

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

MARGARET BUNTING WYLIE

INTERVIEW 404

This is Marea Kafer Foster representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 400. I am interviewing Margaret Elizabeth Bunting Wylie, interview number 404. We are in Mrs. Wylie's home, 1608 Lucerne Way in New Bern. Today is Monday, the 10th of February, 1992.

Marea Foster: Betty, if you will give me your family history, your birth date, where you were born, your parents names, sisters names, and the house that you lived in.

Mrs. Wylie: I was born at 123 Broad Street on the 12th of February, 1925. My parents were called Carl Frank Bunting and Gladys Willis Bunting. I was born in the house that my mother was born in and was delivered by Dr. Gibbs who lived here in New Bern at the time. I have an older sister, Virginia. She's Mrs. John Hughes Pollock now and lives in Trenton, North Carolina. I have a younger sister, Caroline Frances Bunting who is married to William J. Schrier. They live in Hendersonville, North Carolina. My mother's people were from eastern North Carolina from the eighteenth century on both sides; her mother and her father. My father's people came down from Delaware in the late 1880's to establish sawmills in Oriental in Pamlico County. They then moved to New Bern in 1913. My father was born in Oriental and his sister, Margaret, was born there. His younger brother, E. H. Bunting, known as "Speed" Bunting, was born on East Front Street where the family bought a house. It was in the last two blocks of East Front Street on the water side. There was a mill in back of the house. There were so many mills on the river at that time. That was our chief

economy in the late 19th century. Our house was a large white victorian house. It is now gone. It burned in the 1950's. My parents had sold it and moved to the Country Club area and built their dream house. My father only lived in the house three months after it was finished. My mother lived there for about twenty years. The people I remember in my neighborhood were next door, Dr. C. S. Barker and his wife, Mrs. Ruth Barker. Next to them were the John R. Taylor's. I had no girls to play with. I had Jack Taylor and Charles Barker and my two sisters and the Nelsons across the street. (laughter) The people in the area that I remember; of course, Joe Patterson wrote a poem about Buddy, the black man who was downtown so often.

MF: Betty, before you continue, do you remember the mills that were in New Bern?

Mrs. Wylie: Yes. My grandfather's mills, and later my father's and his brother, Speed Bunting, were in Bridgeton. They had established the North Carolina Veneer Company that was on the railroad siding just as you crossed the railroad bridge getting into Bridgeton, and the Bridgeton Lumber Company. The condominiums in Bridgeton are built on the site of the Bridgeton Lumber Company now. At my father's death, my mother continued to run the company and then later on, sold it to one of the larger paper company's. She was no longer able to look after it for health reasons.

MF: Do you remember any other mills?

Mrs. Wylie: Oh yes. I remember all of them. I remember the Horner Veneer Company and I remember the Roper Lumber Company out near

Maola and then there was one on the other side of the Trent river where they're establishing that new housing area. On the right hand side of the present bridge, there was a mill there. There are large pilings there that they will probably remove when they open this new development. There were mills dotted all around the whole county.

The Blades' were very much involved in mills. In fact, my father and Mr. Vernon Blades were in business off and on at times in the lumber business. They were everywhere. And of course that brought on all of the accompanying industries that had to run the mills; all of the iron works and the different things that you have to have to run the mills. My grandfather Willis was in the mill supply business. That was his work. The building that was just torn down on Tryon Palace Drive, South Front Street (which I love to call it because that's what it is. I never can get ready for Tryon Palace Drive. Maybe someday they'll rename South Front Street) the building they just tore down, Joe Alcoke's car business, was a mill supply store right there. I remember that as a child. Then the building next to it, my uncle, Arthur Rexford Willis, built that building for one of the first car dealers in New Bern. He sold the Essex and some of the very early cars. I can remember my mother had an Essex. My daddy gave it to her when she had her third baby, my sister Caroline. It was a 1928.

The Essex's doors opened from the front - back. It was a little black, two door car. I remember that very well. Of course I remember all the beautiful homes all up and down Broad Street that have been torn down. The lovely Jones home and the Queen Anne Hotel and especially

the ones up around the bus station area. There were some lovely eighteenth century homes along there. When they widened the streets, they cut down all the beautiful oak trees that entwined in the middle. Then of course, we had a lovely hand laid brick street.

MF: Excuse me Betty. Was that brick street on Broad Street?

Mrs. Wylie: Yes, Broad.

MF: I know it was brick on Johnson Street.

Mrs. Wylie: Oh yes. Most of the streets were brick. I remember when a lot of the streets were brick. I remember when the streets were covered with asphalt. That was a mixed blessing because we loved skating on the asphalt at night. On Friday nights we would all get together. The girls would get together and skate on these wonderful smooth streets that we had never had before, and of course there was no traffic in those days. Then at nine o'clock we'd all be hovering around Centenary Church side door when the Troop 13 boys got out of scout meeting. (laughter) We would be ready to meet with them at that time. We were just 11, 12 years old in those days. We would all go to Davis Drug Store after that and have refreshments over there.

MF: Now which girls are you talking about?

Mrs. Wylie: This was my crowd. This was Betsy Bowman, Frances Jones, Miriam Hill whose father started Hill's clothing store, Virginia Hamilton whose father had Hamilton's Cafe and wonderful seafood. He was by the bridge that was torn down when they built Tryon Palace. We had a large group. We had Eugenia Paaffe whose father had the restaurant right downtown across from Christ Church.

MF: And then he had one next to my daddy's bakery on Broad Street.

Mrs. Wylie: He had several locations. He and Mrs. Paffe ran the restaurant. We had thirteen girls in our crowd, so when we walked down the street, everyone else would have to move over. (laughter)

Of course no one had cars in those days. I was one of the first ones in my crowd to become sixteen years old. William Ward would get his father to come and get me and he'd drive me down to his house and I would drive his famous old convertible touring car. A wonderful piece of machinery. We would drive all over town. We could get fifteen people in that touring car with the top down. We would have wonderful times doing that. Then, he would have to sneak me home because he didn't want to disturb his daddy to bring me back home, and then he would go down the side streets getting back home so the police couldn't find him before he was sixteen, getting his license. (laughter) But we had wonderful times. Young people say there's nothing to do in New Bern today. I never remember being bored or not having something to do in New Bern in those days. We had our sports events through the schools. We played football out at what is now just behind the police station, Kafer Park. Then we had basketball. I played on the girl's basketball team for New Bern High one year. I didn't really like it but since my daddy had played for Duke in 1915-16, I felt I just had to do it since he had no sons. I really didn't like all that rough and tumble. We played at Stanly Hall. This is across from the city hall.

MF: You played basketball up there?

Mrs. Wylie: Surely did. We had dances at Stanly Hall too. You entered from the side on Craven Street and went up this long steps.

It was just a large open area with a nice floor and a big area that New Bern used for years and years and years from the time it was built for that sort of thing, large gatherings.

MF: What grade were you in when you played basketball?

Mrs. Wylie: I must have been a sophomore in New Bern High which would be the ninth grade.

MF: There were twelve grades.

Mrs. Wylie: No. Eleven. We had eleven grades and eight months of school. This was back during the Depression and the county couldn't supplement the teacher's salaries. We had a very scant education but we thought a good one. I went to Woman's College, of course now UNCG.

In competing with those northern girls who'd had twelve grades and nine and ten months of school, we little New Bern girls really had to struggle. It was very tough on us. But we thought we had wonderful teachers here. I loved everyone of my teachers.

