duffyfield?

MRS. BRYAN: From Duffyfield. I did this four times a day because we came home for lunch. We had a full hour for lunch and we walked.

So, there was very little time perhaps to even eat your lunch. The only buses that I can remember were for children outside of the city limits in Pleasant Hill and Bridgeton. I'm not sure if the bus went to Vanceboro at that time. But they were the only ones that rode a bus. Maybe the walking is the reason I stayed trim. Because I wasn't even weighing 100 when I married. Of course, this was several years down the road. But we walked, and this was four times a day because there was no lunch room at the school at that time.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How large was your graduating class?

MRS. BRYAN: I graduated in a class of either 37 or 39. I can't remember. It was a small class. This was in 1940 that I finished. Some of the things we did then for graduation, we don't do today. We always had a class play.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did you have a Glee club?

MRS. BRYAN: Yes. I belonged to the Glee club. We had the class play. We had not only the prom, but we also had a banquet for juniors and seniors and then of course the actual commencement exercises.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Someone came from the community or someone outside to give your baccalaureate?

MRS. BRYAN: I can't remember whether we had someone from out of town or whether it was a local person for the commencement speaker.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Had you decided then that you wanted to continue your education?

MRS. BRYAN: Oh yes, I certainly had.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: It was encouraged.

MRS. BRYAN: Yes, it was encouraged by my parents.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did your other brothers and sisters?

Mr. Bryan: No they did not. Well, let me put it this way. My brothers were in the Depression. When they were coming through, they were coming through the Depression years. My sister went to nursing school.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Where did she go?

Mr. Bryan: She went in New Jersey. Community Hospital, Newark, N.J. because that's where we were living at the time. Then, my younger sister married right out of high school, but then she did take a course in beauty culture (she attended E & M Beauty School located on Bern Street) and that's what she did up until a few years ago. She had to give that up.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Was that your twin?

MRS. BRYAN: This was my twin sister.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: But you wanted to go?

MRS. BRYAN: Yes, I did. And my parents encouraged it. They tried to persuade her even after she married, but she did not want to do this. I received a scholarship. We had at that time an alumni

club from North Carolina College for Negroes. It's now North Carolina Central University.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Can I ask how much it was for?

MRS. BRYAN: I was coming to that. Seventy-five dollars. This tuition scholarship paid my tuition for one year.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did it go toward your room and board?

MRS. BRYAN: No, this was tuition. My parents had to take care of my room and board. So, I attended North Carolina Central.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did you live on campus?

MRS. BRYAN: Yes, I did. I think the next year I got a scholarship also directly from the school.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did you work?

MRS. BRYAN: That was a work scholarship tuition. I became ill during my Sophomore year. I was able to go back in the fall, but I did not work anymore.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What did you do?

MRS. BRYAN: My job was to keep the entrance to my dorm. In the morning I would have to do that, keep it clean.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Answer the phone.

MRS. BRYAN: Yes, then I also had to do that too if I was in the office area, which I usually did before I went to class.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I worked at one of the colleges and made twenty-five cents an hour sitting at the desk and answering the phone and getting the girls for their dates. I know where you're coming from.

MRS. BRYAN: In my Junior and Senior years, I was unable to do it. My parents did not feel that I should take that extra work.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Plus your load that you were carrying.

MRS. BRYAN: I finished with a major in United States History and a minor in Social Studies. In fact, I received both of my degrees from North Carolina Central with a Master's degree in History. I had started my Master's at NYU, but then I married and I lost six years. When I went back to my graduate studies, I just decided I would go back to Central. It was near and I could be home weekends.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: When you graduated, what did you do?

MRS. BRYAN: When I graduated from college, the war was in progress.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What year did you graduate?

MRS. BRYAN: 1944. So, I headed toward New York. I guess that was only natural.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did many of your friends stay in New Bern?

MRS. BRYAN: My high school friends, most of them did not. But I headed for New York. Many students had left Central at that time to go to Washington, D.C. Most of these people were in the area of business administration. When I went to N.Y., I worked in a factory; a Bundles for Britain factory. I worked from September til December of 1944. I came home in December and my mother persuaded me to remain home. So this is what I did, and I've been here ever since.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: When you came home, what did you do?

MRS. BRYAN: I did some substitute teaching.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did you have a certification for teaching?

MRS. BRYAN: No, I really did not. I had a B certificate. At that time, if you had taken all of the education courses and did not do the practice teaching, then you finished with a B certificate and this is what I had. After I had taught a full year, I could get a recommendation from my principal.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How were you hired, Mrs. Bryan?

MRS. BRYAN: At that time, we were hired by supervisors. There was no interview. She did do an informal interview, but there was no application blank.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: There wasn't?

MRS. BRYAN: No application blank that I recall.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You didn't have to send in your credits?

