

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

CAROLYN MOORE BLAND

INTERVIEW 204

This is Dorothy Bryan representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 200. I am interviewing Carolyn Moore Bland, interview number 204. This interview is being conducted on October 22, 1992. We are at the home of Carolyn Bland, 1615 Hazel Avenue.

Dorothy Bryan: Carolyn, could you give us something about your personal history, your birth place and your parents, sisters and brothers?

Carolyn Bland: I was born during the Great Depression on August 16, 1930 to Susie Elizabeth Leath and George Azel Moore, Sr. at their home 52 Jones Street, which is now number 305 Jones Street in New Bern. Dr. W. H. Munford attended my mother at my birth. My family continued to live at this address until 1954 when my parents built a new home next door at 303 Jones Street. My father's business, G. A. Moore's Grocery Store, was located at 1008 Pollock Street near Jones and German Street, which was renamed Liberty Street during World War II. I was the third of four children and all of us attended West Street School, later named

F. R. Danyus Elementary School. My oldest sister, Frances Winona, graduated in 1943 completing at that time the required eleven grades.

George Jr. graduated in 1947 completing twelve grades with that extra year being added in 1946. I finished high school in 1948 and Bernice Renee, our youngest sister, in 1951. Frances and I received Bachelor degrees from Livingstone College in Salisbury, North Carolina. George Jr. and Renee graduated from North Carolina College now known as North Carolina Central University in Durham. Our dad had no formal education beyond the public school which went to the eighth grade at the New

Bern Academy (Old Sutton School). My mother graduated from there and attended the high school department of Bennett College for two years.

DB: Your parents are both deceased?

Carolyn Bland: Yes, they are. Dad died in 1956 and Mama in 1974.

DB: And you have a sister that is deceased.

Carolyn Bland: My sister, Frances, died in December of 1990. George resides here in New Bern. He's retired. He's a retired Lt. Colonel with the Air Force. Renee is retired and also lives in Raleigh. I retired in 1987 from the Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina where I was a Supervisory Financial System Analyst, having serving thirty-two years in the federal government.

DB: Would you give me the names of your children, Carolyn?

Carolyn Bland: Tamara Ardelle Bland Vail who lives in New Bern now; Randall Craig Bland who lives in Hampton, Virginia; and James Robinson Bland, Jr. who lives in Los Angeles, California. We also have five grandchildren: Alike Vail and Michael Devon Vail, Jr., who live in New Bern, Shayla Dionne Bland, Jordan Sedale Bland and Carlton O'Shay Bland, live in Hampton, Virginia.

DB: Where did you live in New Bern for the most part as a child growing up?

Carolyn Bland: At 52 Jones Street, which is now 305 Jones Street. This is in the vicinity of Pollock Street and New South Front Street. All of us were born in that house, and as I said earlier, we remained there until my parents built a new house in 1954.

DB: I've seen recently that that section is referred to as the Long Wharf section of New Bern. Was that a part of your neighborhood?

Carolyn Bland: I don't recall that identification with the neighborhood when I was growing up. It was only in recent years that I heard that name assigned to the Jones Street area.

DB: What were some of your activities as a child growing up?

Carolyn Bland: I attended Mrs. Winifred Daves' Kindergarten on Queen Street where the Days Inn Motel stands now. I recall participating in the WPA-sponsored After School and Summer Activities Programs, which were held at the Grand Army of the Republic Hall (as it was called) on Carmer Street near Broad. Mr. Allen Dudley, Mr. Lewis Starkey and Mrs. Sadie McManus Lowe taught us games, first aid, arts, and crafts. I also started taking music there under the same program with Mr. Robert Simmons.

DB: Do you remember any of your early playmates, schoolmates?

Carolyn Bland: Yes. Ada Davis, Halice Hargett, Dorothy and Harriet Vail, and their sister, Carrie Mae Vail. Living right behind us was Sarah, James and George Becton, and next door to us were Calvin and George Latham.

DB: What about some of the things that you played with your friends as a young child?

Carolyn Bland: There were several of those, Dorothy. As I recall, we played hopscotch. We played jacks using bottle caps from my Dad's store. "Take a Giant Step" was a very popular game as was "Hide and Go Seek," and "Little Sally Water." One that we basically originated ourselves was something called the "Jump Board"; wherein, we would place a board, (a lumber board) on two blocks, and with a partner on the other end we would jump up and down, similar to the seesaw.

DB: What about home entertainment? Was there anything other than those things that you did specifically at home?

Carolyn Bland: After we did our homework and during the summer, Dorothy, we listened to the radio: Amos and Andy, Lux Radio Theater, Fibber McGee and Molly, Jack Benny, and of course, we all listened to the World Heavyweight Boxing Championship with Joe Lewis.

DB: No television at that time.

Carolyn Bland: No television. As I recall, the first television in our house was purchased in 1955.

DB: Did you enjoy bicycle riding or anything of that nature?

Carolyn Bland: We did. As we approached our tenth or eleventh birthday, Daddy would buy all of us bicycles. But I remember particularly on Sunday afternoons, the K. R. Jones Company on George Street rented bicycles for twenty-five cents an hour. Although we had our own bikes, we liked to rent the twin bikes, the bikes that had the twin seats, for fifty cents an hour. We'd ride up and down Pembroke Road which is now the Country Club Road area.

DB: What about your school years? Are there any favorite or good memories of school and your teachers?

Carolyn Bland: My First Grade teacher was Miss Eliza Miles now Mrs. Eliza Dudley, who is a member of the Library Board and an Elder at Ebenezer Presbyterian Church. I especially recall her beautiful writing and her sweet smelling cologne. When I was in the Second Grade, I took dance lessons under Miss Winona Johnson. I believe that was her name. My first school operetta was in the Fourth Grade, "Midsummer Night's Dream". I was a fairy. Our teacher, Miss Buchanan, made our

dresses of white crepe paper with wings made of coat hangers covered with cheese cloth. We were so proud. In Seventh Grade, Mrs. Cottie E. O'Hara always ended our school day with a chapter from the Adventures of Sinbad, Ali Babba and the Forty Thieves and other classics. I remember very well Mrs. Janariah Jones in the Eighth Grade who taught us North Carolina and Negro History. She added her own current events and local historical tidbits to her presentations. I remember we had to do a scrapbook on famous Blacks. In high school, Mrs. Carrie Fisher taught us Home Economics; cooking, sewing. In the sewing area, I spent about six months trying to make a blouse. She insisted on my taking out the stitches, and re-stitching, and re-stitching, and re-stitching the collar and sleeves until I got them right. The Home Ec. Department even had a room set up as a living room. We took turns playing hostess and guest. Mrs. Fisher graded us on how we greeted our guest, our small talk conversation, and how we served refreshments. I can recall her scolding us "talkers" with this statement, "An empty wagon makes a lot of noise. You need to read your books." For those who insisted on writing their names on the walls or sidewalks, she said, "Only a fool's name is found in public places." Today when I see personalized licensed plates, I think of her remarks. This may account for the fact that I have never had the slightest interest in displaying such a plate on my car. Mrs. Blanche Rivers taught Literature and English in Twelfth Grade. Thanks to her, we memorized Thanatopsies and the prologue to the Canterbury Tales and all of those good memory things that you hear on TV quiz shows today. She was a stern teacher, but I appreciated her diligence when I went to college.

DB: Who were the principals at the time you attended school?

Carolyn Bland: Mr. J. T. Barber was the principal of the elementary school and Mr. F. R. Danyus was our high school principal.

DB: What were some of the extra-curricular activities of school as you became involved in high school?

Carolyn Bland: I was in the Girl Scouts, Troop 7. As you recall, you and Mrs. Annie Day Smith were our troop leaders. We sponsored plays at Egan Hall (St. Joseph's Catholic Church). I took music lessons first, as I mentioned earlier, under Mr. Robert Simmons, then, Mr. Bud Brown on Third Avenue. At the Eighth Grade level, I took music at the Catholic school under Sister St. Hugh. A high point in the high school years was the spring music concert. I generally got a new gown for this occasion. Fifteen dollars was the limit I could spend on my gowns, which I generally purchased from Coplon-Smith's Store. We were members of the New Homemakers of America. Mrs. Fisher encouraged our participation. We learned how to conduct meetings in a business-like way. We travelled to the district meetings in Goldsboro and Wilmington, and we travelled to the state meetings at North Carolina College in Durham.

DB: Were there any other fond memories of your high school years?

Carolyn Bland: I spent a lot of time at the library. The WPA sponsored our first library which was actually located in a small room in the high school building of West Street School because no public library facilities were available to Blacks at that time. My cousin, Miss Lavina Hobbs, and Mrs. Sadie McManus Lowe were the librarians. I recall my favorite books growing up included The Bobbsey Twins,

the Nancy Drew Mystery series, Little Women, Uncle Tom's Cabin, and Wuthering Heights. Mrs. Lowe really inspired my interest in reading and helped me to select my books. The city later built a library for Blacks farther down on West Street across from Good Shepherd Hospital.

This facility was closed, I believe, in 1973. Mrs. Lowe joined the staff at the New Bern Public Library on Johnson Street.

DB: Did you have any particular illnesses during your childhood?

Carolyn Bland: Other than the usual colds and maybe flu bugs, Dr. Latham performed a tonsillectomy on me at Good Shepherd Hospital when I was nineteen years old. Because I hated milk, I didn't drink the milk and I didn't eat the ice-cream; consequently, I couldn't talk for several days until I realized I had to do that in order to expel the congestion resulting from the gas (anesthesia).

DB: So you drank the milk.

Carolyn Bland: I drank the milk and ate the ice-cream eventually.
(laughter)

DB: What about church and Sunday school when you were a child?

Carolyn Bland: Growing up in Clinton Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church was a lot of fun. My parents were very involved in the activities of our church, the local church as well as the denomination. I remember in Clinton Chapel Church, we had egg hunts and May walks, which were hikes up to Pembroke Road in the vicinity of what is now called Old Towne residential area. We played games and had refreshments. I remember a particular fund raising project consisting of what you might call incremental refreshments called the "Hike." Tickets were sold for ten cents with three stops; that is,

stopping at three different houses for refreshments. At the first stop, we were served those eternal pimento cheese or potted meat sandwiches and tea. The second stop, we were generally offered ice-cream and cake. The last stop, we were served peanuts and candy mints. That was a lot of fun. I sang in the junior choir. We attended the Varick Christian Endeavor Service on Sunday afternoons, Sunday School, and sometimes we even visited the Baptist Young Peoples Union (BYPU), up at St. John Missionary Baptist Church, with some of our neighbors. Returning to New Bern in 1957, I started the Wesleyan Choir for young people at Clinton Chapel Church and continued to direct that for about fifteen years.

DB: I know that you are very involved even as an adult in church. Are there any other activities that you participate in at your church as an adult now beside that choir?

Carolyn Bland: Yes. When our church, Clinton Chapel AME Zion Church, celebrated its Centennial in 1982, I was the chairperson of that project. I have been involved with the Women's Day Planning and Steering Committee and the Hospitality Committee. I've been involved with acquiring memorial gifts from families for our church. I served as organist and fill in now when I'm needed. Recently when we had our first Zodiac Dinner Theater, I was involved in the planning of that and the decorations for that project.

DB: Do you recall when that church was rebuilt?

Carolyn Bland: It was rebuilt in 1966, I think it was started in 1964. We had the formal entrance in 1966. The church is located at 1015 Church Street. That street was called Crooked Street and later

at the request of our church trustees, the city changed the name to Church Street. At the time of the formal church opening, I chaired the Finance Committee for that project.

DB: It's a very pretty church.

Carolyn Bland: Thank you.

DB: Going back to your childhood memories, do you have an event that's most memorable in your childhood, or maybe two or three that stand out?

Carolyn Bland: Well, I remember my Dad had an old 1927 or '28 Studebaker that didn't run but was parked behind his grocery store on Pollock Street. The car resembled a touring car with the open top.

We often played in this monstrosity which had a large steering wheel and green tires. My Dad later bought a new 1934 gray Plymouth. On Sunday afternoons, we visited friends in Pollocksville, Dover, or just rode "around the belt." The "belt" circled George Street, Oaks Road (which was called Sunnyside at the time) Glenburnie Road and Broad Street. Daddy also took us to the WPA Conservation Camp, Camp Patterson, which is located in the area now known as Havelock. My brother, George, drove that Plymouth to school through his senior year in 1947 when an accident claimed this beloved family treasure. I also remember when the circus came to New Bern. That was another exciting time. Daddy always got passes for us from the distribution of posters.

I recall the parade of clowns and animals in their cages and music down Pollock Street. The circuses were usually held in the Ghent area, the vicinity of Pollock and I think it was called Ft. Totten and First Street. Back in 1942 or '43, the North Carolina State Convention of

Elks met in New Bern. I remember their parade down Pollock Street, because during those days most parades travelled down Pollock Street.

The floats and marching units were dazzling in their purple and white colors. Local children were invited to participate in a bicycle motorcade. I remember we spent hours helping my brother decorate his bike in purple and white crepe paper. One other thing we had growing up in our church was Tom Thumb weddings. Our dresses were made out of crepe paper in the rainbow colors and we marched down the aisles with the little boys whose suits were made in black and white crepe paper. We had a lot of fun, but the bride and groom always cried when they had to kiss each other. (laughter)

DB: That's imaginable as a child. Now, did the crepe paper last through the program? That was a very popular fabric, or whatever, for making costumes.

Carolyn Bland: If we didn't move about too much. I do remember dresses being ripped from the waist because we stepped on them or somebody spilled water on it and it streamed down. I'm glad we replaced that fabric.

DB: That was usually part of it. You spoke about the waterfront earlier. This was a part of your childhood memories I believe.

Carolyn Bland: Although we lived on Jones Street; Jones Street is a very short street consisting of three blocks and we lived approximately two blocks from Trent River, we were never allowed down in that area because it was dangerous. On Sunday afternoons, we often walked down to the waterfront, the Neuse waterfront that was, to see the Coast Guard ships and other boats go by. We had a lot of fun running

up and down and playing there.

DB: Were there other places of interest that you remember as a child growing up in New Bern?

Carolyn Bland: Another significant activity for us was going to the movies on Friday at the Palace Theater on Broad Street. The admission was ten cents with a wrapper from B.C. or Stanback headache powders, as they were called in those days. My dad would open the packs, give us the wrappers, and sell the individual dosages to his customers for five cents each. As I recall, people used a lot of headache medicines at that time. The powders were more popular than aspirins which were sold in tins. I've often wondered if they were suffering from high blood pressure or hypertension, as it is called now, and didn't know it. I also recall standing in line at the Palace Theater to see Gone With The Wind and Cabin in the Sky with Lena Horne. Those were two very popular movies.

DB: You lived in the vicinity of the fish pond at McCarthy Square. Do you remember it?

Carolyn Bland: Yes. Sunday afternoons, everybody loved the fish pond at Queen and Pollock Streets. How we loved to gaze at the beautiful, colorful goldfish there on Sunday afternoons. We all were sorry when the city tore that down because it had become a traffic hazard.

DB: Who are some of the people that you remember as a young child? Some probably may have influenced your life or given you words of wisdom.

Carolyn Bland: Well, as I said earlier, my parents were very

much involved in the activities of our church on the local level as well as the denomination. My dad was the first President of the National Convention on Christian Education; Treasurer of the North Carolina Conference for twenty-two years, and delegate to the quadrennial general conferences from 1916 until his death in 1956. He was a past State President of the Elks; the IBPOEW, that is Improved Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks of the World. In the Masonic Order, Prince Hall Affiliate, he served as Treasurer of the North Carolina Grand Lodge for twenty-eight years. He was a Shriner and a Thirty-third degree Mason. He and my mom were both involved with the Eastern Star on the local and state levels. Due to their many affiliations, along with the fact that no hotel accommodations were available for Blacks in New Bern, our home became, I suppose you could say, the unofficial guest house for many affluent black dignitaries. I recall Dr. J. Findley Wilson, the Grand Exalted Ruler of the Elks from Philadelphia, Dr. James Eichelberger from Chicago, numerous AME Zion bishops, Bishop and Mrs. Woods who were from Indianapolis, Bishop and Mrs. Brown from Brooklyn, and Bishop and Mrs. Kyle from Washington, D.C. These persons stayed at our home. Because we only had a three bedroom house, we had to bunk up when company came. This was always an exciting time for us because visitors meant special foods, special desserts, and little gifts for all of us. The wives, I remember, always wore beautiful clothes, furs, and nice fragrances. I recall the men smoking pipes and cigars of rich aromas and they all drove big expensive cars, the Cadillacs, the Buicks, etc. When Mama and Daddy had company, she always called us out to perform for the guests. I played the piano. George,

Jr. played the clarinet. Francis, who took music for years but never retained a note, usually got off reciting a poem, and Renee, the youngest, sang a song she learned in church or at school. We all hated those times. It was only in later years that we developed an appreciation for our parent's efforts in rearing us. I particularly remember Bishop and Mrs. James Brown were also assigned to Liberia, West Africa and they shared slides, many souvenirs of their adventures, and their missionary experiences over there. I remember also when the all female orchestra, known as the "Sweethearts of Rhythm," came to New Bern. Some of them stayed at our home. I think my Aunt Ethel was a friend to one of the ladies in the group. Members of the Walter Burns Orchestra also stayed with us. Ella Fitzgerald, who later became famous for her song "A Tisket, a Tasket", sang with this group. I don't think she was with them when they came to New Bern. During the summers, we looked forward to the medicine shows with Dr. Edwards from Kinston. These shows took place on an empty lot near Pollock and First Streets. The participants told jokes, danced, and sang to the stand-up audience because no seats were available. We all had to stand while Dr. Edwards peddled his liniment and cough syrup. After the show left, we'd have our own version of the side show. My brother and his friends would build a tent using burlap bags from Dad's store held together with nails. The benches were made of borrowed lumber boards supported by Nehi (brand) soda bottle crates also from Dad's store. We had our own little band with tin cans and wash boards. The first rain that came along afterwards generally washed it away.

DB: I heard you say earlier that you travelled with your father

on many occasions to meetings. Is this correct?

Carolyn Bland: Yes. Dad would always take us to the Sunday School Conventions and the Annual Conferences of the AME Zion Church. We were sometimes the delegates representing the Youth Department of our church. Mama travelled with him to Brooklyn for the Sequi Centennial Observerance of the AME Zion Church. I think that was in 1946. As a child, because I played the piano, I was often asked to serve as organist at the Sunday School Convention. In fact, I continued to do this until I was almost out of college. I never received any compensation for my services, although I heard expenditures read out in the financial reports for the convention organist. When I asked my Dad about this, he said that he kept the money because, after all he was taking care of me and had transported me there. Of course, that didn't go over too well with me. I also remember that I did a lot of his clerical work when I learned how to type. I would send out his notices to the Sunday Schools, various churches, to the Masonic lodges; the Elks lodges or what have you, and type his minutes for him. One thing in particular I remember, he was the first president of the New Bern Civic League. Now, the Civic League was an organization similar to the Voter League today. They raised money and constructed the shell of the first recreation facility for Blacks which was Cedar Street Center. Daddy maintained the chart of the pledges. It was my job to assist him in up-dating the chart after the monthly meeting of the Civic League. Blue stars were for twenty-five dollar donations; silver stars, fifty dollars; and gold stars, one hundred dollars or more. The league later turned the building over to the city for

completion. After the Stanley White Recreation Center was built, the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity leased that building and they still use it today for programs and community projects.

DB: That's very interesting. I could not remember this information.

Carolyn Bland: Also in travelling, Dorothy, in 1934, I remember my Mom took all four of us to New York. We travelled by train and boat. At age four, I was excited to ride the subway and see the tall buildings. Most of all, I was very fascinated by the vending machines that sold one cent gumballs and pistachio nuts. After my mother died, going through some of her papers, I came across a letter in which my father sent her twelve dollars and fifty cents for the return trip home, reminding her that Frances, our oldest sister, was to ride at half fare and the others of us free. So, I suppose that's how we could afford to go in 1934.

DB: So, that meant that her ticket was approximately eight dollars and Frances was about four. Now, you spoke about going by train and boat. Was that the Cape Charles Ferry that you rode?

Carolyn Bland: I believe it was. I remember it being a very lavishly decorated boat with the red velvet upholstery. We always wanted to run to the deck to look out. My mother held my baby sister, Renee who was about a year old at the time, and she would always caution us not to get too close to the edge of the boat. I remember that and the sound of the ship's horn as it pulled into the dock, and riding the train again when we got to New York.

DB: Who were some of the other interesting people that you can

remember? I think your father's store was sort of a gathering place for people. Can you remember others?

Carolyn Bland: It was. I don't know why it was, but it was a favorite meeting place for the local politicians, the ministers, the teachers, and Mr. B. S. Rivers, the funeral director. I remember Mr. W. T. Lewis, Mr. W. C. Redding, who were insurance agents for Winston Mutual and North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Companies, always stopped by. Mr. Danyus, the principal of the school, the Masonic officers, the Elks, everybody came by to discuss every subject imaginable over a bottle of pop and a package of nabs, as the cheese crackers were called in those days. Lawyer Raphael O'Hara lived across the street from us and he often stopped in after work to share historical tidbits with us. He used to quiz us about Negro history. I think his father or grandfather represented the state of South Carolina in the congress during the reconstruction years. Their home, which was on the corner of Pollock and Liberty Streets, was sold by Mrs. O'Hara to the New Bern Historical District and relocated down on East Front Street near the waterfront.

DB: I have heard my father say that that house was made entirely of pegs, no nails. Had you heard that?

Carolyn Bland: No, but I remember the exterior clap boards probably would lend truth to that. I remember they were one of the few Blacks in New Bern who had a maid.

DB: Of course, he still has grandchildren.

Carolyn Bland: They had two daughters; Ruby and Jean. Ruby lives in Raleigh and Jean lives in Statesville.

DB: I was thinking in terms of Raphael himself. That would have been his grandchildren.

Carolyn Bland: Oh yes, the congressman.

DB: Is there anything else that you would like to talk about under Town Life that we have not covered? If not, then we can move on to some of the other topics. I think you have already covered the library. That was one that you had checked, so we can forget that.

But we can go back to the Black community and civil rights. There were some things you said you would like to say about that.

Carolyn Bland: Yes. During the civil rights movement of the sixties, I recall the boycotts, the boycott of the Kress Five & Dime Store downtown because that was part of a national chain. I recall the marches down Broad Street. I remember the visit of Rev. Ralph Abernathy an associate of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who visited St. Peter's AME Zion Church. This is where I first heard the song "We Shall Overcome." The day that Dr. King was assassinated in April of 1968, I was rehearsing the Wesleyan Youth Choir at Clinton Chapel, our church. Someone came in and told us that Dr. King had been assassinated. We said a prayer and I rehearsed the choir in singing "Precious Lord, Take My Hand." We sang that song the following Sunday morning as a tribute to him. My husband was in the Marine Corps at Cherry Point and I was employed there, I believe with the Supply Directory. Both of us took leave from our jobs to watch Dr. King's funeral on television at the home of a Marine co-worker who lived in Havelock.

DB: Is there anything else that you can recall?

Carolyn Bland: Along the line of, I suppose here, integration, when I became employed at Cherry Point in 1956, there were very few Blacks in clerical and administrative positions. It was obvious from two bathrooms side by side (two ladies' bathrooms, two men's bathrooms), that signs had at one time been up, but they were taken down, the "colored" and "white" bathroom signs had been taken down.

While at Cherry Point, I served as an Equal Employment Opportunity Counselor and I chaired the Air Station's Equal Employment Opportunity Committee. Upon my retirement as a Supervisory Financial System Analyst in 1987, that had changed quite a bit with an increase in the number of minorities and women. I personally believe it was through the efforts of Dr. King and the civil rights movement of the sixties that America became more aware of the rights of other minorities: blacks, women, and the Indians. The term "Hispanic" came into being then. The people in general became aware of the fact that this had been a white male dominated society. Indians became aware of their rightful place in the history of our country.

DB: How do you think that the military bases at Cherry Point and LeJeune affected our local economy? Especially Cherry Point, that's in our county.

Carolyn Bland: They had a significant impact on our economy because those were the first places where people could earn decent salaries, unless, they were in the professions of lawyers, doctors, or teachers. When the base was opened, I remember the influx of people; military (Marine)s, and civilians (who came to work at the base) in New Bern. Housing was so scarce that anybody who had the smallest

room could rent it and receive a fortune because people had to have somewhere to live. Talking about Cherry Point, I remember prior to World War II, school children were asked to collect scrap iron and metal. We took it to school and it was placed in the yard of our West Street School. It was piled high looking almost like a pyramid. I recall my father taking us to Morehead City to see the big ship loaded with the scrap iron headed for Japan. It was said later on that this iron and metal were returned to us in the form of bullets during World War II. I remember visiting Cherry Point with the Girl Scouts. Mrs. Smith and you, who were our troop leaders, transported us there in your cars. Once we got to the base, we boarded open buses (which they called cattle cars at that) time outside of the gate. We were taken on a tour of the base. We saw German POWs (prisoners of War) on their black and white striped uniforms, raking the ground, attended by military guards. It was said that these POWs were taken from a German Submarine that was found off the coast of Morehead City and Beaufort.

We visited a large auditorium. The Black Girl Scouts sat on one side and the White Girl Scouts and their leaders on the other side. We were greeted by some high ranking officer and then we were taken to separate cafeterias for our meals. This was probably in 1944 or 1945.

During the war, I also recall the ration books for food, gas, and shoes. My Mom and Dad had to go to West Street School to sign up for these books. We never had a problem with food because my father had a grocery store and we were able to get everything we needed. However, during the war, I recall all of our neighbors, as well as ourselves, grew victory gardens to assist in making food available for everyone.

I recall the black-outs. We had to have black shades at the windows. The siren would blow and everybody had to get in off the street. I've often wondered since that time, as an adult, had there been a bomb dropped, where would we have gone. As I recall, there were no air raid shelters in New Bern, or certainly not any for Blacks as I remember. I also recall that for a solid week planes were flown constantly over New Bern going to Cherry Point. It was an exciting time for us. We used to stand in the street looking up, looking up and looking up because we had never seen anything like that. I remember one day when a Dirigible flew over New Bern onroute to Cherry Point.

This large air ship was almost as beautiful as the one we heard about that blew up in New Jersey later on. Communication at that time was mostly by Western Union telegram. My dad had the only phone in his grocery store in our neighborhood. When the Western Union messenger boy arrived on his bicycle, all community activity came to a screeching halt because relatives were usually notified of emergencies by telephone. I remember, if a red star was on the outside of the envelope, it usually meant a death notice. I recall my Sister, Frances, attending the dances for Black Marines in Jacksonville. At that time it was called Monford Point. It's called Camp Johnson now. The USO sent buses to Craven Terrace Recreation Center. Mrs. Pearlie Martin usually coordinated and chaperoned this event. Our parents would not allow us to socialize with Marines until we finished high school. Frances was a student at Livingstone College when she participated in the dances.

DB: Did she ever attend those at Cherry Point? They were held

sometimes at Cherry Point.

Carolyn Bland: She may have. As I remember, the Black MP Station was located in Craven Terrace and that's where the buses left from.

I don't know if the buses ever went to Cherry Point, if she attended the ones at Cherry Point or just the ones at Camp LeJeune.

DB: Having finished at that time, I would attend those at Cherry Point. At the time I attended, Miss Rhone was the person that would get about twenty young women.

Carolyn Bland: Charlotte Rhone?

DB: Yes. Was there anything else that you would like to cover on this issue of World War II that you have not covered?

Carolyn Bland: I believe that's all. I'm going back to my early childhood. I remember my father was a partner in a bakery located in Five Points. My brother said that it was named Peerless Baking Company. He was in business with Mr. John Robinson, the father of Johnny Robinson who now lives on Lincoln Street, and Mr. Ambrose Hargett. Dad was also a partner in Faison's Beach (down in Oriental) along with Mr. B. S. Rivers, Mr. Frank Pollock and the owner of the beach, Mr. Marshall Faison. That beach is where we would have our Sunday School picnics every August. We rode to the beach at that time in an open truck usually driven by, if I remember correctly, Raymond Goldman. I think they had a scrap iron business.

DB: Aren't they still in existence?

Carolyn Bland: Maybe they are. But this was the truck the Sunday School rented until we eventually moved up to riding on a bus. It was always a lot of fun. We didn't realize how poor we were, really,

riding down those unpaved country roads, fighting the mosquitos and the jelly fish in the water out there. But we had a lot of fun during those days.

DB: Was there anything else that we have not covered that you wish to cover under any of these topics? We have covered several topics other than town life.

Carolyn Bland: I believe that's it.

DB: Would you please give me under your personal history the full name of your husband?

Carolyn Bland: James Robinson Bland.

DB: I asked about all of the grandchildren and the children and somehow that slipped me.

Carolyn Bland: He's a native of Louisville, Kentucky. I met him when he was stationed with the Marine Corps at Cherry Point. He is now a retired Marine. He worked as a Planner with the Community Action Agency here in New Bern until it was closed in the late seventies.

Then, he was employed with the Personnel Department at Cherry Point as a Personnel Specialist until his retirement in 1990. He is now Treasurer of Clinton Chapel AME Zion Church.

DB: I would certainly like to thank you. It's been very pleasant for having us in and getting this information. You've helped us a lot.

Carolyn Bland: It's been a pleasant experience. There are a number of things I will probably think of later on, but I think I got everything. Oh! We didn't talk about people coming in. I jotted that down. When I was growing up, my Dad had a grocery store and

frequently the farmers would come to town bringing their chickens, vegetables and hams on their wagons. I remember my Dad would buy a chicken and put it in a bag, I guess a burlap bag. I hated that I had to be the one to take that home because I was afraid of the chicken pecking me. Frozen chickens were never heard of in those days. My mother would kill the chicken by putting it on the ground and a stick over its head, and snapping its head off or either wringing its neck off. Then, she would put it in hot water and we had to clean it. Right now, I can still smell the odor that came from those feathers and gutting the chicken. All of that just to get probably six or eight pieces of chicken! But everything was made from scratch in those days.

DB: That's right. It certainly was. Well, let me thank you again for letting us come in.

Carolyn Bland: Okay.

(Mrs. Bland's mother, Susie Elizabeth Leath Moore, was a charter member of the Climbers' Club, serving as Treasurer for 25 years. She was also instrumental in the chartering of the W. W. Lawrence Assembly, Order of the Golden Circle in New Bern)

END OF INTERVIEW

ADDENDUM: My sister, Frances Winona Moore, was instrumental in the chartering of the New Bern Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., serving as its first president from 1953-1954. I served two terms as the Chapter President in 1961-63 and 1979-1981.

A Past President of the Board of Directors, Eastern Area Sickle Cell Association, my membership on that Board covered the years 1982-1991.

I am currently a volunteer and member of the Coastal Women's Shelter Board, represent Craven County on the Cherry Hospital (Goldsboro, North

Carolina) Human Rights Committee, and am Membership Committee Chair of the West Street/J.T. Barber High School Alumni Association. I served on the New Bern Police Civil Service Board from 1990-1992. I am Associate Matron, Queen Esther Chapter #7, Order of the Eastern Star and a member of the W. W. Lawrence Assembly, Order of the Golden Circle.