MF: Can you remember your teachers, Betty?

Mrs. Wylie: Oh yes, I do! I started in the first grade in the building that is now Emily Henson's house location. That was a big brick building there. The entire school was Central School but each building had a different name. I went one through four in that building.

I had Miss Molly Heath, Miss Lizzie Hancock for the second, and Miss Ruth Berry. These were all the wonderful, dedicated teachers. None of them were married. Miss Louise Bell, I had her. You know Louise

Bell lunch room was named for her. She was a wonderful teacher. She lived in the house that Kay Williams lives in now. Then we moved over to what is now the Academy and we had our fifth and sixth grades there. I had Mrs. Charles Turner in the fifth grade.

MF: I had her!

Mrs. Wylie: We loved her! She told us if we were very good, and we were, she would read us the story of an opera every afternoon. Just about everyone in her class has learned to appreciate opera from her doing this nice thing for us in the afternoons.

MF: That's wonderful!

Mrs. Wylie: Then we would be walked up to her house which was just a block away on Hancock Street next to the Gulf Station. She had a beautiful home. She would play her baby grand piano for us to all sing, and we just thought that was wonderful! We had a wonderful year that year.

MF: Well, Betty, she never did anything like that for us when I had her.

Mrs. Wylie: She didn't? You must have been bad to teach students then because we were such good ones and she rewarded us. (laughter)

One of the things I remember about her house were these gorgeous silk draperies. They came down to the floor and fanned out on the bottom on the floor. She had no children, no dogs, no cats, and the house was absolutely perfect.

MF: Just eloquent.

Mrs. Wylie: I thought it was such a treat to go to her home.



In the sixth grade I had Mrs. John Morton. I loved her.

MF: A wonderful teacher. Helen Morton.

Mrs. Wylie: And then we couldn't wait to get over to the seventh grade in the Bell building because the boys came from Riverside and from Ghent and also Brinson Memorial, and from some of the small schools in the county. We just couldn't wait for all those boys to come. We had four seventh grades in those days because there were so many coming in. I had Miss Lanta Winslow as my homeroom teacher. Then we had Miss Mary Grey Moore who was a wonderful geography teacher.

MF: I had her.

Mrs. Wylie: Then we had Miss Carter who was our science teacher. And then Louise Anderson. She was so beautiful when she was our English teacher. Then in the eighth grade, I had Coach Austin for homeroom. He was the football coach and very handsome. He had the bluest eyes, and all the girls just thought he was great. Then I had Latin for the first time, and I had Miss Ola Andrews for math. I think I had Mrs. H. B. Smith for English. She taught English and math I think at times at the high school. And of course eighth grade started high school. In ninth grade, it's getting kind of hazy, I had Mr. Hodgkins for music, and then Mrs. Smith I think for math. I had so many teachers at that time. Then for tenth grade, I can't remember whose homeroom I was in. Then the eleventh was our last year of high school. I had Mrs. Robert Brock for geometry. I never really did understand why we have to have geometry!

MF: All I could do was draw a circle. That's all. (laughter)

Mrs. Wylie: I was lost in geometry.

MF: I was too.

Mrs. Wylie: She was so sweet. I think she gave me a 75 so I could graduate. (laughter)

MF: Well, you tried!

Mrs. Wylie: Yeah. Then we New Bern girls headed for Greensboro. I think about twelve of us went to Greensboro to school. I got through almost two years. I just wasn't real happy up there. I was so homesick. We could not come home from college that first year except for Christmas. It was in the very midst of the war and there was no gas and the buses came thirty-five miles an hour. So, unless you really needed to travel, you were discouraged from travelling. We did not get home from the time we went up there in early September in those days. Our parents couldn't even take us because of the gas rationing, so we went on the bus. My father told me when I left home, he said, "Now you're a young lady, you're going off to college. You have my permission to smoke but you mustn't drink. You're too young to drink."

I bought myself a pack of Lucky Stripes at the bus station and I smoked all of them between New Bern and Greensboro and cured myself of smoking all in one day. (laughter) I may of had three or four after that, maybe on a date or something, but I never did really smoke. We stayed there a couple of years and we said, "Oh there's nothing going on up here. Everything's happening in New Bern." There was Camp LeJeune and there was Cherry Point. Our boys were all off to war and you couldn't even get down to Chapel Hill on a weekend because of the transportation.

No one had a car in those days! Especially just college freshmen and sophomores. We had to go on the bus. You stood on the bus all the way down and all the way back. My parents just did not approve of me going down there too often. My daddy called me and said, "You're just not happy up at college. I have you a job as a teller at First Citizens Bank Monday morning. Take the bus home at the end of Friday classes." I came back and worked at First Citizens and at the Chamber of Commerce until I met my husband, James Edward Wylie, a Marine pilot from San Antonio, Texas. We had a delightful time dating the service men at Cherry Point. We had a big USO down at Union Point in the former Women's Club building. It was given during the war to the USO. We would go down and dance with servicemen with lots of chaperons. It was all very, very much above board, and we had a great time doing that. Then we young ladies thought we must have a very proper way to meet the officers at Cherry Point. So, we got together with our mothers and we formed a little club that we called the "Fifty-one Club".

We went to the alderman and asked if we could have this old courtroom above the old city hall on Craven Street next to Mrs. William Ward.

MF: What's in there now?

Mrs. Wylie: Small shops. That's where "Favorite Things" is. That was the first city hall of New Bern. Up on the second floor there is a beautiful courtroom with all this beautiful carved court furniture. They gave us that. We got up there and cleaned that dirty old building which had not been used in years. We would send a formal invitation to the O Club at Cherry Point and they would post it on

the bulletin board, and we would have a party and would invite the young men from Cherry Point. Our parents were chaperons but we didn't like that too much, so then we asked Emily Pollock Crawford and Annie Kinsey Cook Whitford to be our chaperons. They enjoyed a good time just as much as we did. There were thirty girls in the original club.

Out of the thirty girls, twenty-one of us married the boys that we met at these parties. They in turn would have a party and send us a formal invitation and invite us down to Cherry Point. We would take our chaperons, we would charter a bus, we would go to the parties, and at eleven o'clock we were all put back on the bus and heads were counted to make sure all the young ladies got back home safe and sound.

MF: Did Miss Annie and Emily go down to Cherry Point with you?

Mrs. Wylie: Oh certainly. Yes, they had to go with us. That was our official chaperons.

MF: How often did ya'll have these parties?

Mrs. Wylie: I can't remember how often, but often enough. Maybe once a month. It was right in the thick of the war. We would wear long dress and have punch and refreshments. I'm sure some of the boys brought a little flask and probably spiked the punch. We had jukebox music. We couldn't afford bands in those days. They weren't available here in this small town. We just had a ball dating the boys, and like I said, several of us married the men. Several of us left here for a while. Fortunately, I got to come back. Jim came back to work for my father. My father died quite young at fifty-seven, and Jim decided then he would just go ahead and get into something else and he's been

in life insurance now for forty-one or two years. He was the first chartered life underwriter, CLU, like a CPA, in the New Bern area.

He got that designation back in the fifties. He would get up at five o'clock in the morning and study. We were very fortunate, we had four lovely children. We had two girls. Frances Anne Wylie is now married and living in Raleigh. We have a daughter who lives in Hickory, Gladys Willis, named for my mother. Her married name is Mrs. Kenneth Atkins.

I have six grandchildren. Our son Hank married a young widow with two sons, and so we inherited the two. Then our daughter in Raleigh has two sons, so we have five grandsons and one granddaughter. Our son Robert lives in North Hollywood, California. He is in the tile and mosaic furniture building. He does interior tile. He saves all his little pieces of broken tile and makes beautiful mosaic furniture.

MF: He certainly does. You have a table in your living room that's a gorgeous example of his work. What is Hank's full name?

Mrs. Wylie: Harold Thomas Henry Wylie. That's a long name. I hadn't even told Jim what I was going to name him exactly. We had talked about the Harold because I have a beloved uncle that is named Harold. My aunt's husband and they had no children, so she said when you have this baby, if you could possibly work in one of our names, we'd appreciate it. So, I just gave him the entire thing. When Jim read it in the announcements in the Sun Journal, he came rushing over to the hospital and he said, "What have you done?! I don't even trust a man with four initials!" (laughter)

MF: He was joking surely! (laughter)

Mrs. Wylie: Yeah. They're all grown and pay their bills and doing very well, so we're very, very blessed in having the four children.

MF: Let me get back to your childhood. I want to ask you if you remember the Depression and how it affected your family and the town?

Mrs. Wylie: Yes I do. I remember people came begging at our doors. Black or white people came begging for food. Every day or two there'd be some down and out person at the door. My mother would say, "All right. I'll fix some food. Come on around and sit on the back porch." So, they would come around. It was warmer back there with the sun. The back was on the south side. She would make a huge sandwich; it looked like a Dagwood sandwich when she got finished with it, of everything she had in the refrigerator. She gave them that and a cup of hot coffee, and they'd sit out there on the back and eat that food. I definitely remember that. I remember we only had chicken once a week because chicken was not cheap in those days. It would rate right along with steak. We tried to grow some chickens in our backyard in a little chicken yard. People would come over the back fence, our house backed up to the St. Joseph's Catholic school ground that faces Bern Street, and people would steal our chickens. They'd steal gasoline out of our cars. Dr. Barker had a six car garage. You'd go down in the morning and there would be the syphoning tube right on the ground where they had stolen gas from several of the cars. We often lost the gas out of our car. Money was very, very short.

I remember my daddy would say, "I don't know whether we can make the payroll or not this week." But somehow he always made it. Times were tough. We'd take our maid and walk up to the curb market on George Street on Saturday morning. My mother would pick out two big fryers, and they'd tie their feet together and bring them home. Then our maid, Vida Mae, would kill the chickens.

MF: She'd have to wring the neck.

Mrs. Wylie: Wring the neck, throw them on the ground. We always thought that was great sport. Then my younger sister and I would clean the feet of the chicken that she wasn't going to use and we'd scare my older sister with them. (laughter) We'd paint the fingernails on the chicken's feet after we cleaned them up.

MF: (laughter) How could you stand to do that?

Mrs. Wylie: That was one of our fun games. Like I said, times were tough. I remember my mother even doing some baking in her home.

She was a very, very good cook. She would just call her friends and say I'm going to make potato salad or I'm going to bake cakes this week, would you like one? She had no problem selling her cakes. Then our Uncle Speed, when my grandmother died, moved in with us. So, there went the guest room and we had a houseful of people at that time. He married my Aunt Julia Bunting. They're the mother and father of Bill Bunting who was our University of North Carolina basketball star.

When they married, he moved out. The paper would run these pleading articles, "Would you please take in couples stationed at the Marine base into your home?"

MF: Right. This was during World War II.

Mrs. Wylie: They said, "there's no place for them at Cherry Point, and there's no hotels and accommodations for them in town." We would rent our guest room out to servicemen. We have had some lovely friends that we've made over the years that we are still in contact with, that lived in our home during the war. The girls wanted to be with their husbands up until they were shipped out, and so we provided the last days that they were able to be together. It was a very rewarding thing to do, plus, they were always delightful people. Mother was very lucky in the people that came to her house.

MF: Betty, I want to ask you one other thing about the Depression. Did the town have a soup kitchen or anything like that?

Mrs. Wylie: I was too young to remember. I went to the first grade in 1931 and the bad Depression wasn't coming on until 1933. I was still in the lower grades and I don't remember anything but the people begging at the door. That impressed me as much as anything.

They'd ask for money or for food. Mother would mostly give them food knowing they probably needed the food. She would always come up with something in the food line. She did a lot of sewing. She was a wonderful seamstress. She made all the clothes for three little girls. She was a very remarkable person. She never was still I don't think. She always was doing something to help with the household and saved quite a bit of money that way I'm sure.

MF: Going back to World War II. How did that change New Bern?

Mrs. Wylie: Since the lumber mills all died away we had not had



a large payroll like that federal payroll. I think at one time, or maybe even today, Cherry Point had 5,000 civilian employees. That gave a tremendous boost to the town financially. Housing was very hard to come by and there were shortages of things. I remember you had to have all your stamps to get this and that. People tried not to hoard food and clothing and different items. I remember my one pair of nylon hose during the war. We were up in New York visiting my aunt and we were able to buy each of us one pair of nylon hose.

They were real thick hose. I wore them all through the war. I had washed them so much they had no color. By the end of time, we could finally get more hose. (laughter) They were the first nylons and they were just wonderful. We thought they were just the greatest thing that ever happened.

MF: That sounds great.

Mrs. Wylie: They were quite hard to come by, as I say, in the war.

MF: Did the churches do things for the war effort?

Mrs. Wylie: Yes they did. A lot of Marines came into churches, the ones who had been taught to do that on Sunday morning. In fact, I dated Dale Bumpers who was the Governor of Arkansas and now a well known Democratic Senator. He has been up there in Washington for years.

He came into Centenary Church and joined the choir. He has a perfectly beautiful voice. They came back to what we call Epworth League in those days, our youth group. We had a lot of servicemen that came in for that. They had been accustomed to doing that sort of thing.

We would all go to the movies afterwards, to the second show at the Masonic Theater after we had had our church thing at Centenary. The movie was just a block away from the church. I did not lose a lot of friends in the war. Hal Dill was one of my classmates. He died during the war. Cliff Morehead who was a classmate of mine was killed in the war. He was someone who moved here and his father worked at Cherry Point I think. But I was not touched by the war as much as some people were because I did not lose any relatives and just a very few friends. So, 18, 19 year old girls just had a good time during the war with the influx of the money and the town bustling again. So, I did not have bad memories of the war because of that fact, personally, I did not.

MF: During the war your daddy's lumber business was flourishing.

Mrs. Wylie: He did very well. They'd take all he could manufacture of veneer. They shipped that by rail because that can't be exposed to the elements. He shipped lumber out of here on sailing schooners longer than most anybody else. The big sailing schooners came over to the mill in Bridgeton and loaded up lumber for the war effort, and he sold everything he made. In fact, he never really made any money until World War II because of the Depression. That was the first. Then he died not too long after the war. That was, as I say, the first time he was able to pay off all of the indebtedness from the Depression time. He was finally having a much easier living after that time.

Wars are terrible and yet they benefit so many people financially because of the things that are needed, and it will never change I guess.

MF: That's right. It probably won't. After you and Jim were married, where did you live?

Mrs. Wylie: We were married in Centenary Methodist Church on March 30, 1946, and then we immediately left for Texas.

MF: Was he still in the Marine Corp?

Mrs. Wylie: He had gotten out of the Marine Corps two weeks before we were married. He had to sit around and wait for the wedding. He was anxious to get home and get enrolled in college and finish on the GI Bill.

MF: He had not finished college?

Mrs. Wylie: He had not finished. He went in the flying program with the Navy when he was eighteen, and so he only had some junior college work. So, he went through Navy flight school and was stationed at Cherry Point. That's how I met him. We went back to Texas for him to enter college. He graduated at Texas A&I in Kingsville, Texas.

Then, my father called him and asked him and said since he had no sons, would he like to come up and perhaps go into the building supply business there in Bridgeton by the mill. They were going to build a building supply company there. My father died four months after we got here. So, that's when Jim decided to go into life insurance. So, I've been in New Bern all my life except for two and a half years. I was so lucky to get to come back to my hometown.

MF: Oh I know it, and you've seen lots and lots of change.

Mrs. Wylie: Oh I certainly have.

MF: Tell me about the changes.

Mrs. Wylie: One of the bad changes is the crime in New Bern. That's one of the things that is upsetting everyone. I noticed in the newspaper this morning Raleigh and Durham are really feeling it too. Our home here in DeGraffenreid Park which we thought was a lovely, safe neighborhood, has been broken into four times in the last two years. In the last robbery, they just cleaned me out of my sterling and my good heirloom jewelry and everything. So, we have an alarm system now. I guess we should have had one sooner, but we just didn't think of this as a high crime neighborhood. So many of our neighbors have been broken into including you.

MF: Yes.

Mrs. Wylie: So, we are very wary now, but we love our neighborhood. I guess we'll just keep putting more bolts on the doors and locks on the windows.

MF: But growing up, we could leave the front doors opened and there was no problem.

Mrs. Wylie: Oh heavens, we never locked a door! When I moved out here, I would leave my pocketbook in the car and my car keys in the ignition because I'd know where they were the next day. In the morning I'd get up and unlock all five doors at my house so that if I happened to be on one side of the yard, I wouldn't have to run around to another door to get in. We didn't lock doors. We did maybe throw the bolt at night, but that was all. We had everything wide open, and in the summer time the windows stayed up all the time because we didn't have air conditioning. We wouldn't think of that anymore.

MF: You're right about that.

Mrs. Wylie: That's one of the unhappy aspects of the town changing. But we have lots of new improvements with a beautiful new high school. We have so many nice people moving down here to retire which is another wonderful boost to our economy. These people don't demand any schools. They pay taxes. They live in nice homes, and they contribute culturally to the town. I think it's been a nice boost for us to be discovered as a retirement area.

MF: Sometimes I think we're getting maybe a little bit too big and I don't want us to lose our southern charm.

Mrs. Wylie: We're in the growth area, the Sun Belt.

MF: We certainly are and New Bern has an awful lot of charm. How has downtown changed?

Mrs. Wylie: I just lived two blocks from downtown when I lived on Broad Street. Going downtown was one of our entertainments. We could run downtown to Ronald Ipock's grocery store which was located in what is now Scalzo's restaurant across from the fire station on Broad Street.

MF: I remember that.

Mrs. Wylie: We'd run down there and buy one loaf of bread for a nickel and run back home. Or we'd run down to Kress's and buy one little bag of candy for ten cents and run back home. We had nice department stores, nice shops all up and down Middle Street. If you couldn't find it here, the buyers would get it when they would go to the shows in New York or wherever you wanted to go.

MF: What were some of the nice shops downtown?

Mrs. Wylie: The Parisian has been there for years. It is now Middleton's. Those folks were just lovely folks, the Zacks. They would shop for you in New York.

MF: Yes, they did.

Mrs. Wylie: Belk's would do the same thing. My cousin Elsie Cook worked as a buyer for Belk's and she would always get whatever we needed from Belk's. Belk's was a big three story department store, and it was well run. Mr. J. T. Kennedy just did a wonderful job of doing the Belk's store. The clerks were always so helpful. So many of us worked at Belk's on Saturdays in high school. We made three dollars a day and spent it all before we left the store. (laughter)

I remember that. Of course, New Bern was the hub of shopping at that time; Morehead and Jones County and Pamlico County. Being the county seat, we have always served a lot of people, a large population.

MF: Saturday was a very busy day!

Mrs. Wylie: It was the big shopping day. My Aunt Ethel Cook lived to be within just a few months of a hundred years old,.

MF: She was a wonderful lady. I remember Miss Ethel across the street.

Mrs. Wylie: She was a wonderful cook. She hated to cook, but she was a fabulous cook. What she loved to do was to go down to Centenary Church with a knife that she always carried when she was going down there. She had it wrapped up in a paper bag. It had been sharpened so many times that it was about as wide as your little finger, but

it could really slice those hams and turkeys down there. Centenary used to feed five hundred people at those banquets because they had big rooms to do it in.

MF: They did. Down in the basement if I'm not mistaken.

Mrs. Wylie: We'd even have the big state Methodist conferences here at Centenary because you used to be able to move that great big wall on the right where the newer choir has been put in on the right.

You could open up that large Sunday school assembly room there and you could seat another two to three hundred people in there. So, it was the biggest auditorium in eastern North Carolina at the time.

MF: I didn't know the church was that large.

Mrs. Wylie: Oh yes. It was a tremendous church. It was built in 1904 and we had several members of the congregation who were the extremely wealthy lumber people. I was told when they were trying to raise money for the building that there were so many wealthy men in the church that they didn't even have to have a drive to raise the money. They just said, "we want the finest architect; we want the finest church in eastern North Carolina," and it was done.

MF: It's beautiful.

Mrs. Wylie: It's changed so much. It had all the heavy dark oak woodwork when I was there. Of course that was always the church corner down there. Then we had restaurants. The Green Door was where the First Citizens new park on the side is. It had all these cute little shotgun houses along there.

MF: I remember that.

Mrs. Wylie: Two story clapboard houses there. They ran up to what is now the Episcopal Parish house. People lived in those, and later on they became shops. We had Jacob's Drug Store across from the Episcopal Church. Virginia Jacobs was one of my crowd, so we spent a lot of time in there.

MF: Jacob's is where Hearn's Jewelry Store is today.

Mrs. Wylie: Yes. Then we had a nice ladies clothing shop. Mrs. Hall and some of those nice ladies worked in there.

MF: Parson's?

Mrs. Wylie: No. Parson's was along there at one time. Copeland's was a large department store.

MF: Yes it was.

Mrs. Wylie: We had a very nice two story Montgomery Wards next to Belk's.

MF: I remember that.

Mrs. Wylie: It is now the Jones Music Store.

MF: Belk's is the O Mark's building, isn't that right?

Mrs. Wylie: That's right. Then we had Lipman Department Store where the burned out buildings are there along the left side of Middle Street. We had several men's stores. Hill's was where the antique shop on the left hand side down from Hearn's. The large antique shop was the original Hill' shop. Then we had Suskins Department Store. We had a large Duffy's Drug Store on the corner where Central News has just moved out and the nautical place is moving in. Then we had a huge Gaston Hotel that ran all along starting on the corner where



Branch Bank is and three quarters of that block. That was a well known hotel in the entire eastern North Carolina. The Blades were living there and running it. Mr. Vernon Blades was running the Gaston Hotel.

His son Jim was our age and we spent grand times going up there. Jim had one of the best record collections any place in North Carolina I'd say. We would dance! I pity the poor people who were in the room below us. (laughter) The Blades had a nice living area on the top floor, and so we would have a great time up there at the hotel. They had a wonderful banquet room overlooking the river. We held all of our Junior/Senior dinners in there. It had the gilded chairs and high ceilings and glass all the way around it. It was a magnificent room.

So, we had good times at the Gaston. Dances would take place up there also.

MF: That hotel burned.

Mrs. Wylie: Burned in the sixties.

MF: Was it always the Gaston Hotel?

Mrs. Wylie: It was the Gaston Hotel as long as I can remember.

MF: There was a hotel on Middle Street.

Mrs. Wylie: Yes. That was the original Hotel Albert. That was considered one of the finest hotels in eastern North Carolina. At the time, you came in on the train. The salesman came in on the train and then would walk up to the Hotel Albert. It had a fine dining room.

In fact, there was a good dining room in there through the fifties, early sixties perhaps.

MF: You're right. But it wasn't called the Hotel Albert.

Mrs. Wylie: No. It had several names. It's been called the New Bernian Hotel.

MF: Betty, were there trolleys when you were little?

Mrs. Wylie: The trolley tracks were still down on Pollock Street. I vaguely remember as a very small child the trolleys going only as far as the pavilion on Park Avenue.

MF: Was that called the Ghent Casino at one time?

Mrs. Wylie: The Ghent Pavilion or Casino. They held all sorts of parties and dances. That was just about over and that building was getting so dangerous. It finally collapsed. We would go out there and climb all over it, but our parents always told us not to do it because it might collapse; and sure enough, it did collapse. It was just a big wooden structure and had a lot of open area. The supports probably just rotted and it went away.

MF: Betty, something I want to ask you going back to childhood, were there colored women that came from James City pulling wagons?

Mrs. Wylie: Yes, we had the vegetable vendors. We certainly did. It was wonderful. It was early in the morning. You would hear them walking up Broad Street. They'd sing, "Fresh butter beans and nice fresh corn." They'd raise their voice, the note, at the end of that little song. They'd have seafood. Crabs and fish were sold off the back of wagons. I remember some wagons being pulled, called dray wagons, and people would have their furniture and household goods moved. They were great big old heavy wagons and usually a colored man would be driving the wagon. Then I remember the passenger trains

coming in at the depot. I remember my aunt coming in from New York one time, and I was so impressed. That was just about the end of passenger trains. They did come back some during World War II, but mostly military people were riding them at that time. I took one trip during World War II to go to Annapolis to date one of the midshipman up there. The trains were getting very poor. By then, they were worn completely out and they couldn't replace them because of the war I guess. There wasn't that much traffic down here that the railroad thought they could spend a lot of money doing it. I see you have something on here about Dr. Hands gang and Crabby's. My father told me never to go to Crabby's or Dr. Hands. It was so deep there at Dr. Hands, right at the side of the river.

MF: Where was Crabby's?

Mrs. Wylie: Crabby's was on Trent river. It was a big old building down there and there was a man named Crabby. He had the big slides down into the water and that sort of thing. Young folks would gather down there and swim and raise a little hoopla I guess. My mother and father thought I was too young to get involved in that sort of thing.

My daddy, working on the river all those years with his lumber and veneer mills, knew that the river was so dangerous and it was deep over there. The channel was over here on Dr. Hands' side. You remember Billy Pugh was drowned there.

MF: I sure do.

Mrs. Wylie: That really put an end to that particular use of it.

MF: I had never heard of Crabby's.

Mrs. Wylie: Crabby's was down at the end of East Front and South Front, kind of on that corner of the water. It was kind of to the right of the Union Point's Woman's Club building. It was a big warehouse or something at that time. There was a big Meadows boat building industry.

MF: I didn't know that.

Mrs. Wylie: Yes. That's where Ed Meadows lived, across the street from that which is the Charles Manor and now has been moved. There was a large boat works there at one time. That was just about finished operating about the time I would have been old enough to have really paid any attention to what was going on along there. Then we had a large boat works across the Neuse river where the Ramada is now. That was a large boat building facility.

MF: Who owned that?

Mrs. Wylie: I don't remember.

MF: The only one I remember is Barbour.

Mrs. Wylie: No. Barbour is one of many. I'm sure that people a little older than I am could remember very well the Meadows boat works down there. You have something about the Country Club. I remember going into the Country Club. The old building covered with the cedar shingles.

MF: I remember that. It was beautiful.

Mrs. Wylie: Yeah. It had big fireplaces at each end of the room. It was very, very cozy. We swam off the end of the dock there. The

Trent river, of course, was always considered much cleaner. My daddy was one of the early members of the Country Club. He played some golf.

We were supervised by our parents until we were in our teens and then we were not supervised as we swam after that. Most of us were pretty safe in the water because living here we had done so much swimming.

MF: Everybody but me cause I never liked the water.

Mrs. Wylie: We had the circuses. I well remember those, and the circus parades. My father would take us out to watch the elephants unload the train cars and help put up the tents. He thought the circuses were wonderful. We always went to the fairs. My daddy loved the fairs.

MF: Where did they have the fairs?

Mrs. Wylie: They had them over here where Nichols Department Store is for a long time.

MF: Off Neuse Blvd.

Mrs. Wylie: Yes. Then the fairs were held out in the Riverside area. I have this feeling there were some vacant lots where maybe one of the big old tobacco warehouses that were along National Avenue were. We had several big tobacco warehouses in New Bern at one time.

We were a tobacco selling area. They used to have the big Shrine dances in the tobacco warehouses.

MF: I didn't know that.

Mrs. Wylie: There was a big one on the left of the railroad tracks out there. I remember my father was a wonderful dancer. We'd always go to the Shrine dances, and we all loved to dance with him. He was a huge man. He was six foot four, but he was light on his feet.

MF: I remember your daddy.

Mrs. Wylie: We had a lot of our dances for our Fifty-one Club group out at the Country Club too. They'd get it and have dances out there. The exodus to the seashore and the mountains, that would be the wealthier folks in town that got a chance to do that. The rest of us had to stay here. (laughter) They'd go to Black Mountain and there is a New Bern Street in Black Mountain. I have a cousin who has a place up there, and I always get a thrill when I ride down New Bern Street. Then of course so many of the people did go to the seashore.

The men would go down on weekends. From the upper part of the state, the women would go down and stay all summer long at Morehead. In the early days you stayed in Morehead in those older houses kind of near the bridge. They were the cottages in those days. The ones on your right as you go down Arendell Street there. I remember the YuleTide revue with J. Gaskil McDaniel. They were wonderful plays. He would have this show at Christmas to make money for charitable things around the town. He would get talented people from all over the area to come to dance and sing and do all sorts of things. It was always held at the Masonic Theater and it was a sell out every year. He was always the Master of Ceremonies. We all loved him. He was a wonderful man.

MF: Did you know any of the performers?

Mrs. Wylie: Oh yes. I knew a lot of the performers.

MF: Who were they?

Mrs. Wylie: Gosh, I can't remember. I knew them at the time. I remember Dot Lee Taylor Jernigan now Mrs. Curtis Jernigan sang in

some of them. She'd get up there and sing "Embrace Me My Sweet Embraceable You." (laughter) Of course we all took tap dancing from Frances Perry Hussey. I remember being petrified doing our little numbers on the stage at the Masonic Theater. I can remember the smell of the stage. I guess it was all those Scottish rite things they did; using all that paint for the sets and other things. Then, drive-in movies. I remember those when they first came. That was quite exciting.

MF: When was that?

Mrs. Wylie: I can't remember. It was at the end of World War II when we got those. We had lots of plays. The Masonic had regular road companies to come and play, professionals. We had wonderful plays at the Masonic. I got my entire liberal education at the two theaters here in town; the Athens and the Masonic. We'd go for ten cents. That was the admission. Then my mother would give us a quarter and we could then go to Mrs. Watson who had a pretty little eighteenth century house right beside the theater. It has now been torn down.

She had a little candy counter there in her front room, and we would buy candies. The most, if you bought penny candy, but then if you really wanted to go for it, you did Milky Way or a Snicker or a Hershey bar. It was just great. We could go in there and get our refreshments during the intermission. You'd go to the double feature on Saturday afternoon on your dime and you'd have two serials and then two cowboy movies.

MF: I know it. It was wonderful.

Mrs. Wylie: We'd walk back at night at nine o'clock right through

the streets of New Bern all the way home, a couple of us, and never have any fear at all of being robbed or knocked in the head. It was just a safe town.

MF: And very nice, and the police knew all of us.

Mrs. Wylie: They certainly did. We had no fears of any sort of unhappy disasters. I'd even walk home at eleven o'clock a couple of blocks because I would leave my friend who lived up near me, Dot Thomason Bennett. She lived over on Pollock street and I lived on Broad, so we'd part there at what was the hospital which is now social services.

MF: St. Luke's Hospital you're talking about.

Mrs. Wylie: We'd part, and she'd go one block over to her house and I'd run down my one block. And that would be after the second show at eleven o'clock at night.

MF: Betty, mentioning the hospital, you lived right across from St. Luke's.

Mrs. Wylie: Your mother trained there, and I remember your daddy courting your mother. Those girls would get all dressed up at night.

They'd come home and they'd be so pretty and cute. The boys would come in and get them properly. They'd go and ring the bell and go in and bring them out and open the door for them to get in the cars.

We were standing there on the sidewalk just taking all that in. We thought that was absolutely marvelous. Teen Burnette, Mrs. Stone Burnette, was the dietician at the hospital. I remember her living over there. So, the nurses lived there. That house has been torn



down now. It was right next to the New Bern House Bed and Breakfast.

MF: Mrs. John R. Taylor's house.

Mrs. Wylie: Right. That side yard was once a large white house. I remember we had so many wrecks on the corner of George and Broad. That's where Highway 17 turned. You'd go one block and turn at Tryon Palace auditorium and then you'd be on 17. That would get you out of town. It's now Trent Road. So many tourist came through here because 17 was the New York to Florida corridor. We didn't have 95 in those days. We had lots of tourist homes and the hotels were usually full, especially in the winter, with people going back and forth to Florida.

They'd have these terrible accidents. There were no stop lights and not even any stop signs. The stop light came later. There may have been in some places, but not there. You'd hear this terrible crash and all we had to do was pick the poor injured people up and take them right into the hospital right there on the corner. Black people were in the basement and white people were on the other two floors. Of course there was no air conditioning in those days, so when you went in for anything, you carried the biggest electric fan that you could get your hands on. I had all four of my babies in that hospital. I always had them in the summer time and it was so hot!

MF: Poor planning Betty! (laughter)

Mrs. Wylie: No. I planned it so that they'd all go to school the minute they were six years old. It was late August. It was bad planning really because it was really hot that time of the year.

MF: I want to ask you something else about St. Luke's. When

ya'll were growing up, you had the usual childhood illnesses. The doctor made house calls, didn't he?

Mrs. Wylie: All we had to do was run over next door to Dr. Barker.

MF: That's right. He lived right next door to you.

Mrs. Wylie: We never, never had to worry about that. Maybe once a year, Mrs. Barker was Dr. Barker's bookkeeper, would send us a little bill for maybe twenty-five dollars. We would all go in and out of there. Our maid at the house, if she got hurt in any way, she'd go over there and be treated. All we'd have to do is run in there and Dr. Barker had a nurse that lived right in the home and she was always on duty too. They'd take care of anything that you might have wrong.

My daddy would bring his injured workers over from the mill. Dr. Barker was always at home unless he was out in the country on a call.

He did make house calls too. If we were flat in the bed at home with a high fever, he came right over. We were spoiled when it came to medical care. He was a good doctor. We never worried about medicine.

MF: This is Dr. Christopher Barker.

Mrs. Wylie: Dr. Christopher Barker. Charles and Chris Barker's father. He was a very handsome man. His office was the entire left side of the house.

MF: I remember that.

Mrs. Wylie: He had a waiting room out front. He had one of the first Atwater Kent radios. It was a great big cabinet that went to the floor, and he would always be there listening to his radio if he wasn't practicing medicine.

MF: You mentioned that your daddy would bring his employees over. I think that's interesting because he took care of them. There was no health insurance at that time. He probably paid all the medical bills.

Mrs. Wylie: Yes he did. He'd have to. He took excellent care of his workers. The people stayed with him until the mill was absolutely closed down. We had Mr. John Stilley who was Mrs. Charles Turner's father. He stayed with daddy. Rev. Willie Stilley stayed with him until mother closed the doors of the plant. He had employees that really stuck with him, so he must have been a good employer.

MF: He sure was. Any others you remember that your daddy employed?

Mrs. Wylie: They were the main ones. We had a man who drove the truck and he lived in Bridgeton just within a few steps of the veneer mill. I can't remember his name.

MF: Do you remember the hurricane of '33?

Mrs. Wylie: Yes I do! The '33 hurricane, I well remember it! On Broad Street, of course, we didn't have high water. The house didn't have a basement, so we didn't have to worry about it getting into that. My grandmother had to be removed from her home on East Front Street by boat. Her house is the one next to the old Blades home, across from the one that Joe Patterson restored. It's a big double house with the twin peaks. It's apartments now. Mrs. Slaughter lived there for years.

MF: I know where you're talking about. Bob Reimer is there now.

Mrs. Wylie: It had seventeen rooms in it. My grandmother being

a Yankee from Delaware didn't want black help in her home. I've never seen anybody work like that woman. Her house was immaculate. She did all her cooking, washing, and kept that great big house. She never would let me go to the attic. I've always regretted that I never got in the attic of that house. (laughter)

MF: So, she lived there during the hurricane?

Mrs. Wylie: Yes she did. My grandfather had just recently died, and she stayed in that house. She did not want to leave it until the water got on her front porch. Men were going up and down the street with boats and they took her out and brought her up to my father's house. She very reluctantly stayed there until the waters went down.

The bridge was completely washed away. We had business in Bridgeton. That was terrible for the time it took to rebuild that bridge because my father had to go back and forth by boat. I think they brought a small ferry in. I was only about eight or nine years old and I can't remember all the details. They brought a ferry to get the Bridgeton people here and the New Bern people over to Bridgeton. It took a long time to rebuild that bridge because it was absolutely devastated. They built a wooden one back and then they replaced it. Then, it went off the end of Johnson Street.

MF: I remember that.

Mrs. Wylie: There was a little Texaco station on the corner. Ham Ferebee ran it.

MF: I didn't know he ran that.

Mrs. Wylie: Then they moved the bridge in the fifties. The

merchants wanted all of the tourist to come right through town and they doubled the size of the highway. They said no parking on either side and there was no place for the tourist to park. It didn't bring a bit more business into town. All it did was split the town right wide open.

MF: It certainly did.

Mrs. Wylie: It ruined Broad Street and brought all this awful traffic through town. It was just a disaster when they put that bridge there. Then they put sidewalks up and down the street. We were afraid they weren't even going to put sidewalks. They talked about not putting the sidewalks.

MF: It effectively killed all the business on Broad Street.

Mrs. Wylie: It did, definitely. Broad Street businesses were gone then because there was no where to park to get into them, and we didn't have parking lots around in those days. The buildings covered everything in that area. The ABC Store was located on the corner right across from the fire station.

MF: I remember that.

Mrs. Wylie: Mr. Roy Parker owned that great big old two-story building, I remember, and he rented it to the ABC Store.

MF: Next to that was the little cafe called the Blue Moon.

Mrs. Wylie: It was run by the Lockey family.

MF: And Dennis Paffe had it at one time. Then next to that, was daddy's bakery.

Mrs. Wylie: Oh yes. I can smell it right now.

MF: I can too. (laughter)

Mrs. Wylie: On my way to Ronald Ipock's and on my way to Kress's, I could smell your daddy's bakery. It was wonderful.

MF: Do you remember any other hurricanes?

Mrs. Wylie: I remember the ones in the fifties very well. I was married with children by that time.

MF: Were you living out here?

Mrs. Wylie: No. We hadn't been here but twenty-seven years in March. We lived out in the Country Club area on the other side of Wilson Creek. We had three bad hurricanes in a row in the fifties. One was Ione. We had a new little house out there, and we were pretty safe. Jim was in Norfolk for a Marine Reserve weekend when the worse one came. They were able to get on a bus and get home. They had to leave their cars up there because of the hurricane coming. The bus came in and he said, "there were plumes behind that bus. The water on the roads, you can't believe how tall they were." The eye of the hurricane came and I left the four children in the house and had to meet them at one o'clock in the morning at the bus station. The eye came right then and everything was perfectly calm and we said, "Oh good. It's over." We got here. He had asked another Marine friend to stay because he had to go on to Wilmington and couldn't go any further. We went in and I started fixing them a very nice dinner at one o'clock in the morning that I had cooked anticipating them getting there much earlier, and all of a sudden the eye passed and the other side of the hurricane came. The pine trees out there were snapping

and breaking, but we didn't really have any damage. We had a lot of damage everywhere else. I remember my friend, Frances Reesman, packed her baby in the car and headed home to Newton Grove, North Carolina to get away from it, and that's exactly the path it followed. It followed her all the way. They had as much damage there as we did here. Except they didn't have the water damage. I remember people leaving to get out of town and the thing followed them.

MF: I want to ask you about the fire in 1922. I know you were not born then, but did you ever hear your parents talk about it?

Mrs. Wylie: Oh yes. I heard about the fact that a lot of the towns people had taken the train to the big state football game, the big high school playoff. My mother and daddy were living in their house on Broad Street and they of course could see it all from there. Several died and many, many homes were wiped out at that time.

MF: Do you know where the fire started?

Mrs. Wylie: No, I do not. It was just in the George Street area. From Bern to George is where it all burned, but I don't remember any of the real details.

MF: Did your mother and daddy by any chance say how the town helped the people who were left homeless?

Mrs. Wylie: Everyone got everything they could find; sheets, blankets, and people were taken into homes. I never heard any real details about that. My granddaddy had seven children and he gave everyone of them a home in New Bern. Of course in those days, homes were not what they cost today, but still I guess money was worth about

the same in those days.

MF: Betty, I want to ask you because you were here in New Bern at the time of all the integration, how did that affect the town?

Mrs. Wylie: My girls were in the very end of high school by that time. My older daughter was a senior in high school when integration came. The two boys were still over at Eleanor Marshall in grammar school. They were threatened by a lot of the big black boys. They'd meet them at the door of the school and say, "Give me your lunch money!", and they'd rob their lunch money right off of them before they could get in. Finally, I'd have to go down and give the teacher the lunch money by the week so that they would have their money for lunch. Then if they would talk back to any of the blacks, they'd say, "You meet me outside the school after school!", and they would beat up on them.

So, we got where we had to go and meet the children everyday. Mine didn't live but two blocks from school. We'd have to be there and pick them up. Then, things sort of settled down. My girls had real good black friends in high school. Gladys, my younger daughter, was in with them for three years during integration and she has friends that she has today that she made during high school. We didn't have a lot of problems. I think there was a couple of incidences where they did have to call in the police and maybe close school one or two days, but I don't remember a lot of really bad things happening.

MF: What about when Martin Luther King was assassinated?

Mrs. Wylie: There was a parade over on Broad Street I remember that night, but it happened late in the evening. The blacks did some



marching over there.

MF: No violence? No riots?

Mrs. Wylie: Not that I can remember.

MF: You were living here in this house at that time?

Mrs. Wylie: Yes.

MF: Were you afraid to drive through Five Points?

Mrs. Wylie: No. We had a few incidence of people standing on corners down there and throwing bottles through windows and that sort of thing mostly at night. I wasn't out that time of night with four children at home.

MF: So it really was not a very bad time for New Bern?

Mrs. Wylie: No. I don't think it was bad as it was in some places like larger towns perhaps that were maybe more southern than this one. I think it was handled well here. On a whole, I think it's worked out. We haven't had any incidence lately I don't think, except maybe somebody bringing a knife or a gun to school or something like that. Of course we haven't solved all of our problems yet. It'll take another generation.

MF: Probably longer than that. I just want you to talk about whatever you would like to.

Mrs. Wylie: Well, during the war, I can remember the blackouts. I remember going on house parties because that was right while I was a teenager and college girl. We'd go to the beach on house parties. That was really a blackout. You'd have to have black curtains over the windows at night. The headlights on cars had the black paint halfway

down. You'd have your low beams on and then just enough light on the road to see. There were soldiers patrolling the beaches at night.

You didn't dare walk down there with your date or anything because he would say, "Halt! Who goes there?", and you got back up where you belonged on the boardwalk. I remember very well that blackout down there. I don't remember the blackouts in the homes too much around here.

MF: I just remember we always had the blinds tightly closed at night and the curtains.

Mrs. Wylie: I guess my mother just drew the curtains.

MF: Mother would say, "Now, don't look out. We can't have any light showing."

Mrs. Wylie: Right. Let me say something about celebrations. We didn't do a lot of Fourth of July celebrations down here that I remember. We have more now at Tryon Palace than we did in the days I can remember back.

MF: Talking about celebrations, when you were young, did they still celebrate Confederate Memorial Day?

Mrs. Wylie: Oh yes. Confederate Memorial Day was celebrated on the tenth of May. At one time we would have a Memorial Day and the black people would march.

MF: I don't know about that.

Mrs. Wylie: I lived on Broad Street and all the parades went right by our front door. We had two. You'd see these women in mourning clothes. They wore the black hats and dresses and all that sort of

thing. Widows I suppose. Back in those days, of course, widows put on black. I remember my grandmother, the day my granddaddy died, she put on the veil, the black clothes. Even the handkerchiefs were outlined in black or bound in black.

MF: Everything was black.

Mrs. Wylie: It took her a year of mourning and then she finally got into some purple which was the next step. Then the next step was, the third year, you could wear all white. So, she never wore anything until she died but black purple or white. She observed widowhood very, very strictly.

MF: People did. They had definite mourning periods.

Mrs. Wylie: Somebody else might be able to tell you more about that that's a little older than I am. But we had Confederate Memorial and then there was a 30th of May which is the Memorial Day for the whole country. But we marched out to the cemetery and decorated the big Confederate monument out there at Cedar Grove.

MF: Miss Rose said young girls used to sing a song.

Mrs. Wylie: They would sing, and they would decorate the graves with the flowers. They all would carry flowers in the parade. That was for the Confederates only.

MF: You did not participate in this?

Mrs. Wylie: No, I did not. I guess maybe I wasn't the right age. There was a lot of the UDC ladies. My mother was a DAR and so she didn't participate in that; so therefore, neither did we.

MF: I just wondered if it was still going on when you were young.

Mrs. Wylie: I remember it, yes, as a child. Another thing we could do on Broad Street. We'd have great rummage sales because we all had big front porches and we could drape the stuff over the banisters. The black people had to come from Five Points area down to town to shop. They came right down Broad Street, and so we would sell out every time when we'd have a rummage sale.

MF: The rummage would be the forerunner of the yard sale.

Mrs. Wylie: When we outgrew our clothing, mother would let us sell the things we'd outgrown, and then we would have that money to buy school clothes for the next year.

MF: Talking about school clothes, Betty, you said your mother made your clothes. If you needed anything she could not make, was there a children's shop in New Bern.

Mrs. Wylie: Oh yes. Belk's had children's clothes and so did Coplon's and so did Lipman's. You could buy children's clothes but they were more expensive of course, and during the Depression, you couldn't just go out and cloth three little girls downtown. When she would go out of town with my daddy, his lumber markets were in Philadelphia and Baltimore, they would always bring us a "store bought" dress. We thought that was the "cat's pajamas." Another thing I remember that was funny was my daddy never would have any laundry done on the lot because he had seen his mother work so hard doing all that laundry, when he got married, he said, "You will never wash clothes" to my mother. So, Hannah was our washing lady. She came every Monday morning with a little red wagon. My mother had the big clothes basket

all filled and a big box of Super Suds, and she'd take that away. Then on Saturday before lunch, Hannah would be back with the clothes.

They'd all been washed and ironed and carefully folded and put in the big basket and mother would pay her. One time my younger sister, Caroline, got ill in the middle of the week and she had to have a lot of clean pajamas. So, my mother sent my daddy up to Hannah's, said, "Get the pajamas and I'll wash them here for her." He went up there and all of Hannah's children had on our pajamas. (laughter) Then another thing I remember about the laundry; on bad weeks they'd have to dry the laundry inside and they starched every thing in those days (that's why I don't own a bit of starch and hadn't used any starch since I've been married) and the starch would sour in the clothes.

She'd go ahead and iron them anyway, and we'd get them back and the odor of those things were perfectly awful. Mother would say, "No, we're not going to wash them again. I just paid her to do them and I'm just not going to do it." She'd make us wear them to school. (laughter) I could not stand it. I was afraid people sitting next to me would smell me in that sour starch! It would just get that awful odor when it was sour. Then they would smell like smoke a lot in the winter time when she would dry them inside.

MF: Probably had a wood stove.

Mrs. Wylie: I'm sure she did. But I remember that odor of the starch.

MF: Do you remember the ice man?

Mrs. Wylie: The ice man came in his cart with his great big work

horse right down Broad Street. We'd all run out right away and get up on the little running board on the back. It was like a little step-up.

We'd reach in there and get all these pieces of ice about the size of a fifty cent piece and we'd eat that ice. When you'd put your hand inside of that cart, it was cool and it was wonderful. One way we stayed cool was to sit on my Aunt Ethel Cook's front porch across the street cause her front porch faced south and ours faced north and we didn't get any breeze. So, we spent more time on her front porch and Mrs. Nickey Simpson's across the street than any other place cause they had the southern front porches. That was the thing. You had to get in the southwest to get a breeze.

MF: So, when you were growing up, you had an ice box?

Mrs. Wylie: We had an ice box, and then we got one of the early refrigerators in town. It froze two little trays of ice. My mother was a wonderful cook. We had a cow at the time. When I was a very young girl, my granddaddy would milk it in the morning and my daddy would milk it at night, and we had all this cream and butter and milk.

The neighbors would come and we'd sell the milk to them for ten cents a quart. The thick cream would rise to the top. They would make clabber and cottage cheese. When my mother made ice cream, she would have to thin the cream in order to get it to beat, it was so thick. It was just like butter.

MF: I can't imagine cream that thick.

Mrs. Wylie: Oh it was, out of a big Jersey cow. The refrigerator came with that deep tray that would make like two quarts of ice cream.

So then we'd have to take the trays out and we didn't have ice that day because we had the ice cream instead.

She made sherbets and ice cream and that sort of thing. Every Saturday she cooked a cake. We'd get home from the Masonic Theater after seeing all those wild westerns and we would always have egg sandwiches and a fresh baked cake and cheese. My daddy used to walk up to the A&P store, which is where Piggly Wiggly on Broad Street next to Hatem Shoe Store is today, and get a fresh slice of cheese off the big round, and we'd have the cheese and the egg sandwiches and the cake on Saturday night.

MF: Betty, did they have an A&P store down there in Five Points at that time?

Mrs. Wylie: Oh yes. The first one was right next to Ernest Johnson. The little green building they just tore down was an A&P.

Then we had one in the Gaston Hotel building on the corner where Branch Bank is today.

MF: I remember that.

Mrs. Wylie: Then we had one on Middle Street where the Baptist Book Store is right now.

MF: I remember that.

Mrs. Wylie: You'd go in there and Mr. Blanchard, the manager, would add up everything on the bag just as quick as a computer can do it today.

MF: He certainly did.

Mrs. Wylie: A lot of the stores during the Depression stayed

opened until eleven o'clock on Saturday night to serve the people.

MF: The bakery did.

Mrs. Wylie: Yes. The people came in from all over with their little paychecks, and so they stayed opened until eleven o'clock Saturday nights to serve the people who had to come from the counties.

You could go down there at ten o'clock on Saturday night and buy groceries and he'd add that bill up so fast. I was just fascinated with the way he added so fast.

MF: His brain was like a calculator.

Mrs. Wylie: He really was and it was just great. Another thing about Middle Street. My Aunt Ethel loved to go sit down on Middle Street and watch the crowds on Saturday. Her husband would drive their car down there and park it right in front of Kress's. Then, you didn't get the late afternoon sun because the building protected you from the heat. My mother would follow her down and bring her back to her house and then she was washed from breakfast and ready to go down for the afternoon. We'd drive her down and she'd get in the car and watch the crowds all afternoon. That was the excitement.

Then you would go in Gaskins Soda Shop, where the Dixon's is now, and get a coke. They'd make it right from the coke syrup.

MF: They sure did.

Mrs. Wylie: It was the best coca colas you ever drank! Then you'd make a smash by filling the cup with ice and packing it and taking that pure unadulterated syrup and pouring it over that ice, and that was heavenly! We had several things they could do to a coke cola in



those day.

MF: I always liked a slice of lemon or a slice of orange in mine. They cost a nickel when I was in school.

Mrs. Wylie: That's right.

MF: And a penny tax.

Mrs. Wylie: No. The tax didn't come until later.

MF: I know when I was in school, we had a penny tax.

Mrs. Wylie: Yeah, by the time you got there. There was no tax on foods and that sort of thing.

MF: I think the penny was for the cup.

Mrs. Wylie: Yeah. I still think there shouldn't be tax on food today in North Carolina. That's one of my pet peeves, taxing food.

MF: I do want to thank you very, very much for sharing all your wonderful experiences with me and with Memories of New Bern. I knew you would be full of lots of good interesting tidbits. I have enjoyed every single minute of it, and so for myself and Memories of New Bern, I thank you very, very much.

Mrs. Wylie: I'm honored you asked me.

MF: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW