

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

DOROTHY RITCHY

INTERVIEW 1003

This is Dr. Joseph Patterson representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. I am interviewing Dorothy Ritchy at her home at 206 King Street, New Bern, North Carolina. The date is May 25, 1992. My number is 1000 and this is interview 1003.

Dr. Patterson: Dorothy, I just want to start this interview telling you that we appreciate you letting us come and get your memories of these important things for us for the story of New Bern. To start with, let me ask you for your full name.

Dorothy Ritchy: Dorothy Elizabeth Ritchy.

Dr. Patterson: Where were you born Dorothy?

Dorothy Ritchy: In Pollocksville.

Dr. Patterson: What year?

Dorothy Ritchy: January 13, 1908.

Dr. Patterson: Had your family lived in Pollocksville a long time?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, I had an aunt and an uncle that lived there. Mother was a nurse and she was working in New Bern. When she had her baby, she had it out on their farm at Pollocksville.

Dr. Patterson: Now, your mother was a nurse. I didn't know that. Where did she work in New Bern?

Dorothy Ritchy: She nursed up at New Bern General.

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember about what year she was there?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, if I was born in 1908, it was around that time.

Dr. Patterson: Now, did you say that you had a baby?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, she had me.

Dr. Patterson: Oh, you were the baby?

Dorothy Ritchy: I was the baby. She had me.

Dr. Patterson: You were born in Pollocksville at home?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, at home.

Dr. Patterson: Who was your doctor then?

Dorothy Ritchy: I couldn't tell you to save my life.

Dr. Patterson: I don't know when Dr. Bender was there.

Dorothy Ritchy: I don't remember who it was. Could it of been Dr. Pollock?

Dr. Patterson: I don't know. I don't know that he practiced in Pollocksville but he might have. What was your father's name?

Dorothy Ritchy: Edward Eugene Ritchy.

Dr. Patterson: What did he do in Pollocksville?

Dorothy Ritchy: He didn't do anything in Pollocksville. He worked in New Bern. Daddy was a bookkeeper for Mohn and Eby. We had a dry cleaning plant in New Bern for a long time. Dr. Joe, I don't remember what he did.

Dr. Patterson: It was called Ritchy's Dry Cleaners?

Dorothy Ritchy: Ritchy's Dry Cleaners, yes.

Dr. Patterson: Where was that located?

Dorothy Ritchy: On Middle Street about where Scott Gas Company is now I think it was.

Dr. Patterson: I remember something about that I think. Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Dorothy Ritchy: A sister is all.

Dr. Patterson: Your only sister is Mildred.

Dorothy Ritchy: Mildred Ritchy Harker.

Dr. Patterson: She's a few years younger than you are?

Dorothy Ritchy: She's six and a half years younger than I am.

Dr. Patterson: Did you grow up in Pollocksville?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, I didn't. I grew up in New Bern.

Dr. Patterson: How old were you when you came to New Bern?

Dorothy Ritchy: We left and went up to Lancaster, Pennsylvania. My daddy was from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Then we went to Louisville, Kentucky and daddy ran a grocery store up there. My sister Mildred was born in Louisville. We came back to New Bern, I think I was about six years old when we came back to New Bern and we stayed here then.

Dr. Patterson: Where did you live when you came to New Bern?

Dorothy Ritchy: We lived on George Street for a while. Then, we lived over, there was a Davis Drug Store where Clark's Drug Store used to be and we lived over that. Annie Kinsey and her mother lived in one side and we lived in the other side. There were two apartments.

Dr. Patterson: Then after that, where did you go?

Dorothy Ritchy: We moved over to the dry cleaning plant. We lived over there. Then when we left there, we bought this house and moved in here.

Dr. Patterson: Now this house, is the one we're in right now?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: And you and Mildred have been living in this house

for a long time?

Dorothy Ritchy: Oh lordy, mercy, yes. I don't remember what year it was, but it's quite a few years because I was still in Baltimore.

I came home in 1945 after the war was over and they had lived here a couple of years then.

Dr. Patterson: Now let's see, you went from Pollocksville to Pennsylvania, is that correct?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: And you spent quite a few years up there?

Dorothy Ritchy: I was six when we came back to New Bern. In fact, we went to Louisville, Kentucky. We travelled around. Now that was mother's home, and we stayed there for a while. Daddy had a grocery business there, then we came down here and he got the dry cleaning business.

Dr. Patterson: And you were six years old when you came to New Bern?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: But then you went back North again?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, we lived here.

Dr. Patterson: You just stayed in New Bern after that?

Dorothy Ritchy: Until I went in training, I stayed in New Bern.

Dr. Patterson: You went to school here in New Bern then?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, I went to school.

Dr. Patterson: You went to school on the school green, the New Bern schools.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: Starting in the first grade and going all the way through high school?

Dorothy Ritchy: Going all the way up, yes.

Dr. Patterson: What do you remember about those years? Do you remember your teachers in the early years?

Dorothy Ritchy: They were good years. I remember the people that were in my classes with me. Mr. Smith was Superintendent.

Dr. Patterson: Mr. Shields was Principal I'll bet.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, he was. Then, I had a Mr. Johnson. What did he teach? He was also one of the coaches of something. I don't remember whether it was baseball or basketball.

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember Miss Molly Heath, first grade teacher?

Dorothy Ritchy: I don't think I had Miss Molly.

Dr. Patterson: Who were some of your early teachers?

Dorothy Ritchy: I don't know.

Dr. Patterson: Louise Bell, does that name sound familiar?

Dorothy Ritchy: She was up there I know, but I don't remember Miss Bell being my teacher.

Dr. Patterson: You had a pretty good time when you were going to school?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, I did. I enjoyed it!

Dr. Patterson: And in high school you were pretty active as a basketball player.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, I played basketball.

Dr. Patterson: All of your high school years?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: Where did you play ball then? Where did you practice and play? Was it the Ghent Casino?

Dorothy Ritchy: It must of been the Ghent because we went all around. We went to Kinston, and Belhaven, and Rocky Mount, and the only people we ever wanted to beat was Kinston. If we lost to Kinston, it broke our hearts!

Dr. Patterson: Did you practice at Stanley Hall?

Dorothy Ritchy: Dr. Joe, I am just as blank about everything. I might as well not have a mind.

Dr. Patterson: No, no, no.

Dorothy Ritchy: But that's was many years ago.

Dr. Patterson: Sure. Who were some of your teammates on that basketball team?

Dorothy Ritchy: Booty Hawk, Annie Kinsey Whitford, Etta Gaskins, they're the only three that I really remember because we played the whole time, I mean we were the team. There were subs, but that's only four isn't it? We had five then.

Dr. Patterson: Were you pretty good?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yeah.

Dr. Patterson: You were quite a star as I recall.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, I was a guard.

Dr. Patterson: What was the game of basketball like then? Was

it just a half court game or did you run up and down the whole floor or just stay on your side of the line?

Dorothy Ritchy: We stayed on our side of the line.

Dr. Patterson: You probably played at the Ghent Casino because that's where most everybody played in those days. Anyhow, you had a great basketball career. After you graduated from high school, then what happened?

Dorothy Ritchy: I went into training.

Dr. Patterson: Where did you study?

Dorothy Ritchy: At Johns Hopkins in Baltimore.

Dr. Patterson: What prompted you to go into nursing?

Dorothy Ritchy: Because my mother was a nurse and I'd always wanted to be a nurse.

Dr. Patterson: You liked it?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: How many years did you stay at Johns Hopkins?

Dorothy Ritchy: I trained for my three years and then I stayed there and did private duty until I went in the Army.

Dr. Patterson: When did you go in the Army, '42?

Dorothy Ritchy: '42, yes.

Dr. Patterson: Did you elect to do that or did they draft you in?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, I elected to do it. I didn't go with the Hopkins' unit because I wanted to get away from the Hopkin's unit. They went out into the Pacific and I went over to the European Theater.



Dr. Patterson: Did you go with a hospital unit?

Dorothy Ritchy: No. I was with the 95th General Hospital.

Dr. Patterson: Where was that originated? Do you remember?

Dorothy Ritchy: We went to Bournemouth. We were in Bournemouth, England.

Dr. Patterson: Was that a University hospital team or was it just a put together hospital?

Dorothy Ritchy: Just a team, a put together team.

Dr. Patterson: Did you stay with that hospital for a long time?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes I did, until I came out.

Dr. Patterson: When did you get out?

Dorothy Ritchy: In '45.

Dr. Patterson: Did you stay in Bournemouth, England the whole time?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, we went over on D-Day.

Dr. Patterson: Where did you go?

Dorothy Ritchy: Outside Paris. We were in tents. We stayed there. We never did get into Germany. We stayed in France, because we went to Paris whenever we could, and we were there when Paris was liberated, and then I came home.

Dr. Patterson: You mentioned D-Day. Is that the D-Day of the Normandy Invasion?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: Did you go in?

Dorothy Ritchy: As soon as they went over, then we went over,

shortly after, to set up a hospital over there.

Dr. Patterson: So, you went over D-Day plus a number of days?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: And you were in a tent hospital?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: I was in a tent hospital too on Okinawa. My hospital was smaller than yours.

Dorothy Ritchy: It wasn't very convenient, was it?

Dr. Patterson: Were you actively in a combat zone then?

Dorothy Ritchy: Very active! When we were in Bournemouth, they were bombing all the time. One night they bombed so close to us it knocked me out of bed but it never did hit the place where we were, but there was a great big hole right beside the place.

Dr. Patterson: Was anybody in your hospital injured?

Dorothy Ritchy: No.

Dr. Patterson: Did you do general nursing duty in the hospital?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: Did you work in the operating rooms at all?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, just nursing.

Dr. Patterson: What do you think of those years? Were they good years for you?

Dorothy Ritchy: They were good years, but they were sad years.

Dr. Patterson: You saw a lot of sad things I'm sure. Are there any particular incidence during those hospital years with the 95th that come to your mind, any unusual things that happened? Do you

remember?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, it was the usual thing. We got the boys in and transferred them and took care of everything.

Dr. Patterson: Does your hospital unit have reunions?

Dorothy Ritchy: I've never been to one. I corresponded with a lot of the nurses that were in my unit but I never went to a reunion.

Dr. Patterson: What was your rank when you got out, Dorothy?

Dorothy Ritchy: I was a Lieutenant because I wanted to go over there. If I had stayed in the states I would have been promoted, but I wanted to go overseas and I didn't get my promotion.

Dr. Patterson: That's sort of strange. That's when you ought to get your promotion.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: When you came home, what did you do?

Dorothy Ritchy: I went down and helped my daddy in the dry cleaning business.

Dr. Patterson: In New Bern?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, in New Bern for a couple of years. I got disgusted and we sold the business and I went into public health.

Dr. Patterson: Did you go somewhere and study then?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, I went in public health in New Bern. I worked in New Bern for a while, and then I worked out of Jacksonville. I commuted back and forth. I did that and then Dr. Oscar Kafer asked me if I would help him with the hospital after he got it built, after he renovated and did everything he was going to do.

Dr. Patterson: This was the Jones house?

Dorothy Ritchy: The Jones house, yes.

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember what year he started that renovation?

Dorothy Ritchy: It opened in '50, let me see. I think it was about '49, I'm not sure.

Dr. Patterson: You go ahead and just tell me about that.

Dorothy Ritchy: I went over there when it was finished. I can't remember exactly, we had ten private rooms on the first floor. There was a men's ward, I think we had six beds in that, there was a woman's ward with four beds, and then on the second floor was a six bed OB room. I don't remember how many private rooms we had up there; then, we had labor and delivery, and the operating room. In the basement was the kitchen, the lab, and the x-ray department, and we had the big office that Eliza Turner was in, she ran that. I can't remember how many nurses I had over there.

Dr. Patterson: You were the chief nurse?

Dorothy Ritchy: I was chief nurse and it took a lot of work and a lot of energy to get that place set up. But it was a nice hospital, it was very nice.

Dr. Patterson: How long after Dr. Kafer started renovating the Jones house was it before the hospital opened? Was it about a year?

Dorothy Ritchy: I think it was about a year because there was quite a bit of work done although he left all of the beautiful woodwork and hardwood floors and all of the beautiful part of it.

Dr. Patterson: Who were some of the nurses on your staff?

Dorothy Ritchy: That's what I can't remember. Isn't that terrible? The only one that I remember is Betty Stallings. I can't remember anything. Oh, Kathleen Edwards and Betty Stallings.

Dr. Patterson: Betty Stallings was a general duty nurse?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, and Kathleen was, but after a while she did go into anesthesia.

Dr. Patterson: Until Kathleen went into anesthesia training, who was giving anesthesia there? Perhaps Kathleen was, using open drop ether.

Dorothy Ritchy: Jessie Coats was, wasn't she?

Dr. Patterson: Jessie Coats worked some too.

Dorothy Ritchy: Jessie was in the lab I know but so was Frances Pittman. But I think Jessie Coats did for a while.

Dr. Patterson: Jessie worked at St. Luke's also.

Dorothy Ritchy: She did? I couldn't remember.

Dr. Patterson: So did Frances, but they may have been on full duty at Kafer after that.

Dorothy Ritchy: They were on duty at Kafer, yes, I know. Then Oscar insisted that Kathleen go off and study anesthesia, and then she came back and she gave the anesthesia except when you gave it to them.

Dr. Patterson: I think I had something to do with Kathleen going off, but I can't remember it too well. There was one operating room is that correct?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, and one delivery room.

Dr. Patterson: Then there was an addition on the back of the hospital, wasn't there? Was that on there from the beginning, the private rooms in the rear of the hospital?

Dorothy Ritchy: Oh no, the private rooms were there in the beginning, when it opened.

Dr. Patterson: That's the annex in the back?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: Who were some of the physicians that you remember?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, the two Pattersons, Dr. Millns, Dr. Grady, Dr. Warren, Ernest Richardson, Charles Duffy.

Dr. Patterson: Of course Dr. Ashford.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, Dr. Ashford. There was a Dr. Geist, and a Dr. Hayes, she was a female, and of course Dr. Kafer.

Dr. Patterson: Tell me about Oscar Kafer. How do you remember Dr. Kafer?

Dorothy Ritchy: He was one of the kindest, the best, the nicest people I've ever known. I enjoyed working for him and with him. He was a wonderful surgeon.

Dr. Patterson: Had you known him before you started working with him?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, but not too well until I started working with him.

Dr. Patterson: Now, he had an accident that affected his leg, didn't he?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, he did. For a long time I think, he was hospitalized.

Dr. Patterson: Was that before the hospital opened that he walked with a limp?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, that was before the hospital opened.

Dr. Patterson: But he was very active in the hospital getting that started of course.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, he was.

Dr. Patterson: What happened about Dr. Kafer?

Dorothy Ritchy: You know what happened.

Dr. Patterson: Well, you may not want to put everything on tape, but he became ill.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, he became ill.

Dr. Patterson: And he passed away. About what year was that, 1951, is that correct?

Dorothy Ritchy: I don't think it was that soon after the hospital opened.

Dr. Patterson: Well, I was called by Emmet Whitehurst to come to New Bern in 1951, I was in Albemarle, because Dr. Kafer had died and left a void in the surgical situation here. So, I think it was 1951.

Dorothy Ritchy: It was '51? I didn't know it was that soon.

Dr. Patterson: If that's the case, then he really wasn't in the hospital a very long time before he passed on.

Dorothy Ritchy: No, he wasn't then.

Dr. Patterson: Was the hospital disrupted pretty much when he died? Did you have a hard time?

Dorothy Ritchy: Quite a bit, yes.

Dr. Patterson: What all happened then?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, we just had to sort of reorganize. Everybody fell apart of course, but we finally did get adjusted, and Helen came over and took over and we went along then and did all right.

But I never did get along with Helen. I mean, I had worked with Oscar so long, and he was so good and so kind, and Helen just wasn't my cup of tea or something, I don't know. We just didn't get along.

Dr. Patterson: Had Helen Kafer been working in the hospital before Oscar died?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, she had not. She hadn't done a thing in the hospital until Oscar died, and then she came over and took charge.

Dr. Patterson: That was a very difficult thing to do.

Dorothy Ritchy: It was a difficult thing to do and she was capable and she did a good job. But there are people you can get along with and people you can't, and Helen and I just didn't get along.

Dr. Patterson: Tell me about Eliza Turner. What was Eliza's job?

Dorothy Ritchy: She was a joy. She did everything. She was the bookkeeper from way back and she did everything in the business way. She had her own office and her own things that she did that she took care of, and she was a very capable person and a very likeable person, everybody liked Eliza. She stayed there until they closed



the hospital.

Dr. Patterson: What year was it closed? In the early Sixties perhaps?

Dorothy Ritchy: I think so, yes.

Dr. Patterson: Why did the hospital close, Dorothy?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, I think really and truly all of the talk about St. Luke's closing and Craven County going to take over and do this and that and the other thing, and they were losing money I think, and Helen just didn't want that.

Dr. Patterson: Didn't the Baptists buy that hospital before it closed?

Dorothy Ritchy: I don't know. You know I left and I don't know what happened after I left.

Dr. Patterson: When did you leave?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, I left and I went over and worked in Dr. Ashford's office for about a year.

Dr. Patterson: You left before it closed?

Dorothy Ritchy: I left before it closed and I worked for Dr. Ashford for about a year. I'm not an office nurse. I didn't like it, so, I left and went up to St. Luke's. I worked up at St. Luke's long before Craven County took over.

Dr. Patterson: I remember that. Getting back to Kafer for a minute, was Frances Pittman the only lab technician at the hospital?

Dorothy Ritchy: There was a time when Jessie Coats worked in the lab.

Dr. Patterson: What was the lab like? Was it in one room?

Dorothy Ritchy: The lab was in one room and the x-ray department was in one room. The kitchen was on one side and the lab and x-ray were on one side.

Dr. Patterson: The laboratory then was a pretty unsophisticated area.

Dorothy Ritchy: I'm afraid it was.

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember what sort of things were done in that lab?

Dorothy Ritchy: The necessities I think. I don't think any special test or anything were done.

Dr. Patterson: The blood sugars and blood counts and urinalysis?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, and things like that.

Dr. Patterson: As I recall, there was one x-ray machine.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, I think so.

Dr. Patterson: And that was run by Frances Pittman also?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, Jimmy Beck was in x-ray.

Dr. Patterson: After you went to St. Luke's, what was your job there?

Dorothy Ritchy: I worked on the second floor.

Dr. Patterson: As Supervisor?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, I guess I was, I don't know. No, I guess I just worked on the floor. I worked the day shift.

Dr. Patterson: You enjoyed your years at Kafer?

Dorothy Ritchy: Very much.

Dr. Patterson: Did you enjoy your years at St. Luke's?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes. The Sisters were very, very good to me. I enjoyed it.

Dr. Patterson: I thought they were too. Did you stay at St. Luke's until it closed?

Dorothy Ritchy: Until it closed, in fact, I helped move it out to the present location.

Dr. Patterson: Did you move out there to the new hospital then?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: What did you do?

Dorothy Ritchy: I moved out to the second floor. I was on the second floor. That was the surgical floor.

Dr. Patterson: How long were you there? When did you stop nursing at the new hospital?

Dorothy Ritchy: Let me think. I wanted to stop when I could retire at sixty-two but Hildred Harrison wouldn't let me. She was going to retire the next year and she made me stay until she retired, so I retired at sixty-three. I'm eighty-four now.

Dr. Patterson: So, you retired at sixty-three or thereabouts?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: And you've done no nursing since that time?

Dorothy Ritchy: No.

Dr. Patterson: You've been living here in luxury and retirement.

Dorothy Ritchy: I've enjoyed my retirement! Mildred and I have done a lot of traveling and we really have enjoyed it. I've enjoyed

my retirement.

Dr. Patterson: You've been through some interesting times in hospitals. You were at Johns Hopkins of course, but then the small private Kafer hospital, and then a step to the larger St. Luke's, then to the much larger Craven County. What was your impressions about the hospitals as you progressed along? Did they get steadily better as far providing care was concerned?

Dorothy Ritchy: They definitely did, yes.

Dr. Patterson: Do you think the patients appreciated this increased care or did they like the smaller hospital?

Dorothy Ritchy: The patients were very happy at Kafer Memorial and they were very happy at St. Luke's.

Dr. Patterson: And they got good care?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, they got good care at both of them.

Dr. Patterson: The medical staff at Kafer, I suppose all moved up to St. Luke's?

Dorothy Ritchy: I think all the doctors that were at Kafer were working at St. Luke's anyway.

Dr. Patterson: Yes, and at Good Shepherd. Do you remember some of the older doctors, Dorothy, like my father, and like Dr. Wadsworth, and Dr. Barker?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, I do not.

Dr. Patterson: You didn't know them at all?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, I never worked with them.

Dr. Patterson: Perhaps the oldest doctor you knew was Dr. Ashford?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, Dr. Ashford.

Dr. Patterson: Now, he was a very prominent physician in town and highly respected and very busy. What do you remember about Dr. Ashford?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, he trained at Hopkins. He was at Hopkins when I was up there.

Dr. Patterson: In training at the same time?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes. And the nurses were crazy about him! I can remember that. They used to talk to me about him 'cause they knew we were both from New Bern.

Dr. Patterson: What did they like about him?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, his good looks! It wasn't that he was a good surgeon, but they liked his looks.

Dr. Patterson: He was a very hard working man.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, he was. He was there and he was here.

Dr. Patterson: Now, you're talking about the Dr. Ashford, Sr.?

Dorothy Ritchy: Sr.

Dr. Patterson: And his son went to Hopkins too.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, Charles Jr. went to Hopkins.

Dr. Patterson: I knew him there when I was in Baltimore. Who all was doing surgery at Kafer Hospital when you were there?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, Dr. Geist did surgery.

Dr. Patterson: You don't know where he is from? I don't remember him.

Dorothy Ritchy: It seems to me he was from Jacksonville, and

I think Dr. Hayes was from Jacksonville.

Dr. Patterson: Also doing surgery?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, she didn't. They didn't live in New Bern, but I think they came up to work. Dr. Geist assisted Dr. Ashford sometime.

Dr. Patterson: So, Dr. Kafer was operating, Dr. Ashford was operating, Dr. Geist, and then Simmons and I came.

Dorothy Ritchy: And Dr. Millns.

Dr. Patterson: And Dr. Willis?

Dorothy Ritchy: Oh, Dr. Willis, yes. I'd forgotten about Dr. Willis.

Dr. Patterson: William Willis. Who were the surgeons at St. Luke's? The same group? Any new ones that came in then?

Dorothy Ritchy: The same ones. I don't know of any new ones, of course, they must of come in because when we moved out to Craven County there were a lot more doctors. The doctors have increased and multiplied, I declare to goodness! At one time I think there were about twenty-five in New Bern, now there are over one hundred.

Dr. Patterson: Yes. I think when I came to New Bern there weren't that many, maybe twelve or fourteen.

Dorothy Ritchy: There weren't many when we opened Kafer Memorial.

Dr. Patterson: What was the emergency room like at Kafer Memorial? Where was it?

Dorothy Ritchy: I'm trying to think. We must of had an emergency room. Dr. Patterson, I don't know.

Dr. Patterson: I can't recall it either but I know it was there.

Dorothy Ritchy: It was there because when my nephew was in that automobile accident, he was in the emergency room and Dr. Simmons (Patterson) took care of him and sent him up to Duke. But where in the world was the emergency room? It wasn't very big.

Dr. Patterson: It was in the basement I think.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, it was in the basement.

Dr. Patterson: Yes. None of the emergency rooms were very big in those days. St. Luke's for a while had one bed stretcher and then two. Did the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals ever visit Kafer Hospital?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: Was the hospital accredited?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, it definitely was.

Dr. Patterson: Can you think back to about how long it was from the time the hospital opened until it was accredited? That's a hard question. I was with the Joint Commission for eleven years and I'm very interested in this. I don't remember any Commission visits at any of the hospitals in town when I was here. I know they went on. Did the JCAH come back more than once to visit Kafer Hospital?

Dorothy Ritchy: I think they came back at least twice as near as I can remember, because lord knows we worked ourselves to death trying to get ready for them, but we were accredited both times.

Dr. Patterson: Well, that's a real plus for the hospital, a small hospital like that. In your many years of nursing, Dorothy, are there

any particular incidences that you remember as particular enjoyable, sad, exciting, special times?

Dorothy Ritchy: No. I've always enjoyed nursing. I love nursing.

Dr. Patterson: So then in your profession, there are always emergencies and catastrophes sometime or another?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, when you work on a surgical floor, when you're working anything surgical, you know that!

Dr. Patterson: When you look back, are you glad you did it? Are you glad you went into nursing?

Dorothy Ritchy: I certainly am. I have never regretted a day of it.

Dr. Patterson: You would do it again?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, I would.

Dr. Patterson: Would you advise young people to go into it today?

Dorothy Ritchy: It's a worthwhile profession and it's satisfying.

Dr. Patterson: Well, let's go onto something else, Dorothy. Do you have any other topics about living in New Bern that you would like to talk about? Do you remember, Dorothy, anything about the traffic on the river as you were growing up in New Bern? Do you remember boats and industry, steam boats on the river?

Dorothy Ritchy: No. I've been reading these things. I don't remember all those things. There was a Ryan that had a pavilion across the river where we went over there and danced. Everybody and all the young people in New Bern went over there to dance. But I don't remember all that boat activity. I remember Mack Lupton's fish market down



there and he was mayor, and Kafer Bakery burning, and the flood of '33, the hurricane, because I was in Baltimore and Mildred was in Washington at Strayer's and we couldn't get home to mother and we were both panicky. I remember that very well!

Dr. Patterson: This place in Bridgeton, Mr. Ryan's, and that's where you went over and danced?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yeah, all the young people.

Dr. Patterson: Across the old bridge and up on Johnson Street?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: You remember the trolley cars?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, I don't remember the trolley cars.

Dr. Patterson: You lived through the hurricanes in the 1950's?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: What do you remember about them?

Dorothy Ritchy: Ione came in our house.

Dr. Patterson: This house?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, up to our knees.

Dr. Patterson: On the first floor, the water was up to your knees?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes. I don't remember which one that was, but I forgot to move my car and it got in my car in the driveway. It ruined my car. I was working at Kafer at the time and Ben Harker, my brother-in-law, came and picked me up and carried me up to the corner because I couldn't get out of the house and of course I had no car to drive in.

Dr. Patterson: So, you walked to the hospital?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: Now, the water was pretty deep on East Front Street about that time.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, it was, definitely.

Dr. Patterson: Billy Hand told me the other day it was getting in on the first floor of his house which is built up very high.

Dorothy Ritchy: That is high. Well, our house is the highest house on King Street. In fact, it got in this house over here, got in that one across the street, got in all those houses.

Dr. Patterson: Did it ruin things on the first floor?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, we put everything up that we could. Some of the things were ruined.

Dr. Patterson: Have churches played a big role in your life in town?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, I'm a Catholic and that little church down there on Middle Street is very dear to me. I want to be buried from that little church. I've already told Monsignor that. If they ever let anybody do anything to it, there are some people in New Bern that'll kill them, I'm sure.

Dr. Patterson: That church was very active in the town life.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, it was, definitely!

Dr. Patterson: What about the new Catholic church out on Country Club Road?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, it's a very beautiful complex, but that church is just so modern. It's a beautiful church, but when you're

used to that little one on Middle Street, of course everybody loves it out there. It is beautiful, the school and everything and when Monsignor finishes out there, it is going to be very nice.

Dr. Patterson: But the little church on Middle Street really was the heart and soul.

Dorothy Ritchy: Of the Catholic religion, yes. The Convent was there and the Rectory was there and the school.

Dr. Patterson: Now, the school building is of course for sale. Does it bother you that that's for sale?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, I don't care anything about that. All I want is that little church.

Dr. Patterson: I don't think anybody will disturb that.

Dorothy Ritchy: Somebody said something about them moving it out to where the other one is. I think it should stay where it is. Of course, it is in the historical district and I think it should stay there.

Dr. Patterson: Yes. Well, Dorothy, as you have lived through New Bern's past, you've seen lots of changes. How do you remember, as far back as you can go, the way things were between whites and blacks in town? How do you remember the black people and the way folks got along when you were growing up?

Dorothy Ritchy: The blacks and the whites got along all right. There wasn't any of this animosity and all this fighting and feuding and carrying on. We weren't afraid of the blacks and the blacks weren't afraid of us.

Dr. Patterson: Do you think in those days that the black people were fairly content?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, I don't know whether they were content or not but they weren't always fussing and fighting.

Dr. Patterson: Did any blacks live in this neighborhood around here?

Dorothy Ritchy? No.

Dr. Patterson: When I grew up on New Street, we had two black families there and it worked out fine. What about the time of integration in the Sixties with the civil rights movement and the Martin Luther King assassination? Do you remember those days? Could you talk about them for a minute? Was there trouble in New Bern during the integration time?

Dorothy Ritchy? I don't remember that there was. I don't know.

Dr. Patterson: When Martin Luther King was assassinated, was there unrest? Do you remember?

Dorothy Ritchy: I don't remember.

Dr. Patterson: How were blacks treated at Kafer Hospital? Did you admit them as patients?

Dorothy Ritchy: I don't think we did.

Dr. Patterson: Good Shepherd was in operation then.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, Good Shepherd was there.

Dr. Patterson: And at St. Luke's, the same thing?

Dorothy Ritchy: I think so.

Dr. Patterson: Before Good Shepherd opened, blacks were taken

care of at St. Luke's. There was a basement ward for them as I remember.

Dorothy Ritchy: I don't remember.

Dr. Patterson: But when you practiced there, there was all whites in both of the hospitals.

Dorothy Ritchy: All whites in both.

Dr. Patterson: What do you think about race relations these days?

Dorothy Ritchy: They are not good!

Dr. Patterson: All right, that's getting a little too close anyhow. You mentioned going across the river and dancing as part of your social life, what other things were of interest to you socially? What all did you all do when you were growing up to have a good time?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, we did that, and Flanner's Beach was very popular when I was growing up. I don't know anybody that goes there now, but we used to. We had parties, birthday parties and things.

Dr. Patterson: You drove to Flanner's Beach of course.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: Did you have cars when you were young? Your own cars?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes. I learned to drive on the early Ford. I backed in the ditch one day, but I learned to drive in that. It was a little two seated Ford thing. But we had cars. I can always remember that daddy had a car, it seems to me. He had an Edsel. Let me see, what else did we have. They stopped making Edsels when?

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember electric cars in New Bern?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, I don't.

Dr. Patterson: There were a few of them around. I want to ask you, Dorothy, about the Depression years. Do you remember them in New Bern, or what it was like here during the Depression?

Dorothy Ritchy: The Depression years I was in Baltimore I think.

Dr. Patterson: So, you just don't recall about it?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: And you were not here at all during the war years, of course you were training.

Dorothy Ritchy: No.

Dr. Patterson: Do you have any particular memories of New Bern the way it used to be long years ago; the wharves and the piers on South Front Street?

Dorothy Ritchy: No. South Front? No, off hand I can't remember too much about it.

Dr. Patterson: When you were nursing at Kafer and St. Luke's, did the physicians all seem to get along pretty well?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, I think they did.

Dr. Patterson: They knew each other and a small community.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: And you think the physicians community as you came along was a pretty good bunch of people?

Dorothy Ritchy: I think they were a pretty good bunch of people. I liked them all.

Dr. Patterson: Did they provide good care?

Dorothy Ritchy: They did provide good care.

Dr. Patterson: How does the care that they provided in those days differ from the care that patients are getting these days from physicians?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, I think they depend too much upon test and x-rays and MRI's and all that. In the early days they depended upon their own good judgment and common sense. Don't you agree?

Dr. Patterson: Yes, I think that's true. What about physician-patient relationships? How did the patients feel toward their doctors then and how did the doctors feel toward their patients?

Dorothy Ritchy: I think they respected each other.

Dr. Patterson: Is there a difference now days?

Dorothy Ritchy: I think patients now sort of doubt the doctors at times and I don't think they did in the old days.

Dr. Patterson: Do you think doctors spent more time with patients?

Dorothy Ritchy: I think they did. They're sort of on the production line now.

Dr. Patterson: Did you do any sailing as you grew up? Sail boats on the river?

Dorothy Ritchy: No. I didn't do much river activity.

Dr. Patterson: Did you do much swimming in the river or any swimming in the river?

Dorothy Ritchy: No.

Dr. Patterson: You lived pretty close to the river a lot of your time.

Dorothy Ritchy: I know I have, but I didn't do much.

Dr. Patterson: You were talking about Jacob's Drug Store.

Dorothy Ritchy: On the corner of Middle and Pollock.

Dr. Patterson: Yes.

Dorothy Ritchy: And my daddy used to fuss and carry on about Jacobs and Mohn and several people in New Bern that wouldn't let industry come to New Bern. They were against anything coming in that would help New Bern, and daddy used to get so mad at them.

Dr. Patterson: Well, Mr. Jacobs had, it was more of a soda shop as I remember it, not a pharmacy.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes, it was a soda shop not a drug store.

Dr. Patterson: What do you remember about Mr. Clark's store, Sam Clark's store?

Dorothy Ritchy: Now, that was a soda shop too, wasn't it?

Dr. Patterson: Yes, and a sort of a general store on the corner of Middle and Broad.

Dorothy Ritchy: Oh, I lived over there.

Dr. Patterson: Yes, you lived above it.

Dorothy Ritchy: They had a little bit of everything in there.

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember Sam Clark or his wife?

Dorothy Ritchy: No, I don't remember him. But it was a big place and they did have everything in it.

Dr. Patterson: Anything else come to your mind?

Dorothy Ritchy: No. The hotels burning down, I remember that.

Dr. Patterson: That's the Gaston Hotel?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.



Dr. Patterson: What do you remember about that fire?

Dorothy Ritchy: Well, I don't remember anything about it, but I know it really and truly ruined everything in that place, and they had beautiful things. That was a beautiful place.

Dr. Patterson: Yes. My mother was in there that night. They carried her down a ladder from the second floor. Do you remember the fire of 1922? The Great Fire?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: What do you remember about that?

Dorothy Ritchy: It was horrible and everybody was scared to death.

Dr. Patterson: Did you go up and see it?

Dorothy Ritchy: Later. I didn't go that night, no, mother would not let me.

Dr. Patterson: What was it like when you went?

Dorothy Ritchy: Oh, it was terrible. Everything up there was completely demolished.

Dr. Patterson: And did you see the tent city later on?

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: You were young then of course.

Dorothy Ritchy: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: There wasn't much you could do to help.

Dorothy Ritchy: No, I was young.

Dr. Patterson: Well, Dorothy, maybe this is all we need to talk about then. You've told me a lot of great things about the hospital and your career. You've had a really great career and I think the

Army things that you did were just wonderful, and they appeal to me because I did the same type of thing on the other side of the world.

Well, let's call this the end of the interview then, Dorothy, and let me thank you for the Memories of New Bern project for letting us come and talk to you. This will be valuable information for us about what you did and about Kafer Hospital and early days in medicine in New Bern.

END OF INTERVIEW