MRS. BRYAN: Well, naturally, I had to send in the credits but there was no formal type of application blank.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: And it wasn't done by the Board of Education of New Bern?

MRS. BRYAN: No, it was not. It was done by Mrs. Clara D. Mann. She was supervisor of schools at that time for the county.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: For Craven County for the black schools.

MRS. BRYAN: For the black schools of course. She did the interview. I substituted I guess for two months for a person, Arminta Farrow, who was out on maternity leave. I subbed from about April to the end of the school year. Generally, the end of the school year during that period was in May, the last of May or the middle of May.

So, I substituted for her in a one room school at Rocky Run. It was a riot because it meant that you had all the grade and there were two young men in that class who I think were around nineteen and here I am just about twenty-one.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Do you remember what your salary was?

MRS. BRYAN: I don't know, but it wasn't even a hundred dollars for one month at that time. The salary was very low. I'm sure I have packed back somewhere a voucher from that. The next year I think I went to Vanceboro Consolidated School as a full time person.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What year was that?

MRS. BRYAN: Well, let's see. I finished in '40. 1941 was the year I substituted, so it must have been the fall of '41 that I went to Vanceboro Consolidated School.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What class did you teach?

MRS. BRYAN: I started out with the seventh and eighth grades.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Combination.

MRS. BRYAN: Yes.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How many students would that be?

MRS. BRYAN: I had a relatively small classroom, so I know there weren't over 25 even though they were consolidated.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Was the building adequate?

MRS. BRYAN: I guess it was adequate. At that time, they had just built a new school. I don't know what happened to the other one.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did they have indoor plumbing?

MRS. BRYAN: I don't think there was indoor plumbing at that time.

At that time, I would go to school and stay all day.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did you board in Vanceboro?

MRS. BRYAN: No.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I had a friend who boarded in Vanceboro.

MRS. BRYAN: No, I did not. The first year I taught there we always got the bus into Vanceboro. There were three of us. We would get the bus coming back. The second year, I bought a car, a little Hudson.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: On your hundred dollars a month?

MRS. BRYAN: On that. My father gave me the down payment on it.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Do you remember from whom you bought it?

MRS. BRYAN: Yes. I bought it from Jack Morton. Wasn't it Jack?

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: His daddy was Wesley Morton.

MRS. BRYAN: That's right, Wesley Morton. I believe the car had belonged to his daughter.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Penelope.

MRS. BRYAN: It was a little maroon, very neat, clean, little coupe with a small seat in the back. I didn't have license at that point in time.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: It was during the war too.

MRS. BRYAN: Yes. I got license shortly after I got the car. The very first day I drove it, I had an accident right there at the corner of Bridgeton just as you turn to come across the bridge. I did not swing to my right as far as I should have.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Were you alone?

MRS. BRYAN: No. I had the two other people that were with me that rode on the bus with me, a Mr. William Adams and the other one was Carrie Keyes. I will never forget when I went to the insurance company to report the accident. I had gotten the policy from I. H. Smith Realty Company. I walked in and told him.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Were you crying?

MRS. BRYAN: No, but I told him what had happened. He said, "Well, let me tell you the first thing about this. You don't ever admit that you're at fault." (laughter) But they paid, and of course as I said, I taught there for about eight years. The second year that I taught there I worked with the high school, if you could call it that; because there were only two of us teaching the high school subjects, the Principal, Mr. John R. Hill and myself.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did they have adequate materials, Mrs. Bryan?

MRS. BRYAN: No, they did not. They actually moved the high school to Fort Barnwell. Fort Barnwell already had a high school and they consolidated the two. I had the opportunity of moving, but instead, I chose another route that was closer to home.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did they have science materials?

MRS. BRYAN: He taught the science course, but there was no lab or anything like that. I taught the History and English.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did you teach any black history? Were you able to get that in?

MRS. BRYAN: Perhaps incidentally at that point. Later on, I taught black history at New Bern High.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: But this was in the forties?

MRS. BRYAN: This was in the forties in Vanceboro. When I left Vanceboro, I went to James City Elementary. I had no idea that I would be there so long, but this is where I spent most of my teaching career.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What grades did you teach there?

MRS. BRYAN: I always taught seventh. Then as integration came into being and schools were integrated, James City became sort of a junior high, seventh and eighth for the James City students and for Brinson Memorial. The classes were departmentalized.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Where was the school? I can't place that school.

MRS. BRYAN: Joe Alcoke had a car dealership over there in the building. It's on the access road; on the right as you go towards Havelock. It's now owned by a church.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How many students did you have?

MRS. BRYAN: Usually 30, 35 at that point.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: And you were still not getting the good, new books and that kind of thing?

MRS. BRYAN: No, we definitely were not.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: The children had to buy those books?

MRS. BRYAN: Yes, they bought books unless you had a sister or brother maybe that was just ahead of you in school. I can't actually remember when free books came into being, even as a student. Now, free books probably by this time were into being. I know that when

I first started out, they were not. I know for a fact that when I went to school as a student, we purchased everything.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: And they were second hand too, weren't they?

MRS. BRYAN: Yes, they were second hand. Naturally, they were cheaper than the new books.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did you have to go back and be recertified every so often in those early years?

MRS. BRYAN: From the time I started, you had to be. I understand early teachers did not have to be certified. In fact, I can recall two that were not certified or did not have a college degree when I was coming through high school because those two women came back to high school and finished in my class in 1940. One was a Mrs. Mary Kinsey. I think she never went back into the classroom. Mrs. Sally Hamilton, whose husband was janitor at West Street, did after she finished high school, go back to college and get her degree. She came back eventually to teach at West Street. I think many of them used the summer school to get their degree.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did you have to go away for that or was that offered in the community?

MRS. BRYAN: No, it was not offered in the community. They had to go to college and they did it over a period of summer school courses. When I finished with my B certificate, which I really hadn't even written for, they sent it. Because I never really wanted to teach. I'll put it this way, I had not considered at that time teaching.

I think maybe the war had something to do with it because really from a small child I had wanted to teach. But then at that period I had not considered, so I did not even bring my B certificate. They mailed it to me. I taught for a year. When I wrote the State Department about upgrading my certificate to an A, they told me if I had had at least one year of successful teaching and my principal would vouch for this, then I would automatically get the A. This is the way I got my A certificate.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Do you remember any outstanding students that you had in that early period?

MRS. BRYAN: I do. One was a Marvin Bryan at Vanceboro. Marvin went on to get his Doctorate in Education. I don't know where he finished. He is a college professor now. He was a very good student.

Amazingly, some of the very bright students during this period did not always turn out to be the ones who had done as much with their lives. Then in other instances, they did. I'm not saying they did nothing, but they turned out to be average citizens.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What kind of extracurricular activities in those early years did the children have?

MRS. BRYAN: After I was teaching?

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Yes.

MRS. BRYAN: After I started teaching, I think I coached the girl's basketball team. This is about it at Vanceboro. Of course once I moved over to James City, this was an elementary school and they didn't have the types of activities they do now.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Just pure academics.

MRS. BRYAN: Mostly academics. We were required, of course, to do the chapel programs. That was mandatory. You usually did it for a holiday or you might do it for something you were studying in your classroom. When I first went to James City, they had what was called; I think that was one of the Roosevelt Jeanne's schools. Two of the classrooms could be opened up into one large assembly. James City, I understand, was the first school to get a cafeteria, now, at least among blacks. They did this because the principal actually built it with the help of the parents. They built a little wooden cafeteria. That was Rev. T. L. Bynum. He was principal there for a long time. Then later, they built in front of the original building the more modern building that had about I guess five or six classrooms and a cafeteria was included.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: In the early years before integration, Mrs. Bryan, what kind of problems did you have? Student discipline, how was that administered?

MRS. BRYAN: You had the usual types of discipline that you would find in a classroom I suppose. Teaching at the level I did, you had the additional problems of dealing with adolescents. These children are mature at times; the next minute, they are being very childish. You probably have some idea of that type of problem. Usually, punishment was detention. You could also spank at the time that I began teaching. Even when I was going to school, a teacher could spank. We did not give demerits at James City. When I came through high

school, you could get demerits, you could get suspension. Now, we did give suspensions.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What kind of things would you be suspended for?

MRS. BRYAN: If you had been taken to the office for a certain number of times.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Disruptive behavior.

MRS. BRYAN: Disruptive behavior, yes, then you were maybe suspended for a couple of days. Then sometimes a child was sent home and they had to have their parent come back with them before they could be admitted.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did you make home visits?

MRS. BRYAN: This is another thing. We had to make home visits when I was at James City. That's the only place I taught that we had to make home visits.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: It opened your eyes, didn't it?

MRS. BRYAN: It did. At Vanceboro, I don't recall making any home visits. They had a very strong PTA at James City. I think teachers were manipulated more at that point than they have been in later years.

I think teachers have much more freedom. And certainly there were no home visits. In fact, home visits stopped before I even left James City. But when I first went there, we had to make those home visits.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Mrs. Bryan, getting back to when you first started in teaching, did your principal set forth any kind of standards that you had to meet in your personal life? Did they have much control

over that?

MRS. BRYAN: I think they had a whole lot of control over your personal life. Much more than they do now. One of them is in dress. I have seen teachers in recent years wear jeans to class to teach. We didn't have any dress codes, but you better not wear jeans. Of course pants when I first started, were not worn to school by the teachers. There was no dress code for teachers or students. I don't think it was needed. We were living in a different time it seems.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Teachers were expected to be proper.

MRS. BRYAN: That's right.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: They set a standard and an example.

MRS. BRYAN: A standard and an example. I can't think, I'm sure there must have been other things, other standards, that we were asked to abide by, but they cannot come to me right now.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You just sort of knew instinctively what you couldn't do as a lady.

MRS. BRYAN: That's right. It's sort of an unwritten rule. Of course, smoking perhaps was one. You did not necessarily smoke on campus. Even if you smoked at home, you did not smoke on campus. These were, as you say, unwritten laws that you just went by.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Do you remember in that time, was there much deprivation, children not being adequately clothed or not getting adequate medical care or being abused?

MRS. BRYAN: I never heard of any case of abuse during the time

that I was teaching, and maybe we weren't tuned into it as much as we are today. Certainly there were some children that were perhaps neglected, but then again, maybe we weren't keyed into that as much as we are today.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How was attendance handled?

MRS. BRYAN: I can't recall that there was any particular way to handle attendance. We took the roll every day. But then, children had to work on farms. There were some that worked on farms where I taught at James City and most especially at Vanceboro. If they were absent, you marked them absent. Of course if they were just absent too much, then they didn't make their grade. But so far as following up on attendance the way we do now, we did not do that then.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: When did you leave James City?

MRS. BRYAN: I left James City in 1971. That's when I moved over to New Bern High and stayed there until the end of my years of teaching. I retired in 1983.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Integration began, as I understand, as a freedom of choice before there was total integration, is that right?

MRS. BRYAN: It started out as freedom of choice. There was also the pupil assignment plan.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How was that done?

MRS. BRYAN: You decided wherever you wanted to go. I had a personal experience with my daughter. At the eighth grade level she started writing around to various colleges that she would like to attend. One of the things she found was that she would have to have

four years of one foreign language or two years each of two languages, and that disturbed her. She was among the first four who entered as ninth grade students at New Bern High. This was her reason for going because she felt she wanted to get the four years of foreign language so that she could attend the college of her choice.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How was that handled? What steps did you have to go through?

MRS. BRYAN: I believe we went to the Board of Education. I think we may have had to fill out forms. In fact, when she came to us with this idea; (it was her idea, it was not ours) when she came to us, we said you cannot go alone, you will have to have some other students.

So, she immediately started calling her friends. One of those friends was Cynthia Lewis who was a very quiet girl and a very sheltered girl.

We were not satisfied with her choice. Then, she contacted a more mature person in our neighborhood, Sandy Sparrow. I talked with Sandy's mother. Anyway, this was one of the first steps. We said she could not go alone. We would not permit that because we did not feel that she would be safe or have any companionship there. Then as I said, there were certain things we had to do. One I remember vividly. She had to have a doctor's certificate, which I could not understand. She got the doctor's certificate and then they had a conference with us before she came.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What were some of the things you were asked, Mrs. Bryan?

MRS. BRYAN: I don't remember. That's been such a long time.

But we had a conference and we filled out her schedule. Of course, she could register immediately for her foreign language. Over at Barber, you got only two years of foreign language. As I said, she had written away to these schools which she was thinking about attending. I think Mr. Flowers was principal of the school at that time.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Was she comfortable about going? She wanted to.

MRS. BRYAN: I think she was comfortable because she wanted to go. I think the attitude of the principal had a lot to do with her well being. He was very nice, and she had two other teachers that she felt very comfortable with. One was Jo Whitley and the other one was a Mrs. Rhodes. I think Mrs. Rhodes taught Latin.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Mrs. Laura Rhodes?

MRS. BRYAN: I think that's the one.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Her husband was Johnny Rhodes.

MRS. BRYAN: This is the person.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I felt comfortable with her too.

MRS. BRYAN: She taught you also?. She said they were very nice to her and there were some students that were kind and seemingly went out of their way. One of the things about Mr. Flowers, she said "he always seemed to be in the hall at the time classes were changing" and she felt this was not an accident; that he just made it a point to be somewhere nearby.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: She was a good student to begin with.

MRS. BRYAN: She was a good student I thought. I don't remember just where Gwen finished, what her rank in class was, but I thought she was a fairly good student.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Let's back up. We haven't gotten you married.

MRS. BRYAN: All right. I married October 22, 1949. My husband was still in dental school when we married. I was teaching.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You were in New Bern?

MRS. BRYAN: Yes. We married right here in New Bern at the home of my parents. We did not have a large wedding.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Where had you met him, Mrs. Bryan?

MRS. BRYAN: He finished high school before me. Four years.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: In New Bern?

MRS. BRYAN: In New Bern. He's a New Bernian too. I just sort of knew he was there. Then, I think he finished North Carolina Central the end of my first year there.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You didn't date him at that time?

MRS. BRYAN: Not at that time. See what happened, when Christmas came and all of your old buddies were home, you would have parties and maybe you would go from one house to the other at night if you didn't do anything but play cards or just sit around and have refreshments. Then, he went into the service. Actually, he was dating someone else when he went into the service. When he came back from the service, most of us were all out working. But this trend of gathering from house to house was still what we did for amusement.

I don't know where along the line we became closer. Out of that group,

I think we're the only two that married. Everybody else married somebody from away.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Would he get off on weekends?

MRS. BRYAN: I'm not referring to that. What I'm saying is when I finished college and then he actually was in the service, but this trend continued. At Christmas time, practically everybody is home. We actually courted I would say through his first year in dental school and then we married the second year he was in dental school.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: So, he was still in school.

MRS. BRYAN: He was still in school and he did not come home weekends. I remained in New Bern at home the whole time teaching while he finished his dental work. Even the year that he did his internship, I remained in New Bern. Of course, he was in periodically but not every week because he went to school in Tennessee. I think I went there once or twice, but it was much easier for him to come to New Bern. Sometimes I can remember he would come with other people that were coming this way.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: When was your daughter born?

MRS. BRYAN: She was born in June of 1950.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Who delivered her?

MRS. BRYAN: Dr. William Martin. She was born in Good Shepherd Hospital.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: When did you begin at New Bern High School?

MRS. BRYAN: September. I started New Bern High in September of 1971.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: When did total integration take place?

MRS. BRYAN: Total integration took place I think in 1970 because it had gone on I remember one year before I arrived.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What were your feelings about that?

MRS. BRYAN: Well, I had mixed emotions. I had applied for work in the city maybe sometime ago. But then I determined before I left the county, James City, that actually the county seemed to have more materials to work with. So, I remained. I think I applied again because James City was going to be closed. Those seventh and eighth grade students were going to come over to H. J. MacDonald. So, I came in and actually applied for H. J. MacDonald, but a vacancy in my field came up at New Bern Senior High, so that's where I went.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Who was principal then?

MRS. BRYAN: Mr. Honeycutt. Shortly after I was there, Mr. Fields came over as principal. He retired before me. When I retired from there, Mr. Phelps was principal.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: That first year, was it comfortable for you or were there students who did not accept you?

MRS. BRYAN: I was teaching United States history. I had two courses in United States history and three courses in African-American history. I found in both instances that there were white students that did not want to be disciplined or taught by a black teacher and there were black students that did not want to be disciplined or taught by a white teacher. But I did not have a great deal of problems. I would not consider my life actually miserable. In fact, I enjoyed

what I was doing and I guess that was one of the reasons.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You had plenty of materials and a lot of support, or did you?

MRS. BRYAN: Well, I can't say that I had lots of materials. I cannot say that. I think I had support. One of the things too that we lost when we came over was the supplement that we got from the county.

I think at that time the city was not giving that extra amount of money to the teachers. So, that was one of the things. But by and large, I really enjoyed it. The interesting thing about it is I met some of the children that I had taught in the seventh and eighth grade and you would not believe that they were the same. They were so much more mature. Some of those students had sort of given me problems at the seventh and eighth grade level. Mind you, some of these are white students and some of them are black students. I still say that it wasn't that bad for me as a person, but there was quite a bit of upheaval. I understand the year before I went to New Bern Senior High that they had had; well, I don't guess you would call it a riot or what, but they had had a disturbance. I think some of the disturbance that occurred the fall of my first year had carried over from the year before.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What were the feelings?

MRS. BRYAN: I was not there the first year, but it was my understanding that it started when the students wanted to have a program in the chapel to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday. You probably heard the story yourself. Then, the white students wanted

to have one to commemorate Robert E. Lee. I was not there, but I understand the school had to close. Well, I think some of this had carried over to the fall, and it was right around Thanksgiving when there seemed to be a lot of unrest. We were closed a day or two before Thanksgiving. I can remember that Wednesday night before Thanksgiving Day, some of us were asked to come back for a meeting in the auditorium, which we did. We were asked to at least give a vote of thanks for the out-going principal. Mr. Fields was asked to come over just for a short period of time until order could be restored. Of course as you know, he stayed there until he retired.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How'd you get along with the white teachers? Did they accept you.

MRS. BRYAN: I think most of them did. This is my feeling. I don't know how they were really feeling inside, but at least they were courteous, friendly. Mr. Albert Willis and I taught next to each other the whole time I was there. Down the hall were the Tharringtons who taught History. Next door to me was Howard Mathews. He was in the social studies department too. Of course, as I said, maybe this is the way I felt. There may have been some, I'm trying to think of some that maybe were not friendly. But then some of the people who were not friendly, were perhaps not friendly because they did not know me. You have to look at that side of it. Because once you have taught with a person over a period of years, then you know the person.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You bond.

MRS. BRYAN: That's right. You may not have been as friendly.

I may not have been as friendly as some of the people felt that I should have been. I can recall one person, to give you my point. Some of it was the person's personality. I can recall vividly coming down the walk from the teacher's lounge one day. I passed a teacher on the walk. He did not speak, so I did not speak. We were just passing.

So, there was a white teacher coming behind me, and she caught up with me and asked, "Did he speak to you?" I said, "No. I didn't speak."

She said, "And he didn't speak to me either." Well, everybody knew that person was that way. That's two ways of looking at it. You have to weigh a person's personality and then you have to look at gradually becoming friends with people.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: In looking back, what do you think are some of the good things that came out of integration?

MRS. BRYAN: Well, one of the good things was at least black students got a chance to have a variety of subjects more than they had at some of the other schools. I'm referring now especially to the high school. They had more materials to work with. Then I think too, just having a broader outlook on life. It gives you a broader outlook on life that people are people. Once you leave a segregated situation and go into the work world, you're working with all people.

So that means if you went to an integrated school system, it would just be normal that you would expect to work with a variety of people.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Do you see any negatives to that?

MRS. BRYAN: I think one of the negative things is something I mentioned a while back, and that is, you don't know your children's

teachers the way you did earlier. For instance as I said, my mother knew all my teachers and this meant a lot. Now, you do not know your child's teachers. Your teacher perhaps does not know what to expect of you or where you're coming from. So, that's been a disadvantage.

I don't think the relationship is as close among teachers and students and parents. That three way situation there. Unless, the parent is very, very active. But then I find that usually the active parents have children that are doing well in school and adjusting in whatever way they need. I think that closeness between school, home and teacher has been destroyed with this situation. The other thing I think is a disadvantage is that you're having fewer and fewer black people to go into the teaching field.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Why would you think that?

MRS. BRYAN: I think one of the reasons is there are so many other avenues open to them and they have not always had this.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: It's more lucrative.

MRS. BRYAN: That's true. So they go into other fields, which is to me, a disadvantage.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: For both black and white.

MRS. BRYAN: Yes. My daughter, when she first returned home, did some subbing here. Her undergraduate field, was Home Ec. and she had the occasion to sub in a Home Economics class and one of the students said, "Well, I didn't know there were any black Home Economic teachers."

Of course that person had always had a white teacher, so they were just amazed when they discovered differently. I think that role model

situation has been lost. When I came through, I can remember three teachers who greatly influenced my life. One was Laretta Smith. The other one was Blanche Rivers. And the third one was Mary Danyus. She is deceased now. Those three teachers were role models for me.

I guess the more you get into this integrated situation, it will not matter that even a white teacher could be a role model. I know, as I said, Mrs. Rhodes and Whitley both influenced my daughter's life. She looked up to both of those teachers very much.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I looked up to Miss Laura.

MRS. BRYAN: She was a very good teacher. She said she was very supportive and encouraging.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: A real Christian lady.

MRS. BRYAN: But it was not particularly fashionable to be that friendly with blacks at the time and that meant a lot to Gwendolyn.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Mrs. Bryan, and it can happen on both sides, that white teachers are able to comprehend where the black children are coming from? Do you feel that white teachers have difficulty in understanding?

MRS. BRYAN: I believe they do. I think it still goes back to the fact that many times that student may go to through that teacher's room all year and that teacher and parent may not ever see each other.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: No communication.

MRS. BRYAN: No communication. So, they have no idea.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: And preconceived ideas.

MRS. BRYAN: This is true.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I hope that's breaking down.

MRS. BRYAN: I think so. Preconceived ideas on both sides.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: On both sides. We're getting there.

Mrs Bryan: I had a student over at James City. I had to attend a school meeting. When I got back the next day, the teacher that had kept the whole class had had problems with him and she reported this to me. She said that she had taken him out in the hall and had barely put her hand on him and he had yanked away and was furious. I took him out in the hall and talked the next day and said, "Well, I have done the same thing." He said, "That's different." But see, this was in the very early stages of integration. Maybe the very first year. I think, as I said over time, I'm hopeful that things will be better.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I think it is.

MRS. BRYAN: I think so too. In the beginning when we first moved to New Jersey, I had no black teachers but I can remember one that stood out vividly, a Mrs. Leonard in the fourth grade. She was as sweet as she could be. As I said, over time, it will be the same I think with all.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Can you think of anything else that you want to talk about? Your library experience. You were a volunteer with the library?

MRS. BRYAN: No, I wasn't a volunteer, but I just wanted to talk about the early librarians and the library there on West Street. My first remembrance of that library was in the high school building of

West Street. They had that Central building there which housed the elementary. Then over time, they built a small one story building that housed the high school. When you went in the door to the right, there was a little room that was the library, the public library for blacks.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Was that a branch of the city library?

MRS. BRYAN: I don't know whether it was or not. I think Rev. R. I. Johnson was the first person to be involved with that. After him, I think the second person was Mrs. I. H. Smith, Anna Day Smith.

Somewhere along the line the WPA built the little building down the street on West Street to house the library.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Was it staffed by volunteers or were they paid?

MRS. BRYAN: I think one of the persons there, Sadie Lowe, was a paid person. Because when they closed that library and the Craven County took over, she went there to work for a while.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I never thought about this, but did blacks use the New Bern Public Library?

MRS. BRYAN: They did not. That's what I'm saying. They used the building that the WPA built down on West Street.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: That was in the thirties?

MRS. BRYAN: That was in the thirties I think. Before full integration came into being, all public facilities were opened and then that one was closed. It's still there. The Climbers' Club uses it. In fact, they have it as their clubhouse. They use it and some

of the branches meet there.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How were the books purchased?

MRS. BRYAN: I imagine they had a small budget to purchase books, but some of them were donated.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I was just wondering if, say, anyone in the north ever adopted the library.

MRS. BRYAN: Not to my knowledge.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Because you know St. Joseph's received a lot of funds from northern parishes, I've been told, for their school.

MRS. BRYAN: To my knowledge there was none, except what they bought with their small budget.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I wonder if that came through the county board or city board?

MRS. BRYAN: It could have. Because I imagine the city board or somebody had to pay the salary of the person who worked full time.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You all worked under some pretty hard physical conditions too, didn't you, in your early years?

MRS. BRYAN: Yes, I would say so.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: No plumbing.

MRS. BRYAN: Now, at West Street there was plumbing. It was when I went out into the county in Vanceboro, there was no plumbing originally. There was no plumbing at James City in the beginning. Later on, there was plumbing at James City. I can't even remember just when it came about.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: But you remember when it wasn't there.

MRS. BRYAN: I remember because I would stay all day.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: And cold out there too! Anything else?

MRS. BRYAN: I think I had checked on here the black community and the civil rights. I would say one or two things about it. I was not a civil rights activist. In other words, I did not participate in the rallies, the marches. But this went on in New Bern, the rallies; and usually they were held at churches. A group from here went to Washington, for the Black March on Washington. I can't remember who sponsored that trip.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Churches probably.

MRS. BRYAN: But a group did go for the march on Washington.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: When he made that speech.

MRS. BRYAN: There were two people here that I think played a role. One was the Rev. W. G. Hickman. The other one was a Mr. Nixon. Now, Hickman has over the years been with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. I believe, I'm not sure, that Nixon was with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. But they were very active. Now if they decided they were going to boycott certain stores, I did not go into those stores. I can remember vividly not going into Kress, because that was my favorite five and dime. Instead, I would go to McLellan's. When it was all over, I don't think Kress ever recovered because by this time we had gotten into the habit of going into McClellans. Of course the reason for boycotting Kress's was the lunch counter. I believe McLellan was just about to put one in, but they did not put the seats in. They were very smart I guess

along that line.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What other businesses, do you remember?

MRS. BRYAN: Well, Clark's Drug Store was one.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Is that because of the management?

MRS. BRYAN: I think that was because of the lunch counter also.

I think I went back to Clark's. That was very convenient to the post office. I believe, and I'm not absolutely sure on this, there was a store in the Five Points area, the Foodland store, formerly Gordon's.

I believe that most of their business was black. My understanding is that the management did not want to hire any black in that store, when he was approached about hiring a person. So, this was another store that was boycotted.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: That would have been the store that Pac-A-Sac bought out?

MRS. BRYAN: Yes. I think that was the first store in New Bern I believe located right there on the corner.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What was the name?

MRS. BRYAN: Gordon's. So, that did not bother me because I did not shop there anyway. At that time, I was shopping at the A&P. They were the only stores that I can recall. I think some person told me that they went into Bynum's and he served them and they left and that was that. Because I think the whole idea was would you serve.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Was there any real unpleasantness in New Bern that was overt?

MRS. BRYAN: The only unpleasantness that I can remember was the

first year my daughter attended New Bern Senior High. Someone, I guess it was the Klan, I'm not sure, burned a cross in front of one of the student's home. This was Diane Murrel. She lived on Bern Street. I understand that there were crosses burned on a couple of the teacher's lawns, also.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Black teachers?

MRS. BRYAN: No. I can't recall the names. I think one was also burned on the lawn of Mr. Flowers.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: The Principal.

MRS. BRYAN: So, those were the only unpleasant incidents that I can recall. Even when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, I cannot remember whether there was any unpleasantness or not. I remember I was at a PTA meeting at that time. The other thing I remember is there was an interracial council set up. My husband attended a time or two. I think he said it was held in the First Presbyterian Church. He did not follow up because he was beginning to have eye problems and he could not drive.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Who appointed the interracial council?

MRS. BRYAN: I never knew. I never even knew who contacted him to be a part of it. I did see someone last week that was asking; Athene Bunn. She was a part of it too because she remembered him from that.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I'm glad that that was a part of it.

MRS. BRYAN: Yes, it was.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: There were some people who were trying on both sides.

MRS. BRYAN: On both sides.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: We have a lot of be thankful for.

MRS. BRYAN: This is true. There are good people everywhere.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Is there anything else?

MRS. BRYAN: Well, just my experiences with World War II and a bit about the church. These are my personal experiences. I was a student at North Carolina Central when December 7 happened. That is all you could hear on the radio, was the concern over the attack on Pearl Harbor. As I said before, shortly after that, a lot of the students went to Washington, D. C. to get jobs. A lot of the males volunteered for the service. To the extent that when I finished in '44, I don't think we had ten men left in my particular class.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I'll never forget that day. I was working. I was on the desk and I had my little radio. The little ante area was full of guys waiting for their dates. I turned it up and the little boys from State and Carolina and Davidson, and I remember one saying, "Well, that's us." And it was.

MRS. BRYAN: Well, this was true for North Carolina Central. Most of them volunteered. One of the Christmases while I was there, in order to avoid the rush on transportation, Dr. Shepherd had us to take our Christmas holiday early.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did you ride the bus?

MRS. BRYAN: Yes.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I did too.

MRS. BRYAN: I always rode the bus. One of the other situations

there; as I said, I just felt I needed to get a defense job and that's when I went to work for the Bundles for Britain. This was a place where we mended all of the clothing that people donated and those clothing were shipped over to Great Britain.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: We were so idealistic, weren't we?

MRS. BRYAN: That's right. I worked there from I guess September until December when I came home for Christmas. That brings me to another vivid memory. When we got down to the train station, this is in New York, it was bedlam. I was living with a brother-in-law and my sister.

It was bedlam trying to get on the train to come home. My other experience of travelling during the war was winding up on a troop train once all the way from Washington, D. C. to New Bern.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Oh, that was fun!

MRS. BRYAN: Oh boy, it was not fun! Because they disregarded us. The things they said and did, it was just like you weren't there.

So, this was another experience. Another favorite memory was going down to Cherry Point. We would go down to Cherry Point for the dances.

I think Miss Charlotte Rhone was still living. She was a social worker. She was the person they contacted, for the girls to go down periodically.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Your mother allowed you to go?

MRS. BRYAN: I was out of college then. I had been to New York and had come home. This had to be somewhere around '45 or '46. Miss Rhone would always go too. They would take a bus load and she would pick and choose the girls that would go, and we would go to the dances

they had down there periodically. Sometimes they would have a football game or something of this nature and we were transported down. The thing that amazed me was all the things that they had that we could not get. I just felt some of it was being wasted. But all the things that we did not see, they had. I remember the rationing and the stamps.

I've got some rationing books somewhere; the sugar, the coffee, the meat.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Remember the hose?

MRS. BRYAN: The hose, the cigarettes. And of course the black market developed, especially with the meat. I can remember that. Another vivid memory is V J Day. V E occurred in the spring, either April or May. When V J Day came, I was in New Jersey with another brother and his wife. We went down to Newark, New Jersey. That was sort of a central city, the largest city from the suburban area; the people just jammed the streets with horns and all of this. I guess it sticks out because there was such a sea of people. I would not dare go into a crowd like that now, but at that point I was young and brave. I remember vividly V J Day. Those were just my personal memories of World War II.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: It was quite a time we've lived through, wasn't it?

MRS. BRYAN: It was quite a time. You're still getting more said and written about World War II I think than any other war.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Well, it was a war where we were all committed. Everybody.

MRS. BRYAN: Everybody was committed. It was truly a world war.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: The cause, we felt, was just.

MRS. BRYAN: That's true.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Where Viet Nam was different.

MRS. BRYAN: Our country was divided on that situation.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Well, Mrs. Bryan, if you can think of anything else, we'll come back and do this again. I have thoroughly enjoyed it.

MRS. BRYAN: I've enjoyed it also. I hope some of the information will be of use.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: It will be to those that come after it.

MRS. BRYAN: Well, hopefully.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Thank you.

MRS. BRYAN: You're certainly welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW