

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

DR. L. STEVE REDD

INTERVIEW 912

This is Dorothy Richardson representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 900. I am interviewing Dr. Steve Redd, interview 912. This interview is being conducted on February 8, 1993. We are at Craven Community College in New Bern, North Carolina.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Dr. Redd, we would like to know a little bit about your background; where you're from, where you were born, your parents, your education background.

DR. REDD: I'm an eastern North Carolina guy. I was born and raised in Greenville, North Carolina, not very far from here. My father was a tobacconist. He kept a set of books in a warehouse and followed the market quite a bit, both Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina.

In some of my earlier years I got to go with him and that was interesting. My mother was a housewife and primarily raised me. But when I was thirteen, daddy passed away. Mother suddenly found that she had to get on the job market and had no skills, so she went to some night schools and became an employee of the City of Greenville. I graduated from Rose High School.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Excuse me. Did you have brothers and sisters?

DR. REDD: I'm an only child, and married an only child too. (laughter) But I went to Rose High School and East Carolina University. Actually, I grew up right on the campus at ECU. I'm probably one of the few lifetime students. Because from the time I was in the first grade through the seventh grade, I actually went to school on the campus at the training school at ECU.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: They experimented.

DR. REDD: That's right, they did. I had quite a number of practice teachers every year, and we thought that was great. Upon graduating, I went to ECU. To start with in pre-engineering, but shortly realized that I lacked some academic background and switched to industrial arts and graduated in about three and a half years as an industrial arts teacher.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: The years.

DR. REDD: That was in 1963 when I graduated from college.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Viet Nam?

DR. REDD: Viet Nam was heavy at the time, it certainly was. I was on the upper end of the age eligibility by that time, and public school teachers were exempt from the early part of the Viet Nam war.

I had a choice of five jobs. Industrial arts teachers were rather scarce at the time. I chose New Bern for two reasons; one, I just fell in love with the rivers when I came here for my interview; and secondly, it afforded me to be close to mother whom I was leaving finally and she was by herself. She has since remarried by the way, shortly after I did leave. But I became a public school teacher and taught industrial arts at New Bern High School. As a matter of fact, I replaced Taylor Koonce.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What year was that?

DR. REDD: That was in December of 1963. Taylor had been promoted to vocational director, so I took over his classes. I taught for about two and a half years.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What type of student would you have had?

DR. REDD: I had primarily boys cause I was teaching shop. At that time, all boys took an exploratory course in shop in the ninth grade, so I had all the male students at New Bern High School. Not just myself, now, there was another teacher too. We traded off. But in the eleventh and twelfth grades we had boys who were actually trying to prepare for a career in one of the shop programs. My specialty was woodwork and that's what I taught at the time. I taught for about two and a half years. When I got out of college, I started immediately working on my master's degree, doing that part-time, travelling back and forth at night.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You did this at East Carolina?

DR. REDD: Yes. Did both of those degrees at ECU. ECU, by the way, Mrs. Richardson, was kind of like a community college to me. With daddy having passed away, we had very limited resources. Mother was earning whatever minimum wage was at the time. ECU was to me like I'm sure a community college is to a lot of people, it was a homegrown opportunity for education. I had a job. I was working part-time in a drug store. Had been for five, six years.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What was the tuition?

DR. REDD: The tuition was \$90 a quarter, and that's less than what our tuition is now.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: And you lived at home.

DR. REDD: I lived at home. So it really was a community college in all respects, except that's not what they called it. But it was in my case. There really is some question about whether I could have

even afforded to have gone anywhere else. I don't know what scholarships or financial aid might have been available. My education in the baccalaureate degree was quite inexpensive because of the way in which I did it, which is not unlike the way students do it in colleges now. But I taught for two and a half years, working on my master's degree, going back and forth one night every week. One of my courses toward the end is unique because it's kind of how I got here. In the first night of this particular class that I was taking over at ECU, the professor said, "Let's introduce ourselves." We all stood up and said where we were from, and one of the people in that class turned out to be a gentleman by the name of Thurman Brock. He stood up and introduced himself and said he was from New Bern. When he said he was from New Bern it kind of caught my attention cause I really thought, well maybe, that's somebody I can ride with. I did know who he was.

I don't know that I would have recognized him, but I did recognize the name because he was the county supervisor of vocational education, but I was working for the city system and they were two separate systems at the time. But during our class break, we got together and we started riding together and that really started an association that went for thirty some years. As we were going back and forth night after night to Greenville, he was telling me about an effort on the part of some citizens, headed primarily by Robert Pugh, to start what turned out to be a community college, but that's not what they were talking about in the original days, early days. To be truthful with you, it was interesting to me, but I had my sights set on being a school principal.

That's what I was studying and that's where I was gonna go. It never dawned on me that what he was talking about would have any impact on my life. As we continued to grow in our relationship, one night he said, "Steve, I need some help at night. I've got some adult basic education classes. They are literacy classes for adults. I've gotten permission to have a part-time supervisor. I need some help." Thurman, at the time, was holding two jobs. He was trying to get this thing started and also operating the public school vocational program. He said, "Are you interested?" Of course, I was single and about the only commitment I had at night was that master's degree, so I said "yes". I started running materials for him at night to some sections of Craven County that I had never been in. They were primarily in black neighborhoods in the rural areas. I visited a lot of schools that are no longer in existence.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: The classes were held down at the schools?

DR. REDD: Like Ft. Barnwell Elementary and Vanceboro Consolidated. They were primarily black elementary schools, and some black high schools too because we did have segregation at the time.

I really did enjoy it. I had no earthly idea that I was going to enjoy it as much as I did. I did that for about nine months.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You could see that it was reaching people.

DR. REDD: I really could. There's a story I tell that actually happened. Within everybody's life there are things that happen from time to time that you think may have had an influence in setting the course of your life, this is one of those rather incidental events,

but it's never left my mind. I was at Vanceboro Consolidated School one night and had to deliver some material to the teacher and also pick up some forms. You know, that's the bureaucratic way - pick up some forms. I was twenty-one years old, doing my thing, just getting my forms. I don't know that I really thought about what I was doing, other than running these errands and what have you. I was walking from the back of the classroom to the front of the classroom. The class consisted of about twelve, rather elderly black individuals, men and women. As I was walking to the front, a very old black man kind of put his arm out and stopped me and he said, "I want to show you something." He took out a checkbook and commenced to write a check, but what he writing was his signature. He wrote it one slow letter at a time. It really had an impact on me, cause he was so proud. He told me when he'd finished, he said, "I've never been able to write my name before." He had learned to write his name and the teacher had helped him open up a bank account for the first time in his life.

I thought maybe he was gonna write me a check, but he was just actually showing me that he could write his name. Suddenly, what I was doing took on a different light entirely. I was no longer processing forms.

I was involved in something that was impacting people's lives in a way that I had never experienced before. The beauty of that, the reason it stays in my mind, is I have seen that happening everyday for the last twenty-five years. In different formats. I mean, it's not just that people learn to write their names but they are learning, and that results in a change in their lifestyle to the positive. That's when

I kind of ceased having a job and took on a mission or ministry, so to speak. It really did alter the way I approached what was happening to me.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: It's beautiful.

DR. REDD: It is, and it's a true story. It really did change my way of thinking. I was still working part-time. The College had started, by the way. It had been chartered. They were housed in the top floor of the St. Luke's building. One of those nights, we were travelling back and forth, and I was right on the end of my master's degree, and Thurman said "I've gotten permission to have my second full time professional person", or administrator I should say, and he said, "I'd like for you to join me". To be honest with you, Mrs. Richardson, while I had enjoyed what I was doing, there's that old thing of security that cropped into my mind. And we're talking, at the time, a very small operation, extremely small. As I told you earlier, I don't know that I had this grand vision of what it was going to be. So, I thought, well, you know, if I do this, if I switch and give up my position at the high school, this thing could fold the very next day or the next week, and then what will I do.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: As a young man, you had to think of that.

DR. REDD: I've always liked to have my ducks lined up, and that was a little bit of an adventure for me. I told him that I was interested and didn't tell him about my doubts. I didn't think that was appropriate. When I was going through college, my faculty advisor was a gentleman by the name of Dr. Tom Haigwood. He was also my neighbor,

having lived in the same town. He was a wonderful, wonderful gentleman!

He was absolutely my father figure in college. I went to Greenville, and called him to see if he'd see me on a Sunday. He let me, as I knew he would, come to his house. We sat and I told Dr. Haigwood about this opportunity that I'd had but I had some doubts about whether it was going to offer security. Dr. Haigwood said, I can almost quote him, he said, "Steve, I feel sure the community college system is the wave of the future, and if you've got an opportunity to get in on the ground floor, for goodness sakes take it." He said, "And if you're not happy, I'll guarantee you I'll find you another industrial arts job." Well, I had so much confidence in him that all the doubts that I had just went completely away, and I left his house with a direct beeline back to Dr. Brock's to say yes, I wanted to do that. So in April of '66, I resigned my position at the high school and assumed the position.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Who was principal? Excuse me.

DR. REDD: Bill Flowers was principal. I tell you the truth, they had to go to a lot of trouble to get me out, because I was obviously under a contract, and industrial arts teachers were rare. They looked and looked. This is in the middle of the year and they couldn't find one. What they wound up doing was shifting some personnel within the school. One of those people that got shifted was Tommy Phelps, who wound up being the high school principal years later. Tommy was teaching, I think he was teaching introduction to vocations. Tommy and I both had the same degree. So they switched Tommy into my classes

and hired someone else to do the introduction to vocations, and in essence, released me. By the way, Thurman put that as a requirement.

I had to leave with the good graces of the New Bern city system primarily because so much of what we were doing depended upon cooperation from both school systems. But they were very gracious.

Mr. MacDonald was superintendent then, and everybody was helpful if that's what I wanted to do.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Was the feeling then, with Mr. MacDonald and your fellow workers, that this thing was going?

DR. REDD: Well, I think it was with Mr. MacDonald. I wouldn't say that was the case with fellow workers. It was so new, Dot. It was also at a time in Craven County when there was a lot of unrest.

This is a time when the schools were just beginning integration. There was another organization that was started called Operation Progress. Craven Operation Progress was part of President Johnson's anti-poverty program. There was a lot of ill feelings about that in the community. We became another new government program that nobody knew about that got attached philosophically to that movement.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I never heard of that.

DR. REDD: Well, it was a big operation. Part of Johnson's anti-poverty program. I really think that the people that could see something from this were the older visionaries of our community. Lynn Kelso was heavily involved in that. R. C. Godwin was a legislator at the time and he submitted the original bill. We named our library after him. I hate to start calling them because I'm gonna forget

them, but there were a lot. Mr. "Pop" Beasley was heavily involved in it. Libby Ward was very involved in it. I think these gentlemen, Mr. Pugh and Mr. MacDonald, could see the role that education was most likely going to play in the future of America and also in the future of Craven County.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: On the state basis at that time, they had set up statewide, hadn't they? Not community colleges as such.

DR. REDD: Well, they'd actually set up community colleges by that time. Along about 1958 when Governor Hodges was in office, they established something called the Carlyle Commission. Basically, the Carlyle Commission was to look at how North Carolina was gonna change from an agrarian based economy to hopefully an industrial based economy. The realization was that there were very few skilled workers in North Carolina, and there were absolutely no training facilities for implanting skills amongst workers who might be coming off the farm for example or coming out of an ag related industry. So they decided to start a group of industrial education centers. These were schools that were far apart from the academic arena. They were shop oriented schools for adults. At the same time, and completely separate, there had been a move on the part of a number of municipalities in North Carolina to establish city owned, public junior colleges. There were five in existence at the time; Wilmington had one, Asheville had one, Charlotte had one, Burlington had one, and there was one other and I can't remember where it was. The industrial education centers got started on one end of it and these municipal schools were started.

The municipal schools ran into financial problems. They started growing and the cities couldn't support them, so the cities turned to the state government and said give us some help. So the state made some appropriations. The size of the appropriation wasn't the important thing, the important thing was for the first time the state took a role in financing public junior colleges. Well, nationwide, the community college movement was just beginning to emerge. The community college is a comprehensive school that has a component that is technical and vocational based. It also has a component that is pre-college or junior college. There was also an effort at the same time to look at the university system. There was ECU, East Carolina Teachers College. There was a total independent institution, UNC.

What we know as UNC, Chapel Hill was an independent institution; NC State. Federal, state, all of these. So there was also a move to look at doing something more economically with the university system.

There was another commission empowered along about 1960. It took a look at all higher education in North Carolina. The result was, number 1; the consolidation of the university system, and number 2; the consolidation of these junior colleges, municipal colleges, with these vo-tech centers, to formulate a community college system. Now, three of the municipal supported junior colleges decided to become part of the university system; UNC Wilmington, UNC Asheville, and UNC Charlotte. The other two decided to become part of the community college system, so there was created the school at Burlington, I can't remember the name of it exactly, and also I believe the school in

Goldsboro. At the same time, at the very same time in the same act, a number of communities had begun to look at this thing that was coming up, called a community college, and they wanted them. So when the Community College Act was passed, that was the same time that the Consolidated University Act was passed, there actually was instantly about twenty-two institutions. Lenoir Technical Institute was one of those.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You operated under Lenoir.

DR. REDD: Well, later on we did. We weren't even in existence at this time. All this took place around '60 to '63. So, Lenoir was created. Wilson Technical Institute was created.

There were twenty-two of them scattered throughout the state. Then after that was established and there was a community college system, and it was headed by Dr. I. E. Ready, the first director statewide, then other communities that were a little bit behind some of the first ones, decided they wanted to have a community college in their area.

There was a provision in the law that allowed for a unit to be established, a unit of a permanent institution, and it required a bill.

So a bill was submitted at the encouragement of some citizens here to establish Craven Industrial Education Center Unit of Lenoir Technical Institute.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I wondered how it was under Lenoir. You made that clearer for me.

DR. REDD: That's how we got started. When I first started my employment, my check came from Lenoir Technical Institute.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Who was paying, the county?

DR. REDD: No, the state was paying them. The state paid for the salaries of the few people we had employed. We had a regular state budget, but it ran through Lenoir Technical Institute. Now we also had some local money in it. The county commissioners appropriated some local money. The local money pays then, like it does now, for things like the heat, light, rent, telephone, the structural physical things. Now that money ran through the Board of Education because we were not licensed to receive funds or disperse funds. We had to do it under somebody else's license. So the local money was spent out of the County Board of Education, and the state money was spent under Lenoir. But at least it chartered us and we started. We originally were in the top floor of St. Lukes' Hospital building. We stayed there about nine months, maybe a year.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How many teachers did you have?

DR. REDD: One. We had one licensed practical nurse instructor. Her name was Maxine Kliet, and there were twelve students. Actually, the program that I'm talking about predated the college a little bit. It was initially done as an agreement between the hospital and Lenoir Community College but within six months it became our program. In other words, the first graduating class did graduate after we were in existence. Shortly after we chartered the place, or they chartered it, we began to look for other facilities. I remember Mr. Kelso was very involved in that. The decision was made to rent what is now the Harvey Mansion. It

was a series of six apartments.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: The Henderson House.

DR. REDD: Yes. The Henderson Apartment buildings. There was a duplex behind that. So, we rented that. The duplex became the office and the big building became the classrooms. And it was poor, poor, poor. We heated the place with open flame heaters. Within a short period of time we were up to about eight teachers.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What were you teaching?

DR. REDD: Let me get back to that in just a moment. At the same time we rented the Henderson Apartment building, we also took over the Leona Tolson school which was a school at Croatan. It was a decommissioned black elementary school. So that gave us two facilities. We began to look at the kinds of programs to put in. In New Bern in the Henderson Apartment we put in a learning lab; a library, the library, by the way, was in a room smaller than this, very little; we put in a secretarial program; a business administration program; and we already had our nursing program, licensed practical nursing. In the Leona Tolson facility, we renovated that to be shops and we put three programs in down there; drafting, machine shop, and welding. So, for quite a number of years that was our curriculum.

In fact, it didn't really expand much until we actually moved out here.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What kind of folks came in? All over the county?

DR. REDD: Yes, all over the county. Primarily, our students

were older students. They were not generally right out of high school.

I would say that the vast majority of them were minorities, a vast majority of them were female, and a vast majority of them were in a lower economic situation. Our entire student body was about seventy-five at that time, so it wasn't a big expanse of humanity at all.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What kind of fees did they have?

DR. REDD: The tuition, as I recall in the earlier days, was something on the order of \$30 a quarter. That was a full time tuition.

We also were operating a lot of adult education courses then. We began to build that program up, and those courses at that time were absolutely free. They aren't anymore, but they were then. We also continued the work that we'd been doing with the adult literacy program.

It was free, and it still is today, there's no charge for adult basic education. As we progressed, there was a steering committee. You see, we were not an independent institute, so there was not a board of trustees, but there was a steering committee. In the steering committee's mind from day one, they wanted it independent. There was a requirement; according to the law, in order to have an independent community college you had to have a bond referendum and that bond referendum had to have in it a supporting tax. Before the legislature would even consider, they had to be told that the citizens of the community had voted to have a community college and that the vote to have it was expressed in a supporting tax. So we began working toward that endeavor. At the same time, we decided as we were gonna have

a bond referendum we also needed a campus. So we put on the ballot a half a million dollar bond referendum to purchase the initial land and build the initial buildings. It just so happened, by the way, that H. J. MacDonald School was on the same bond referendum and both of them passed. So H. J. was built with the same effort. We did succeed in that. We got a ten cents tax levied, which gives the commissioners permission to use up to ten cents of every dollar of taxes to support a community college. We never have used that much, but that was the going amount at the time. Also, the half a million dollar bond referendum passed. Because of that, the very next legislature did pass a charter granting independent status, changing us from Craven County Industrial Education Center Unit of Lenoir Community College to Craven Technical Institute. That, by the way, was the basis for the first board of trustees. So then within probably six months, a brand new board of trustees were formed and they elected their officers, and then started the process of locating the land. I think the bond referendum was '67, but in the late sixties there was quite a bit of federal grant money and matching money for education. So we were able to take that half million dollars and probably match it five times over with two different sources of federal funds. With that, we purchased the first hundred acres of land that we have as a main campus and we built this entire building and a piece of the building next door to us. Spent virtually all that money in the initial outlay. Actually, though, we bought this land for \$1,200 an acre. We bought it from Weyerhaeuser Corporation. I remember so well sitting in the

meeting where they were describing where this land was. Now, there was a little controversy on the board about whether to locate on this side of the river or the other side of the river. As you well know, the plans to have a highrise bridge had been in existence for years and years, but I don't know that anybody ever really thought they were gonna see it. The final thinking was that we needed to locate it on this side of the river because of the bridge problem. But I remember sitting in the meeting room where they were describing this land and they said it was on Racetrack Road. They were describing it as somewhere around the third bend in the road, something like that. Well, the next day I came out here to try to find it and there was absolutely nothing out here but a road and some woods, and I think the North Carolina Forestry Department had something about where the new post office is located now. I got out of my car, and tried to visualize where it was gonna be. So I pretty well determined where it was gonna be and I must have missed it a half a mile, because when they finally came out and started clearing the land, I was way off. But nevertheless, it's been a wonderful location for us. The land is of immense value now. There's no telling what it would be. But we were the first entity on Racetrack Road. In fact, we have a piece of Racetrack Road on our campus now.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You do?

DR. REDD: Yes. A little small piece of it. As you come into the campus, the little triangle of land that's on the left includes the old right of way to Old Racetrack Road.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: We used to come down Racetrack Road. (laughter) Oh me. Well, by then, you were attracting more and more students. How about high school students?

DR. REDD: Well, that's true. We've been attracting more and more high school students as time goes on. When we left to come out here, our enrollment had gone to about two hundred in the old facilities. Within two years of being out here, our enrollment was four hundred.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: In two years?

DR. REDD: Yes. I tell you the truth, I really have to credit that to a change in image. In the old place, the student lounge was a room not much larger than this and had a dirt floor, so help me, a dirt floor! The furniture in it was old furniture that had donated.

Throw away stuff. What I'm saying to you is, that people that came to improve their educational status would obviously look at the facility and it would be hard for them to equate that with quality.

However, when we came out here in new facilities, we had a permanency that we had never had before. We also had facilities that were commensurate with whatever somebody's thinking of quality might be.

We actually had public restrooms and not residential restrooms, and things like that. That probably had more to do with our sudden jump in enrollment than anything. But we have continued to draw and attract high school students. As a matter of fact, our average age of students has been decreasing for years, which means they're getting younger every fall. Or maybe it means I'm getting older. But every fall it

looks like we have more and more extremely young people on the campus than we did the year before. But at the same time, I'll have to say that the enrollment has continued to increase to the extent that the impact of young people hasn't been overwhelming. We are currently right around twenty-six years of age; whereas, we used to be years ago probably closer to thirty-two, thirty-four. But for all entities, the retired person or the person who's looking for a second career, the middle person that's looking for a better career, and the very young person coming out of high school, we've seen increases in all three of those.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Your physical plant now, how many buildings, well, excuse me, let's go back. You worked right along with Dr. Brock then.

DR. REDD: Yes. Well, as I mentioned, I was the second one. Not the second employee, but the second administrator. There were two other employees that preceded me on a full time basis. Kathleen Tyndall was the first bookkeeper/secretary. By the way, she retired after about ten years of service, but did that fifteen years ago before we had gotten where we were giving retirement plaques. It just so happens that I look after her. She has no family. She's like an adopted grandmother. As a matter of fact, my wife and I are her legal guardians.

Every year now, I pull all the secretaries together for a breakfast on Secretaries Day. I tricked her into coming to breakfast with me one morning and gave her a retirement plaque last year. But anyway, she was the first secretary, and Maxine Kliet was the first instructor.

Both of these ladies were actually working before I started. So, I was really the fourth employee but the second administrator. As far as official title, I've done just about all of it from one time or another. When you're real small, you wear a lot of hats. One of my jobs early on was to take care of maintenance. We didn't have a maintenance crew, so I actually did it myself. As a matter of fact, I violated every electrical code in the world cause I did our wiring.

I replaced ceilings and I cut the grass and everything. I officially was the extension director, which meant that I took care of the classes that were away from campus, the adult ed program. After the first year, Thurman changed me to the vo tech director, which meant that I then took care of the inside classes and we hired somebody to take care of the outside classes. I did that for a number of years until about the time we moved out here. Well, just before we moved out here I switched to run the division of continuing education that was by that time really growing. So for the most part, I have about fifteen years as dean of continuing education. One day, just on the spur of the moment, Dr. Brock called me into his office and sat me down. He said, "Steve, if I'm gonna keep my job as president, I've got to have a doctorate." Now, Thurman has been like a surrogate father to me; boss, father, friend, the whole thing.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I've read his reports and their good. They're logical.

DR. REDD: Now, he's actually written down all that I'm telling you. I haven't done that. He's much more methodical than I am. But

anyway, he brought me in one day and he said "If I'm gonna keep this job, I've got to go to school." He said, "Now, here's what we're gonna do. I'm gonna go first, and then you're gonna go when I get back." To be honest with you, that was kind of a shock to me.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Were you married then?

DR. REDD: I was married. We had just bought a house. No, we hadn't bought a house, but I was married.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Where is your wife from and who is your wife?

DR. REDD: My wife is Brenda Thigpen Redd and Brenda is from Greenville just like I am. We were high school sweethearts.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: My husband and I were.

DR. REDD: She is an elementary school teacher. She has taught for the New Bern city system all of her life. She's probably about twenty-seven years into the system. All of that at Oaks Road School except for the last two years, and she's at the new school, Ben Quinn Elementary. She teaches kindergarten and thoroughly loves it. That's her life.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: That sounds nice.

DR. REDD: She's a sweet lady.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How many children do you have?

DR. REDD: We have two. We have William.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How old is William?

DR. REDD: William is thirteen. Then we also have Heather. She right now is twelve, but she's gonna be thirteen shortly. I'll tell you how that came about in just a minute. Anyway, Thurman called me

in and said you're going to school. I had been out of school for ten years; I'd been working the whole time; had just gotten married, rather late in life, but got married; and thoroughly enjoyed my work. I enjoyed the rivers. I had a boat. My life was pretty well set, and he was talking about going back to school, and that kind of shocked me. It did more than just shock me. I went home and I mentioned it to Brenda and she thought it was a good idea. I mentioned it to my parents and they thought it was a good idea. I mentioned it to my in-laws and they thought it was a good idea. Everybody thought it was a good idea, but nobody had to go except me. I started work on my doctorate on a part-time basis the year that Thurman left to go work on his. As a matter of fact, Brenda and I moved into Thurman's home while he and his wife were gone. Sure enough, when Thurman came back, we must have crossed somewhere around Goldsboro, cause his first day back at work was my first day in school. He had worked on it part-time for two years. I did not work on it that long part-time, so I had to do two full years. He got by with one year, but I had to do two full years. So for two years I gave up my job. Now, Thurman and the board of trustees gave me a leave of absence by the way. But, I gave up my job.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Where did you go?

DR. REDD: NC State was the only university offering a doctorate in Adult Education Community College Administration.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did you stay there or commute?

DR. REDD: Well, a little bit of both. By the time I did go off

to school, we had bought our first home. In fact, we still live in that home today. Brenda, she was very much entrenched in her work, and so we decided not to move. What we did was to buy a mobile home and put it up in Raleigh with the idea of putting it on the beach when we finished with it, and that's exactly what we did. We still have the mobile home by the way. This was in 1972. So I would go up early Monday morning and come back on Fridays. I did that for two years.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: May I ask you something? It had always bothered me, teacher's salaries. They have to go back for recertification at their own expense and their own time, and yet their pay scale remains low.

DR. REDD: It does.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: So much is demanded of our teachers.

DR. REDD: There really is. Even our folks here. Now, more and more we're getting into financing some of the going back to school, but still, a lot of my teachers who are going after superior degrees have to do that on their own and on their own time for the most part.

I had to give up my entire two years of pay. Now, I did draw a scholarship. At that time, the legislature had funded a program at NC State. The system was growing leaps and bounds at that time. By the way, along about that time, there was a school being formed in this nation every week, a community college. That's how fast they were coming about. North Carolina went to fifty-eight before it stopped. What they were finding was, that there just weren't very many people who had the terminal degree, the Doctorate Degree in

Administration at community colleges. So North Carolina did fund a program at NC State, and in also doing it, funded an internship which gave me a small sum of money to go to school. I went to N. C. State, got my doctorate and came back and went right back in the same position that I had beforehand. I was Dean of Continuing Education. In 1980, the current Dean of the College that we had decided to do something else, so he resigned and left. I applied for that position. That position does require a doctorate by the way, and I was fortunate in getting it. I went from being the Dean of Continuing Education, which is one division, to being the Dean of the College, which is all of the educational divisions.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How did you become President?

DR. REDD: The trustees did a national search in that year of about 120 applications for the presidency of this institution, all of whom had the doctorate. That was a requirement that the trustees put on the position. They appointed me, by the way, as "acting president" for six months while they did their search.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Now, what year was this?

DR. REDD: This was 1990.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I read about that.

DR. REDD: January of 1990 I became the acting president. And they concluded their search by May and they named me to be the president effective July 1, of 1990. So that's how I came to be in the presidency position. That's a normal track. I will tell you that most of the presidents who are not founding presidents, and the founding presidents

have pretty much retired now, but most of the presidents that have replaced them have come from the position of Dean of the College. That is the senior academic officer in the college. There are two others.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Who is dean now?

DR. REDD: Dr. Brad Sears. I hired Dr. Sears to take my place. He's a vice-president. We now call them vice-president instead of dean. We have a Vice-President of Financial Affairs, and that's Mr. Sutton. He runs the campus security, the bookkeeping, the payroll, all of the support services that keep this place going. He manages the budget. Then I have another vice-president; that's Clifford Swain. He's Vice-President of Student Services and he handles all the student entities; enrollment, registration, records, financial aid, counselling, job placement, just many, many more things. But Dr. Sears is the senior academic officer, so all the teachers, everybody that works in the area of delivering educational services, works for Dr. Sears. They are my three major administrators. Vicky Mosley Jones is Personnel Director. She reports directly to me. Becky Williams is Director of The Foundation, Craven Community College Foundation, and she reports directly to me.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Women in responsible positions.

DR. REDD: Absolutely. We've got quite a few. In fact, we have gotten some very favorable notoriety for our diversity in administrative staff, both from a race standpoint and from a gender standpoint, so I'm real proud of that.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Who appoints your board of trustees?

DR. REDD: They are appointed by three different agencies. There are twelve board members. They each serve four years. They can serve repetitive terms, but the four years are staggered terms. Four of them are appointed by the board of education; four by the county commissioners; and four by the sitting governor of the state.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I didn't realize that. It kind of reaches down.

DR. REDD: Oh yes, very much so. I mean that's the way it was set up originally and it's still that way.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Is that true statewide?

DR. REDD: Yes. We're part of a system that has fifty-eight community colleges. We are about mid-size, by the way, in the state. The largest school is Central Piedmont. It has 30,000 students. The smallest school is Pamlico Community College. It has about 200 students.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I read about the movement to eliminate some of these smaller units.

DR. REDD: Well, what you're talking about is the performance audit, the North Carolina performance audit. The performance audit is absolutely an economic look at the educational aspects of the community college system. Now, by the way, the performance audit looked at all state government, but it also looked at the community college system. To a great degree, a lot of the recommendations of the performance audit go 180 degrees from the original founding philosophy

of the community college system, which was to provide access to education for people that had generally been denied access to education; either from an academic standpoint, from a geographical standpoint, or from a financial standpoint. There probably are more economical ways to run a system, but as you do the more economical things you also pay a price in terms of less access to education. The performance audit does call for the elimination of some of the fifty-eight schools. It also calls for the consolidation of some of those schools and for the regionalization of programs. Personally, from my standpoint, I do not find very much in the performance audit that I would consider to be an educational advantage to the people of North Carolina.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Statewide.

DR. REDD: That's right.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How does Mr. Scott feel about this, Gov. Scott?

DR. REDD: Well, first off, Gov. Scott is recuperating and has been recuperating from by-pass surgery, so he's kind of been out of the picture in the last two months as the audit has become public.

But my understanding from both Gov. Scott's office and from the State Board of Community Colleges, (now, there is another entity, there is a state board and it's one of three boards. It's parallel to the State Board of Education and the University Board of Governors. But this is the State Board of Community Colleges.) the performance audit does recognize that the community college system has historically been

underfunded for the mission that it was to undertake. That, we all obviously agree upon. The state board is realizing that we are in changing times, both economically and politically and that probably the system is going to have to alter some of its basic philosophies in light of reduced revenue. So, they are saying that while they might hate to do it, there are some things that we're probably going to have to do that is going to not necessarily be in the best educational interest but in the interest of providing high quality education that is affordable to the state of North Carolina and to the taxpayers.

I feel the same way. I realize that we always do in life some things that we don't necessarily want to do, but the net result may be more advantageous. There is a price to pay for everything and that's one of the prices we're probably going to have to pay.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: As I understand it, statewide businessmen have some say- so about the kinds of things that they feel need to be done in, say, community colleges, for the work force ten, twenty years down the line.

DR. REDD: Well, historically, the business community has probably had more influence in management of community college system than in any other educational entity. As a matter of fact, probably half of our state board and a good number of my board of trustees are business people, males and females. In fact, I'll also tell you that back in 1971 is when Craven Technical Institute applied for and received permission to become a community college. That was not a hundred percent received by the community. There are a number of business

people who felt like that what we would be doing would be to abandon our basic purpose of providing job training and moving toward an academic ivy covered university concept. People constantly ask me if Craven Community College is going to be a baccalaureate college one day. I don't think that's going to happen. I really don't. I don't see any movement for it.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: And yet it meets a need I think.

DR. REDD: It does.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I mean that side of it.

DR. REDD: For so many years the business community was left out. Except for their need for engineers and doctors they were left out of higher education. When they finally got this thing started, they were very protective of it, and rightfully so. But what really happened nationwide was that the community college movement became comprehensive. One of the things that I tell business people is that they can't look at this with a selfish motive, that we have to look at why this college is here. This college is first and foremost here for the person that walks through the front door. I've got to be morally and ethically straight with the person that walks through the door, to whatever degree we can assist them in bettering their lives. That's our major purpose in life. Now, if we do that and do it well, we will in effect do what the business and industries want in the long run. Business and industry has changed quite frequently. Years ago, business used to say, "Gosh we want more machinist! We want more machinist! Don't put people in cosmetology, we want machinist!" What

business is now saying is that, "We want people that are literate.

We want people that are educated. Give them some introduction to the specific trade, that's fine. But first and foremost, give us people that can think, that can calculate, and can communicate, those three things. And we'll make up the difference on the specifics of the particular trade." For example, take the limited field of machinist.

Just one field. There are probably a dozen industries or businesses in Craven County that use machinist and all of them use them in different ways because they're manufacturing different products, so they use different pieces of machinery. There's no way we can train someone specifically to the nth degree for Bosch for example or for NADAP down at Cherry Point.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: They have to have their own.

DR. REDD: We give them general training and then they go into specialization once they get on the job. That's what industry is looking for now. They want people that can do the three things; communicate, calculate, and think. Those three things.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I was very disappointed when the bond issue did not pass in Craven County. Very disappointed. What do you see happening to our community college here Dr. Redd?

DR. REDD: Let me back up and tell you that the bond issue, while it didn't pass, is not over with by any means. There is no doubt in my mind, and I may be a little prejudice on this, I sometimes let my idealistic way get in the way of my thinking, but there's no doubt in my mind that this college has the potential to play a major role

in the future of Craven County and in the future of its people. To that extent, it's got to have the facilities and the support to make that happen. Nothing comes free. I mean, there's a price to pay for everything today. But it's still the best deal going for the community.

Unfortunately, this bond referendum was run at a time when there was a lot of unrest and we wound up going into the bond issue carrying a lot of others people's baggage.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Yes.

DR. REDD: We paid the price for that. Our board of trustees is committed. We went on our first retreat when I was acting president.

What I tried to do with the board for three days was to get them to really think about the tremendous burden that's put on their shoulders for the future for the next board of trustees, not so much what we're gonna do this year and next year. The thing that I told them was that sometime ten years from now there's probably gonna be another president and another board of trustees who are gonna sit back and try to analyze how bad of shape they're in in terms of meeting the needs, and they're gonna think back to whether this board and this president contributed to their problems or contributed to their solutions. So, we have an obligation. We're gonna try to continue to tell the story, tell the story of the need. It's our job. We can't sit back and just assume people are gonna realize this on their own. There are a lot of pressures out there for public dollar, and so we've got to do our job in telling that story. So, you haven't seen the last of that by any means.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: And the kind of students that you turn out.

DR. REDD: There's two things about students; there's quality and there's numbers. What we try to do is maintain a balance of both.

Our students that transfer to the university system, by documentation, do better than a native university student. They wind up with a higher average. Because of that, we now have all four major universities recruiting hard on our campus. They come to us for the transfer students. The students that are in the trades areas go on the job with a high degree of acceptability. It's very seldom now that I ever get an employer who employs one of our graduates and says, gosh, they couldn't do what we thought they could do. The problem we're running into now is not so much quality, and I'm not saying that quality is not something you always work on by any means, but it's not so much quality, it's quantity. And the reason I say that is, no matter how good the quality of your student body is, if you're not producing them in a quantity that makes an impact on the employment needs of the county, you're really not doing a whole lot. You've got to produce in volume skilled workers. But right now, I think it's less than twenty percent of the students who enter ninth grade graduate from any form of higher education. Well, what about the eighty percent? I mean, what are we gonna do with them? We can't just take eighty percent of the population and corral them into social services or jails. So that's the mission of Craven Community College and any other community college. It's apart and separate from the public schools. It is apart and separate from the university system. They have their mission, and I think for the most part do fine for that, but that's not the

same mission as the community college system. We target people who traditionally, and in the future, lack access to higher education.

We become, in so many cases, not just the best choice, we become the only choice. So many of our students that graduate from this college, have parents who never finished high school. So they are taking a very big step in the social aspect of things. I had a middle age lady last year to approach me during the reception after graduation, and this is a lady that I've seen around the campus for several years but I don't know that I've ever had a conversation with her, (we have 2,400 students now), but I had seen her around. She had some older children but she also had one that was only about that big. She came up to me and I knew I was gonna get a hug, I mean, I could just look at it.

This was a very robust lady. She grabbed me as hard as I've ever been grabbed and wouldn't let go, and you know, after a while it kind of got embarrassing. I thought how am I, with some grace, going to get out of this? Finally, it dawned on me that the reason she wouldn't let go was she was crying. When she did separate, she said, "I want to tell you", bless her heart, she was thanking me for it, but I had nothing to do with that, but she was saying, "for the first time I feel like I can hold my head up amongst other citizens, other people, because I consider myself now an educated person." She came onto this campus four years ago without a high school diploma at the encouragement of her husband. She didn't want to come, she was scared. But she got into the learning lab situation that we have over there, which is kind of like a tutor situation, found out she could learn, got her

high school diploma, got to playing around with some other courses and landed in the teacher associate program and that night was graduating with a two year associate degree, which is equivalent to a junior college degree, and she's going to be a teacher aide next year at Oaks Road Elementary School. She went from not feeling at all good about herself to feeling extremely proud. A person that has that pride can just do anything. That's probably more of our mission than just giving them the ability to do algebra. That is our reason for being without any doubt, and it supercedes the economics of the area, it supercedes the obligation we have to business and industry.

Because these people cannot abandon their families in pursuit of education. We wouldn't want them to. They've got bills to pay. Eighty percent of our students work either full time or part-time and seventy percent of our students have family obligations. Seventy percent.

So, you know, it's extreme in terms of their abilities to do anything other than come to Craven Community College. We go into pre-registration Wednesday. The last time we had pre-registration was just before Thanksgiving. I had to spend the night in the halls out here that night because I slept a 150 people that were lined up for registration the next morning. They started lining up at seven o'clock the night before and spent the night, and it was so cold I let them come inside. And I can't let 150 strangers sleep in the hallways without some security, so there was one security guard and myself that spent the night out here. Since I didn't really have anything to do with registration the next day, after a while I went

home and went back to bed during the next day. By the time we opened up pre-registration, at eight o'clock the next morning, there were 900 people in line. The line stretched all the way to beyond the tennis court. You may not have seen that, but that is a long way.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: There is something about tennis courts in one of our reports.

DR. REDD: And the reason they're doing that is we're not large enough to offer enough sections of any single class and they know that.

I mean, we can't have a class that seats 30 and have a 150 people in it, we have to control that. The way we control it is by the computer, first come first served. We're trying something a little different this registration to eliminate the long, long, long line. But that's the problem that we have in terms of limited facilities. The need is well beyond question. I mean, people that stand in line for twelve hours, they want something mighty bad, you know. You know Jane Ashford?

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Yes. Well, I know Charlie because of the hospital.

DR. REDD: Okay, well, his wife is one of our trustees now. She's also one of our graduates. She got the associate in liberal arts from us and is now working on her master's degree. Chances are pretty good, I think Jane would tell you, that had Craven Community College not been available at that particular time in her life she would not have pursued that. Now, Jane could have afforded to go anywhere.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Of course. Her family.

DR. REDD: In her case it was not economic, it was other

circumstances. Dell Ipock's wife, Cookie, got her two year degree here. I can't tell you how many people who could afford to go anywhere, money is not the object, come here because it is available to them and it fits their lifestyle. Over half our students, by the way, are not full time students. To a great degree, if our students can put education number two in their life, they're doing very good. Because they've got family obligations, they've got children to raise, they've got households to keep up, and they've got bills to pay. So if they can work education into their lives, maybe find some time to take a day course or a night course or maybe even two courses at the time, that may be their only alternative. Most of our students in a two year program take four years to get through.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I think the motivation that they have to come, to me, says something to begin with.

DR. REDD: There's no doubt that this is the most logical, if not the only opportunity they'll have to fit that into their lives.

If I were selling widgets, I'd have more people wanting widgets than I could manufacture, and that's basically what it is. Now, that's a good problem. I can't park the students. That's a good problem, but it is a frustrating problem too. I don't know where it will end.

I don't know that there's any end to it. We have predicted that our enrollment, given the proper facilities, will be 5,000 by the year 2000. As a matter of fact, we're actually moving faster than that prediction. This particular quarter we're finishing up is the largest winter quarter we've ever had. It consistently grows at about three

to seven percent.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Dr. Redd, there was something I was interested in. Do you have scholarships or loan programs?

DR. REDD: Oh yes. Probably about twenty percent of our students draw some form of financial aid. Some of that is federal, some of it's local scholarships, our foundation funds a lot of that, various civic clubs fund a lot of that, private individuals also fund it. We have a number of name scholarships for relatives. People will create a scholarship in the name of their mother, father, whatever. The Pell grant is the biggest one. That's a federal student assistance package that's available to all institutions of higher education.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Is that the one that's having so much trouble with them not paying back?

DR. REDD: No, cause Pell is just an outright grant. What you're talking about is this guaranteed student loan. We also have that. We have very good collection rate, but some of the schools do not.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: We had to do that with our son, pay it back.

DR. REDD: We have a work study program where quite a number of our students get a scholarship. But they have to earn it by working and they work at the minimum wage rate. They work here on the campus and in some cases work for other government entities. We have some that work for the county, some that work for the city. But there are any number of financial packages available to students. Veterans, the VA, the GI Bill. The new GI Bill, we have a lot of students involved

in that. We have a lot of students that are active duty military. The military also gives them financial assistance if they take certain courses. It's quite involved. By the way, the total package on student aid is right about three million dollars a year, so it's no small thing for us.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Dr. Redd, this has been probably the most enlightening interview I've had.

DR. REDD: Well, I appreciate that. I love to live it again.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Of course I'm biased because I so firmly believe in the mission of the community college.

DR. REDD: Well, we do too. We really do.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: And I think it's going to get harder for students to go away to school and for what you're doing, thank you.

DR. REDD: Well, thank you so much. I appreciate your coming. I'm so thankful you gave me this opportunity.

END OF INTERVIEW