

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

JOHN ALEXANDER "ECKY" MEADOWS

INTERVIEW 1032

This is Dr. Joseph Patterson representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 1000. I am interviewing John Alexander Meadows ("Ecky") at his home at 1110 Green Springs Road in New Bern. The number of the interview is 1032. The date is January 15, 1993.

Dr. Patterson: Ecky, it's certainly nice to be out here talking to you about your memories of New Bern and sitting here looking out over the Neuse River seeing that wide river out there and this beautiful place you're in. While Fred's back there taking pictures, maybe we can just go ahead and start. Let's begin, Ecky, by my asking you to tell me your full name.

Mr. Meadows: John Alexander Meadows III.

Dr. Patterson: Where were you born Ecky?

Mr. Meadows: I was born on South Front Street, now Tryon Palace Drive in New Bern, North Carolina on July 28, 1916.

Dr. Patterson: Were you born at home?

Mr. Meadows: I was born at home. Dr. Pollock would attend mama when she had children at home rather than in the hospital.

Dr. Patterson: Ecky, who were your parents?

Mr. Meadows: My parents were Wade, no middle name, Meadows and Ella Simmons Meadows.

Dr. Patterson: Where did your father come from? Was he from New Bern?

Mr. Meadows: He was from New Bern too. His father was John Alexander Meadows too. I was named after my uncle who died young.

Dr. Patterson: Your family goes back in New Bern a long, long ways then.

Mr. Meadows: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: And your mother was born in New Bern?

Mr. Meadows: I believe she was born in Raleigh.

Dr. Patterson: And your grandfather was Senator Simmons. Do you remember him very well?

Mr. Meadows: I remember him very well. Papa and I were very close because of my interest in the farms and agriculture. We would often go out to the farms with him and visit the tenants and see how the crops were growing and all. We had a very close relationship as a matter of fact. I even visited him on his Maryland farm and spent a week up there. After two or three days I got a little tired cause I didn't have anybody to play with.

Dr. Patterson: Now, your grandfather was my grandfather too and you and I are first cousins and I'm very glad of that. Granddad Simmons was a United States Senator for thirty years. He came back to New Bern what year Ecky?

Mr. Meadows: I think it was about 1928 it seems to me.

Dr. Patterson: And he lived on East Front Street at the corner of New and East Front.

Mr. Meadows: Correct.

Dr. Patterson: When did he move out to your place in the country, Green Acres?

Mr. Meadows: I guess I was at school, so it should have been

about '36 or '37, something like that, my remembrance of it.

Dr. Patterson: This Green Acres home was where?

Mr. Meadows: It was about a mile west of New Bern on Highway 17 out in the grove of pecan trees.

Dr. Patterson: Was it on 17 or was it on Trent Blvd?

Mr. Meadows: It was on 17. Trent Blvd didn't go out that far.

Dr. Patterson: That was a very sparsely populated area then was it?

Mr. Meadows: Right. It was farmed all around there then, and Papa owned the farm. We didn't get it developed until later years when my father and Uncle Ed, who was in real estate, suggested that he develop it in small areas at a time.

Dr. Patterson: What do you remember about Granddad Simmons when he was living with you out there as an older man?

Mr. Meadows: He was still very up and doing well I thought. He was interested in what was going on and all the political things. He was interested in what I was doing in Raleigh at that time. You see, I was up at State and I only got to see him when I was home on weekends and vacation. But, again, I got a chance to talk to him about the farms and all. I used to ride out with he and Sam. Sam was their chauffeur/handyman and butler and all. I remember him as being very active with Papa and taking care of him.

Dr. Patterson: He was a small man.

Mr. Meadows: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: About how tall would you say?

Mr. Meadows: I think Papa was about five seven, just about my size.

Dr. Patterson: I used to ride him around too Ecky. I'd take him around his farm lands, all around New Bern. Did he live with you all until his death?

Mr. Meadows: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: Did he die there?

Mr. Meadows: Yes, I think he died right in the house. I don't believe he went to the hospital was my remembrance of it. I don't recall again I was away at school.

Dr. Patterson: Now your mother, Ella, tell me about her background.

Mr. Meadows: She was the daughter of Senator Simmons. She went to St. Mary's school I believe. She, of course, lived here in New Bern and dad met her and married her. She took over the Benevolent Society at the Methodist church when my Grandmother Meadows died. That was the New Bern welfare department more or less then I guess because we didn't have an official welfare department in Craven County. This developed later on.

Dr. Patterson: Ecky, Grandmother Simmons, your mother and my mother's mother, came from Hyde County.

Mr. Meadows: Correct.

Dr. Patterson: They were Gibbs.

Mr. Meadows: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: And they have a long lineage going back there. How about your brothers and sisters Ecky? Who are they?

Mr. Meadows: Before I was born, a child Mary, her name was Mary Simmons Meadows, was born, but she died as a child. I never knew her. Then Sara, my older sister, was born. She didn't have a middle name either. Then I was born, and then "Bucky", Wade Meadows, Jr. was born. About twelve years later, Ella Meadows was born. Ella McLendel I believe is her name. So these are my brothers and sisters. Bucky was killed in World War II in a plane crash. He was a navigator on a B17 bomber somewhere in Kansas. This of course was a big shock to all of us. Bucky and I were very close. We even double dated all during high school and college. He came up to State for a year, but didn't last. I think he picked a subject that had too much chemistry and stuff in it for him and he didn't know how to study, or take notes I guess would be a better wording of it. Anyhow, he came back and worked for the highway department until the war and he joined the Air Force. He couldn't get in the Navy because of a bad knee. All of us seemed to have knee troubles. The Air Force did an operation and fixed him up so he could go on to flight school. So he got into it that way. Bucky and I, of course, hunted together and fished and all. We enjoyed going down to Gloucester and so forth. In the camp, we went down to Camp Kiro with Mr. Gossard. He was the camp director and YMCA director at that time.

Dr. Patterson: Now, this accident happened around 1943 as I remember.

Mr. Meadows: I believe it was '43. '44.

Dr. Patterson: '44. I remember Bucky so well. We played together. He was a very fine gentle person.

Mr. Meadows: Right.

Dr. Patterson: Well, Ecky, let's get you back to South Front Street. Which house were you born in on South Front Street? Where did you live?

Mr. Meadows: We were born in the second house on South Front Street from the corner of East Front. No, it was the third house. There was a little house on the corner, then the Lucas house which was Lucas and Lewis grocery store owner, then was our house. Then was the Paterson house. The Paterson was corps of engineers and he was transferred down to the big office down at Wilmington later on when his boys went on down there. There was Robert, and what was the other boys name?

Dr. Patterson: There's Harry.

Mr. Meadows: Yeah, and Harry was the oldest. And Bill I believe was the middle and Robert was the youngest.

Dr. Patterson: I believe they spell their name with one "t".

Mr. Meadows: Yeah.

Dr. Patterson: Ecky, what was on the corner of South Front and East Front on that side?

Mr. Meadows: On that side, there was a smaller house, but I

can't place exactly who lived there. It just doesn't come to me.

Dr. Patterson: Then next to that was another small house?

Mr. Meadows: No, it was a pretty good size house. The Lucas house, it was a pretty good size house.

Dr. Patterson: Is that where the vacant lot is now?

Mr. Meadows: Yeah, that's where the vacant lot is now. That vacant lot is actually our house lot and the Lucas lot I think. The Paterson house, you see, is next to that lot as I remember it.

Dr. Patterson: Is the Paterson house where John Peterson's architect office is now?

Mr. Meadows: No, that's the Mitchell house. That's the next house to it.

Dr. Patterson: Okay. So next to the Paterson house was the Mitchell and that's where Mr. Tom Mitchell lived.

Mr. Meadows: That's right. Tom Mitchell lived and his wife was Mary. His children were "Buzz", or Thomas, Jr.; and Johnny; and "Tootsie", or Sara; and Mary. Mary, I believed, married the older Dawson boy.

Dr. Patterson: James Dawson. Now the next house was your house?

Mr. Meadows: Right, next house was our house.

Dr. Patterson: What was the house next to you on the other side?

Mr. Meadows: The other one on the other side was where the McSorley's lived, and Captain Walter Brinson owned that.



Dr. Patterson: That's where Peacock's Plume dress shop is located now.

Mr. Meadows: Yeah.

Dr. Patterson: Who all lived there?

Mr. Meadows: There was Gene McSorley and Virginia McSorley and Miss Ida who was their mother; I'm sorry, she was their aunt, and Captain Walter who was her brother. Captain Walter, incidentally, was the one that gave the land for the Camp Brinson hunting camp down in the lakes country. He made that as a hunting camp as long as it was used for that. So he was into that very much.

Dr. Patterson: Did the Willis' live there too?

Mr. Meadows: They could have at one time, but I don't recall them living there.

Dr. Patterson: John Patterson and his family stayed there.

Mr. Meadows: Yeah, they stayed there on occasion too.

Dr. Patterson: Then next to that house?

Mr. Meadows: Ben Gillikin lived there.

Dr. Patterson: On the same side of the street.

Mr. Meadows: On the same side of the street. Ben Gillikin and I had a run in one day. He kept right on picking on me and I picked up a big chunk of wood and knocked him on the head.  
(laughter)

Dr. Patterson: Well, sometimes I guess you had to do that.

Mr. Meadows: That's right. (laughter) Then next to that, of

course, is Craven Foundry.

Dr. Patterson: Okay, that's fine Ecky. Let's cross over the street and start at East Front Street again and head toward Craven Street on the opposite side from your house. What was there?

Mr. Meadows: First would be the city dump I guess. It used to be the site of an old lumber mill.

Dr. Patterson: Is this Union Point?

Mr. Meadows: Yeah, Union Point. The only thing that was left there was the old log pond. They would bring the logs in in big rafts from up the rivers, or down the rivers either, and put them in these ponds so that they wouldn't drift away. These were made with pilings stuck all around so they would be solid. That was about the only thing that was left of that lumber mill, cause it's gone out of business. See, about 1922 they finished cutting all the virgin stuff around here. They had 23 lumber mills in New Bern and they were all around. I mean, New Bern, and the vicinity of course. They were all around. There were three or four in Bridgeton and there's two over here on Trent River. But you can still see the log pond there at Scott's Creek where there's one by the thing. So there were a lot of lumber mills there.

Dr. Patterson: The pond at Union Point, now did that take up most of the area that's now filled in?

Mr. Meadows: Part of it. There was a little land there where the lumber mill was, see. The pond was on out into the river and it was filled in later as part of the city dump but with

the

garbage and trash.

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember it as a pond?

Mr. Meadows: Yeah, I remember it as a pond before they started putting the trash pile in.

Dr. Patterson: When did they start making this area the city dump?

Mr. Meadows: I would judge that it must have been somewhere around 1926 or '27 it seems to me. I'm not sure about that, but somewhere along in there that they started hauling in the trash and pushing it around a little bit. Of course they didn't have the fancy bulldozer and everything they got now.

Dr. Patterson: What sort of things do they put down there?

Mr. Meadows: Everything. Mainly the junk cars. That was our good thing. We'd go in there and get the gas lines and the copper pipe out from underneath the junk cars and take them down and sell them to Goldman. Goldman had a place down on South Front Street down there now where the garage was that's just been torn down, Alcoke's garage. So we would take that copper pipe and other metals to him and sell them and make our spending money. So that was our big thing down there. Then we always had a good rat hunt down there. We'd go down there about dusk when the rats would come out; first with our air rifles, and then when we got a little bigger we got 22's, so we could really shoot them then. Finally, Crabby made us a real rat gun. He put a flashlight with

a small spot on the bottom of a little 9mm shotgun. It had a bullet about big as a pencil, but it had a lot of little shot in it. If you put the rat in that spot and pulled the trigger, you had a rat. (laughter)

Dr. Patterson: Ecky, when did the reconstruction of this junk area begin?

Mr. Meadows: I can't place it right off hand. It probably was while I was off at the war I'd say offhand.

Dr. Patterson: Ecky, as you left Union Point then and walked up South Front Street toward Craven, there used to be houses all along that street. Can you remember them and describe them one by one as you walk toward Craven?

Mr. Meadows: The first building of course was the Meadows Company office building on that side. Then there was an open parking area next to it. Beyond that was Hudnell's coal and wood yard. Hilton Hudnell was a member of the First Presbyterian church that died recently. His father ran that. Then there was another small house there. As a boy, it was occupied, but it went into bad repair and was unoccupied for a while there. I don't remember anybody specific that lived there because it was, as I say, a very small house. Then there was a vacant lot. Dad had built a marl based tennis court for sister and them. Then the Dill house, Sam Dill II. There lived Pauline and Ada Williams who are Uncle Ellis Williams' daughters. Bessie Dill was Uncle Ellis' sister and she raised the girls for him after his wife died. He

was an engineer on the merchant ship. He sailed out of Boston mostly or Rhode Island and those places up there, so he was just home very rare because he had to be his chief engineer on those ships. Pauline and Ada both went to Florida. Ada married. I don't think she ever had any children as I recall. Pauline married and was divorced later. The next house was the Davis house. It was a Tom Davis. He had two sisters and I can't place the names of them. Tom and them moved away fairly early while I still a young boy. The next house was the, I can't place the people there either, but the house next to that was Shoot Hall who was Charles Hall. Shoot was the manager of the Seashore Transportation company for years. He's retired to Harker's Island now. Down there where he can fish.

Dr. Patterson: We've interviewed Shoot.

Mr. Meadows: Good. Of course Shoot was a pretty good fellow. I guess he was into everything. He was the main boat driver for dad's outboard boats. He won a lot of medals and things around eastern North Carolina. He'd go to Wilmington and up to Elizabeth City and different places and take out boats and he won a lot of cups and things. Of course the Depression cut that out right quick. But Shoot had the first radio. You'd go over to Shoot's house and listen to Amos and Andy and all these shows. He was the first one to get an airplane and he got his flying license and all. He was always our, being four, five years older, he was one we kind of looked up to for these kind of

things.

Dr. Patterson: How far are you now from the corner of Craven Street?

Mr. Meadows: Well, next to that is the Harvey mansion. Bobby Sparrow lived in one of the apartments there. His cousin, Don Sparrow who lived on King Street, was another one of our buddies that came around and played with us there. Of course our main playing field was the middle of South Front Street. There wasn't enough traffic to bother us much late in the afternoon and we could go play tag football or just chunk baseballs or whatever.

Dr. Patterson: And there was no bridge to bother you.

Mr. Meadows: No bridge there to bother you or anything like that. It was generally a good wide open area where we didn't have to worry too much about breaking windows and things. Next to the Harvey mansion was another small house that doesn't register anything to me. I don't remember who lived there or anything about it. Then there was a big building. J. C. Whitty & Sons was the farm equipment dealer. John, his middle son, and Pretty, we called him, I've forgotten what Pretty's (Fred) name was, but he probably was the oldest son and they moved on out to, I believe it was Pasteur Street, somewhere out that way and had a farm equipment business for a while. Around the corner on Pollock Street there was another business, a building supply building.

Dr. Patterson: On Craven Street or Pollock Street?

Mr. Meadows: You're right, Craven Street. I'm sorry.

Craven Street. Now I'll get it. There was a building supply business.

Dr. Patterson: This is Mr. Mark Stevenson's building.

Mr. Meadows: Right. Below that was a warehouse that went down to the river and had its own thing and that was Bishop's originally, E. K. Bishop's Building Supply, I mean, sugar warehouse we called it. They brought in sugar and general merchandise in a big way I'd guess you'd say. They were a wholesale place. Along the river of course was, going back was my dad's shipyard and he had three railways there. Small boats, he could take up a 25 foot boat to a big one that would take up a 150 foot boat, or three or four small boats if the occasion arose. Next to that was a warehouse that Uncle Dick Williams had. Originally, it had been the New Bern water and light plant. He later sold out to the city and the water and light bill's been going up ever since. On beyond that was Crabby's Machine Shop.

Dr. Patterson: We're going east aren't we?

Mr. Meadows: Yeah, we're going east now on the riverfront. Beyond that was Crabby's shop and it backed up to the stables and one of the storage places for hay, for the J. A. Meadows company this was. Next to that was the power plant. They burned slabs that they got from lumber mills as fuel. You'd send a truck over and the lumber mills were glad for you to take them away cause they clutter up the place. But they burned slabs and made enough steam so they could run the railways and all originally over at

the shipyard as well as heat the boilers in the office and so forth. Behind that was the grist mill and the feed mill where they made corn meal and mixed feed for horse food and hog food and cattle feed too. Dad made up all those formulas for that stuff. He went up to New York somewhere and took a special chemistry course and things like that so he could make up those formulas more scientifically. There was a warehouse right out on the water. Crabby got dad to lease that to him to make Crabby's clubhouse. He put in a pool table for us and dressing rooms for us so we could take our bathing suits down there and just leave them and then we wouldn't have to be tot'n stuff back and forth from home. He built us diving boards and all these things. It got to be the regular meeting place during the summer. After everybody was out of school, we'd all go down there and spend the day in the river. At that time the cutter "Pamlico" was moored there too. I think Papa Simmons originally had got her assigned here to take care of things around New Bern. She was the oldest thing in the Coast Guard. When they finally decommissioned her, she was - the keel was laid back in 1906 I think. Way back there. Of course she was steam driven and had old boilers and everything. We got to know the sailors of course good, and the captain, he still used to write dad after he left. Then one of the later captains, dad helped out on several occasions there when he had problems, of course being in the shipyard business. Then we come of course back to the city dump. On the other side of the



road of the city dump was the veneer plant we called it. They made veneer mostly for just boxes for shipping stuff in.

Dr. Patterson: Excuse me Ecky. Was this right on Union Point?

Mr. Meadows: It was on the other side of the road there on Union Point, you see.

Dr. Patterson: South Front Street went right into Union Point?

Mr. Meadows: Right. In other words, South Front Street went down to the water you might say at Union Point there originally. On the left hand side of the street over there where part of the park is now, well, it used to be the Texaco tank farm, was where the veneer plant was. Three houses down was the Gwaltney house. Of course there were a bunch of the Gwaltney's.

Dr. Patterson: This is on the east side of East Front Street as you start at the corner of South Front and East Front and head north on East Front. The Gwaltney house was the first house.

Mr. Meadows: No, I think the Gwaltney house was the second or third house is my remembrance of it. Bill Gwaltney was one of the older ones, and Sylvia and Maude and Joe. Joe, I think is still living down at Oriental.

Dr. Patterson: Sylvia and Maude are both in New Bern.

Mr. Meadows: Right. I think Bill's dead. Bill was with us down at Camp Kiro. Mr. Gossard asked him to be assistant camp director one year. I guess this was about '28 or something like

that, during the Depression. The only reason I got to go was I had saved up a little money that I had been making, and I pulled it out of the National Bank just in time and used it to go to camp.

Dr. Patterson: What were some of the other houses in that first block of East Front Street Ecky? On that side next to the Gwaltney house?

Mr. Meadows: I can't place them.

Dr. Patterson: Let's go back a minute. You mentioned Crabby. He has been the topic of many interviews. Tell me about Crabby. Who was he and what did he do?

Mr. Meadows: Crabby was a mechanic and he could fix anything. I was telling you about the rat gun he made for us boys. He was always doing something for us. We would hang around his shop even before he had the clubhouse. I think to get rid of us was one reason he got the club started because we were getting in the way. He had a little corrugated tin shop there that dad built for him. He had his own tools and equipment of course, but the shop itself was put up there for him. He had a lathe and drill presses and all these metal working tools. He was able to manufacture parts and things when some of the equipment on the railway broke or something like that. If he couldn't make something to fit it, we'd go to Craven Foundry and get them to cast us one. He was a minute fellow. He could fix the little things, which always surprised us about him cause he had one

finger cut off anyway and so he didn't have those little fingers. But he had a little pair of tweezers and he could pick up things with those tweezers and put them in place.

Dr. Patterson: Ecky, who all belonged to Crabby's club?

Mr. Meadows: It seems to me that most all the boys on South Front Street. Of course there was Johnny Mitchell and Andy Fuller and Gene McSorley and Bucky and I. I think the Paterson boys, it seems to me like they had left by the time that Crabby's club was organized. I think Buzz had gone to school or something. I don't recall him being there either. The boys came from all over town.

Dr. Patterson: Well, first, it was a very select group.

Mr. Meadows: Right.

Dr. Patterson: The South Front Street boys, but then you opened the gates to some "foreigners" from downtown New Bern didn't you?

Mr. Meadows: Oh yeah. We opened it up so that anybody could come down from that section of town. So we had quite a crowd there often. We'd have swimming races and diving contests too as well as just messing around. Then Crabby helped us design a diving helmet. He cut off a top of an old hot water heater, a thirty gallon one I guess, and put some padding on the edges there so it could rest on your shoulders, then run a tube from the top entrance of the thing on back up to a pump. Then the air on top would pump air into you. He put a face plate in front of it so you could see. Of course it was always so muddy, so you can't see

anyway, but it was an idea. (laughter) So we were able to experiment with diving under water. We'd go down the ladder with this big metal thing on your head, cause once you got in the water, the air in there would take up the weight of the thing, so it wasn't that bad. It was just getting in the water that would make it hard. We had a lot of fun messing with things like this. And of course the pool table. We always had our pool contest. Some were better than others. We always enjoyed that.

Dr. Patterson: Ecky, we talked about Meadows Shipyard, and many people have talked about it. Would you speak to that a little bit more? What is the history of the Meadows Shipyard and what all was done there?

Mr. Meadows: I think that my grandfather started the shipyard, but dad and Uncle Ed were running it. O course when I knew anything about it, it had all gone to them. Dad was, again, the designer of the boats and things that they built down there. Like I say, he had gone up to New York to get this engineering work. But dad went to Virginia for his college degree and he took a little extra business there, but generally he just took a regular liberal arts course there. He took a chemistry course too, actually, there. But most of the stuff he had to get from experience I guess. My first remembrance of it was building a big yacht called the "Decoy" for Vernon Blades. That's one of the first ones that I remember. This was a pretty good size yacht with wide beams so it was comfortable and had lots of room down

below with a big awning over the top so that they could get up on top too and everybody could gather up there. But he designed and built this one. Of course, Vernon being in the lumber business, got the best mahogany that he could get a hold of and make it very pretty.

Dr. Patterson: That boat was later bought from Mr. Blades by the Ward family and stayed in the Ward family for quite a while. Al Ward used to run it quite a bit. I've been on that boat many times.

Mr. Meadows: My first job down there, when I was eleven, Mr. Barbour hired me to paint and to drive plugs. It was ten hours a day, fifteen cents an hour. I got down at seven o'clock and had an hour off for lunch and get off at six. I made a dollar and a half a day and that was big money. That's where I got my money to go to camp. We built two big Menhaden fishing boats, about a hundred foot as I recall. They were both sitting up on their launching ways. They put the launching ways under to start off with, see, and then built them from that on up. I did the first coat painting, mostly inside, but sometimes on the outside, and then all those little plugs. They would put the deck plugs, the planking, you had these big spikes and then they'd drill a round hole so that the spike head had to be seated down into the plank. Then you would put some paint in there to seal it and put these little old wooden plugs in there. You had to get them just straight so that the grain ran the same way as the grain in the

deck. I was driving plugs and then you would take the chisel and chisel the plug off flush with the top of the deck so that you wouldn't have anything to stumble over when you were walking down the deck or keep clean. So I drove a million plugs I reckon in those two boats.

Dr. Patterson: So at the shipyard, small boats were made, yachts were made, fishing boats were made.

Mr. Meadows: Correct. We made all different types. Of course the boats that we remember were the Sharpie. This was a twenty-five foot sailing boat with a sharpie rig. It had a club and a mast, and originally a jib too. Later on, we re--adjusted the mast and put it further forward so that they could do away with the jib caused it was just getting in the way more than anything else. Of course it didn't make for a fancy sailing boat like that, but that wasn't what we wanted. We just wanted something to sail around the river in. As the sail rotted out, it was the Depression and we didn't have any money, and dad found one of the tarpaulins off of a sugar barge that burned up. He salvaged it after the barge caught on fire and they cast it a loose so that it drifted down the river and ended up over across the river here where it sank and has later been made into a fishing reef. Anyway, we used that thing to make us a new sail. We sewed it all by hand with palms. We all got it spreaded out there on Crabby's floor where everybody could get around and work and made us a sail. The Sharpie was, of course, our main

recreation for sailing and all. I think you went on one several times.

Dr. Patterson: Ecky, we'll get back to sailing in a bit, but let me ask you about the shipyard again. How long did it stay in operation? When did it close?

Mr. Meadows: I guess it closed with the rest of them there about the time of the Depression about 1928, '29, something like that, right in there it closed up. We took a sixteen foot skiff they had been using around the place there for general work down to Minnesott and delivered to a man down there. I think that was '29.

I would say that general operations were pretty well closed up. There wasn't anybody that wanted any repair work they couldn't do themselves. The fishermen and the yachtsmen, everybody would do their own repair work if they had to do anything cause they didn't have any money to hire the shipyard.

Dr. Patterson: What happened to all the holdings?

Mr. Meadows: I guess Barbour got a bunch of it. He opened up his boat works up there on a lot he had further down South Front Street.

Dr. Patterson: Did the buildings remain for a while?

Mr. Meadows: Oh yes, the buildings were around for a while. Again, all this happened when I went to school.

Dr. Patterson: This is a good time to get back to what happened to you after being a young boy on South Front Street.

Your life is so interesting it seems we ought to pick things up as we go. But let's get you to school. Now where did you start school?

Mr. Meadows: School, of course, was in downtown New Bern there. We started school in I guess the Bell building.

Dr. Patterson: That's the school green, Central School.

Mr. Meadows: Central School. Miss Mollie Heath was first grade teacher and Miss Lizzie Hancock was the second grade teacher. And because of bad health, I had about that point, I think it was probably malaria and jaundice and one thing then another, I stayed with her a couple of years. So I ended up one grade below my chronological friends. Then Miss Ruth Berry was the third grade teacher. Miss Bell had the fourth grade I believe. I've lost track now of who after that til we get in high school and then the eighth grade I believe was a Miss Blackwell, room teacher.

Dr. Patterson: Ruth Blackwell.

Mr. Meadows: Yeah. And of course the civics teacher was Coach Alston. Also, of course, he was the football and baseball coach. I tried to play football at 90 pounds til I made the fourth string. (laughter) I got to play twice. I had a hard time in school as usual cause I had my mind off yonder instead of on the book.

Dr. Patterson: What year did you graduate from high school?

Mr. Meadows: I graduated in 1934.



Dr. Patterson: We were in the same class when we came along.

Mr. Meadows: Yes. Right.

Dr. Patterson: Did you get in much trouble during your school days?

Mr. Meadows: I think I usually did pretty good. I remember one time I even got on to the student council. They elected me to that. So I must have been pretty good.

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember fights on the school green?

Mr. Meadows: Oh yes.

Dr. Patterson: What were they like?

Mr. Meadows: They were like any other good fights. We'd have them back and forth. Sometimes we'd get bloodied up a little bit.

Dr. Patterson: Ecky, where did you go after high school?

Mr. Meadows: After high school I went up to North Carolina State in Raleigh and took a course in agriculture and soils mainly. Then I came back and farmed a little, and bought potatoes, and one thing and another. Then the Navy started talking about having this officer's training program called V-7 program and I got interested in that. So in June of '40 I went up to Raleigh and talked to a recruiter up there and he said that he would okay me for it if I got a cardiogram made because of a heart murmur that I had. From that, I got into the Navy and went to the V-7 program and went up to New York and got on the Wyoming who Captain Donald Patterson, your uncle, was captain of. I spent a

month on there.

Dr. Patterson: Pretty big battleship.

Mr. Meadows: Yeah, a big battleship. Training duty for a month. We went down to Guantanamo Bay and back, stopping off in Norfolk. Then came back and went through the regular ninety day course that had been set up there in New York and went on to active duty. I was on the Saratoga, the first aircraft carrier there. I spent thirteen months on it and then was transferred to armed guard on merchants ships for a couple of years. From there, I went to sub chaser school. I lined up for DE but they gave all the DE's to the Coast Guard at that point.

Dr. Patterson: What is that? Gave the what?

Mr. Meadows: The DE's, the destroyer escorts. So they gave me the LST. (laughter)

Dr. Patterson: So you became commander of a LST?

Mr. Meadows: Captain of the LST. I went up to Solomon, Maryland and trained my crew, then went over to Louisville, rather Jeffersonville, Indiana across from Louisville, Kentucky and brought her down the river with the Coast Guard acting as a pilot. Then we put her in commission in New Orleans and went to Galveston and Panama City and then on up to New York, Boston, and on over to Europe for the Normandy Invasion. We practiced around southern England there. We made most of those ports there and did our practice landings there. Made thirteen trips to Normandy, back and forth.

Dr. Patterson: Carrying troops?

Mr. Meadows: Yeah, carrying troops and often bringing back casualties. We had these two hospital units aboard with doctor and necessary corpsmen on with them. The space down on the tank deck, the big deck below, they had stretcher carriers on each side so that they could just put the stretchers right in these brackets and they carried the casualties that way. That way we could handle, well, up two hundred and something if it was a trip. We brought them back. On two trips out of those thirteen, we had to carry them to the ward. We went to southern France down in the Mediterranean, and from Africa to southern France, and from Africa to Sardinia, and then from Sardinia to southern France, and Italy.

In Italy, I ran into Betsy Williams, and so Betsy and I got in a small boat and ran over to Stanley Claypoole's cruiser. He was paymaster, and I tried to get in touch with him. I didn't have much luck. He was off somewhere picking up some supplies. So we left out there and went over to visit Tom Bass on his sub chaser.

Tom had a sub chaser tied over in Naples harbor there and I remember came aboard there and he greeted us warmly and all. We had a good time talking.

Dr. Patterson: How did you know that they were there?

Mr. Meadows: We had our own code to get up with these people. What I did was write Betsy, said, "I'll be in Naples sometime during the week of my birthday." She was down in Saronto I believe it is.

Dr. Patterson: She was in the Red Cross.

Mr. Meadows: Red Cross down there. She had the doughnut wagon or whatever you call it, that kind of stuff. So we had a big time and we went back to see Stan. He didn't like it at all cause we were in our unpressed uniforms and all and here he was on the Admiral's ship and all spit and polished. (laughter) Anyway, we had a good visit with him anyhow. But we did get to see him over there. Then I came on back and went to the Pacific through the canal and all. Every monthly, you of course got in. Then I ran into you right on into Einewetok in the officers club out there and we had a good talk there.

Dr. Patterson: I was on the Florence Nightingale headed for Okinawa.

Mr. Meadows: Right. You might be interested in this note I got from Garland Bell. He just said he missed me and he tried to call, and we were out birding somewhere of course and I didn't get to see him. But Garland reminded me that we had run into each other over in the Philippines, and so I saw him over there. Garland lived in one of those small houses. I think it's the one next to Gene's, between Gene and the Craven Foundry there, my remembrance of it, at some point. This house, as I say, was back before, was rented property and so it was different from time to time.

Dr. Patterson: Where did you go in the Pacific Ecky?

Mr. Meadows: After I left you in Einewetok, we went to Guam,

and from Guam we went to the Philippines, and from the Philippines I made a trip down from Luzon down to Mindanao and picked up some troops from the Air Force and brought them back up Luzon at Subic Bay. Then we made another trip from Subic Bay up to Okinawa and then came back and picked up our gasoline and smoke pots and went back up to Okinawa. So we sat around as Okinawa's filling station for the smoke pot detail. Whenever the kamikazes would come, everybody would make as much smoke as possible to hide the ships from them cause they usually came in on that line of sight thing you see. But if we could get enough smoke up, then they couldn't see anybody, so they had no targets.

Dr. Patterson: I'll tell you a sad story about that Ecky. I've heard this from a colleague of mine who was on Okinawa, a doctor like myself. Just before the war ended, a plane came in carrying a commanding officer and twenty some odd Japanese interpreters. The Navy used smoke pots that day because they expected another kamikaze plane. The smoke drifted inland and this plane with all these people, the Americans on it, crashed in the smoke and they were all killed. This happened almost next to the aid station where my friend was stationed and he helped remove the bodies. So, that was a sad thing about smoke pots.

Mr. Meadows: Right. Anytime you do anything like that, you know, there's gonna be side effects or what have you. But when you see one of those planes coming down at you, or it looks like it's at you anyway, from about 10,000 feet up, and he's coming

right straight down and you hear that engine roaring. We had that fifty-five gallon drums of gasoline all over our deck. He didn't have to hit but one of those. Now, that's all you wrote brother! It can be very frightening.

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember anything about the seawall on Okinawa?

Mr. Meadows: Yeah, it was steep. A high thing there.

Dr. Patterson: Well, I've told you this, but I'll tell you again. I was in command of a loading party to pick up our supplies on the beach and we were between the seawall and the ocean. We looked up and a kamikaze plane was heading for us, we thought. So we ran and climbed over that seawall like it was two feet high.

Mr. Meadows: I'll bet!

Dr. Patterson: And I saw it many years later and couldn't believe that we had done that. But we all got away. Where did you go after Okinawa?

Mr. Meadows: After Okinawa, they sent us up to be post office in Korea, so we went up to Inchon and worked there, and again, we sat around.

Dr. Patterson: That's what happened to all my mail.

Mr. Meadows: That's right. (laughter) I'm sure it did because they brought it in, but it looked like little dribbles at a time, and the boys processed it. We had a regular postal unit aboard as well as our regular crew, so we sat there and did postal

matter.

Dr. Patterson: Were you anywhere near Yung Dung Po?

Mr. Meadows: No, we were just in Inchon, that's all. I got ashore I think one or two times. But it wasn't too long after that that I had recommended my exec to take over command and go home on points, so it wasn't too long after that when I got my orders to come on back home.

Dr. Patterson: Did you come back to New Bern?

Mr. Meadows: Yeah. I came right on back to New Bern and helped dad with the farms for a year. Then I decided to go look for another job because there wasn't enough job there for dad and I both. So I went up to Washington and probed around up there and finally got things lines up for a job with the soil conversation service. When I got my time in from that, I retired. I went to Pamlico County for a year and worked down there as aide and then promoted to soil scientist. Then I went to Goldsboro for more soils training there and stayed up there for about two and a half years. I worked the area down here from there on per diem, so I would stay with the family and enjoy a visit while I was working here. I finally persuaded them into sending me back down here and just cutting the area in half and give me these five counties around New Bern and let the boy in Goldsboro do the other five counties up around Goldsboro. So I stayed here the rest of my time.

Dr. Patterson: When did you retire Ecky?

Mr. Meadows: I retired in I believe it was '73.

Dr. Patterson: So you retired in '74 after thirty years in service?

Mr. Meadows: Yeah.

Dr. Patterson: Did you move out here on the Neuse River shortly after that?

Mr. Meadows: No. We moved out on Neuse River in 1957. We built the house in '56 and moved out here in '57.

Dr. Patterson: Now, you and Sue were married when?

Mr. Meadows: We were married in '50 in September. So we've lived here ever since. Of course most of our retirement has been taken up with, I say, bird watching. We've covered about fifteen countries and been to Africa six times. We've been to South America five times. No, it would be seven now because we've been back twice now in two countries. We have been to Central America eight times. We're going back to Beleez in February.

Dr. Patterson: Ecky, let me get you back to this area. In your younger days and these days too, you are a great hunter and a great fisherman, when you were growing up, where did you all do your hunting and fishing.

Mr. Meadows: We did the fishing right here. Uncle Tom...

Dr. Patterson: Tom Williams.

Mr. Meadows: Yeah, Tom Williams, Betsy's and Amy's father, had his shad nets an all right out front just like I put mine out in the same area. We'd cast along the shore here and go up Duck



Creek and Northwest Creek over there where Fairfield Harbor is. Those were our fishing grounds. Then when we moved out to Green Acres, we'd fish in the creeks out there in Haywood's Creek and Wilson's Creek as well as Trent River itself. Hunting, of course, was on the farm out there. We had quail hunting and rabbit hunting and dove hunting right there on the farms. Then on occasion, of course, the boys would ask me down to Camp Brinson. I wasn't a member then. I went down there deer hunting right after the war. My first hunt I was to get a big eight point buck with my rifle I had captured over at Normandy, a little 30 caliber carbine.

Dr. Patterson: Yes, I've got one too.

Mr. Meadows: Then my first duck hunting experience was, Dr. Hand and dad hunted together, and they had a blind off Allen Patten's house down the river fom here, you know, where the ( ) live now. He had a big dairy down there and dad and Dr. Hand built them a blind down there and they had a bunch of decoys and everything. They took Billy and I into the blind one day. Billy had a little 16 gauge shotgun, and so they would let us take turns at shooting that. So, that was our first experience duck hunting.

Billy and I just went down to Portsmouth last Wednesday and Thursday trying to shoot ducks again, but the ducks wouldn't come.

Ducks are getting scarce down there. We saw a big flock of pin tails and some brant, but nothing would come to our decoys, so we had to give it up for this year.

Dr. Patterson: Ecky, I don't know much about Camp Brinson. Would you speak to that a little bit more?

Mr. Meadows: Camp Brinson is a deer and duck hunting camp down on the lakes, mainly Long Lake. It goes down to the gourd neck which is the point of Long Lake. Captain Walter gave the camp to a board of trustees made up of John Patterson and Gene McSorley and Virginia McSorley and several other nieces and nephews, that they are the board of trustees, and the Fuller boys. We have about 2,500 acres down there of woodland and swamp and a couple of ponds that make good deer hunting and duck hunting.

Dr. Patterson: That's been there for a long time.

Mr. Meadows: Yeah. They used it of course before Captain Walter died, but then as I say, after he died, he had willed it to the camp to be a camp. It was to go to his nephews, one of his nephews, after it had quit being a camp in other words. That's the way he left it.

Dr. Patterson: So this tract of land is privately owned?

Mr. Meadows: Privately owned.

Dr. Patterson: By this board of trustees right now or by the nephew?

Mr. Meadows: By the trustees. Camp Bryan had gravitated so that it got to be that it had more people from out of town in it than they did local boys. So in order to alleviate a situation like that, Camp Brinson decided that anybody had to be from Craven County in order to be a member of the camp. That was just a local

rule that they set up. The four boys, and Scotts; and Gene McSorley never was a hunter so he didn't join up, but we had several of the men from the Craven Foundry there that used to be members, and Billy Braddy. I remember Braddy's Laundry and Dry Cleaners. Elliott Street and different older members have died since then. So now it's down to the younger ones.

Dr. Patterson: Ecky, what was Camp Kiro like?

Mr. Meadows: Camp Kiro, of course, the name there, the Rotarians and Kiwanis got together and leased this piece of land or bought it. I think they bought it actually. Anyway, they put up a nice camp down there. It had about six or seven cabins and a big kind of a meeting place, recreation hall.

Dr. Patterson: Where's it located?

Mr. Meadows: It was located about nine miles down the river on the banks of the Neuse. It had a road in there. The road now is paved down to the river. But the road over to the camp, you have to go across a gully, was not paved, and as I remember it, we used to get a car stuck there during the summer once or twice. It was on a ridge over there and very high ground. It had a nice mess hall with a kitchen attached in the back. Then the cabins on one side and two cabins on the other; one, two, three cabins. Then in the water we had a diving platform and mooring platform to moor boats to. But as I recall, we didn't have many boats. Most of our recreation was walking along in the water and crabbing in the daytime and floundering in the night. That way we caught our

own fish and crabs which gave us a better menu, cause the Depression was coming along about this time. I went down there first when I was about eight years old and learn how to perfect my swimming a little bit. I had been paddling around a little , but they had a regular swimming course and so I learned better how to swim down there.

Dr. Patterson: Now this camp was started then in the 1920's.

Mr. Meadows: Yeah.

Dr. Patterson: The reason I asked, I had been told by someone that the buildings were the remains of the CCC Camp built in the early thirties, but that's not so.

Mr. Meadows: No, this is Camp Hatcher, not Camp Hatcher, but Camp, in other words, down at Fisher's Landing in the National Forest is another old boy scout camp site. This is strictly boy scouts as against the other one being a Y camp which was anybody you might say.

Dr. Patterson: Camp Kiro.

Mr. Meadows: Yeah. Anybody that had the money to pay for their room and board and so forth you might say. It was very inexpensive really. I've forgotten, but of course things were a lot cheaper then than they are now anyway.

Dr. Patterson: Ecky, are you saying that this boy scout camp might have been an off shoot of Camp Patterson, the CCC Camp?

Mr. Meadows: Yeah. I think it was.

Dr. Patterson: That was farther down the river?

Mr. Meadows: No, it was closer. Now, wait a minute. I want to get myself placed here. No, it's further down the river cause it's down more near where Magnolia Farms and those places are, in that area.

Dr. Patterson: Ecky, when you were growing up, what was river traffic like?

Mr. Meadows: The river traffic along here, say, we had the tug boats bringing in the rafts and logs to the lumber mills. The river barges would come with the sugar barges. Then of course the fishing boats would bring their fish and crabs and all in. Of course a lot of people had their own pleasure boats too. Dad had a speed boat that we all enjoyed because it would go real fast. I've forgotten what kind of engine, but there was an inboard engine in it anyway. Then the traffic of the boat races when they had them. Shoot Hall, who I was telling you about before, was one of our main drivers. Then Jarvis Arthur got into it later on, but this was after the shipyard had quit. The yachts would go by. And then of course we had the Sharpies that were sailing around. Several other people, like Fred, had their sailboats, and so the sailboats were back and forth.

Dr. Patterson: You mentioned moonlight sailing. Was that a big thing?

Mr. Meadows: We enjoyed it. We always went during the summer when it was pleasant. We'd get out and sail. Of course every now and then we'd get becalmed and I'd have to go in to talk

with the mothers about it to try to explain about the wind. It was a good excuse to stay out late. (laughter)

Dr. Patterson: Who all had sailboats in those days?

Mr. Meadows: I reckon Scrappy Green had one. I believe Theo (Theodore) Baxter had one.

Dr. Patterson: Betsy Williams?

Mr. Meadows: I don't recall that Betsy ever had one.

Dr. Patterson: Gerald Colvin?

Mr. Meadows: I don't remember him either.

Dr. Patterson: Not Gerald Colvin. Well, you and Sara had one.

Mr. Meadows: Yeah.

Dr. Patterson: That was just one boat.

Mr. Meadows: Just one boat.

Dr. Patterson: I remember these sails. I think we went out in your boat many times on those sails.

Mr. Meadows: Right. Oh yes. Later on, we gave the sailboat to the boy scouts after we got old enough to go to school, one thing, and another. So that's what happened to it. I think it finally sank and went out after that troop went out of business.

Dr. Patterson: I want to ask you, Ecky, about a mutual friend of ours who played an important role in our lives and many other people's lives, and that's Ben Hurst. Tell me about your friend Ben Hurst.

Mr. Meadows: Ben was one of those macho exercise boys. He

rowed his boat when he lived here. Of course he had built up his chest along with it, had gotten pretty hefty. So Ben went to Elon and played on the football team there. He was in pretty good shape most of the time and he would just enjoy getting out there in the water. He had his own boat, a big skiff. It's still on the beach down there. He brought it over here to preserve it before he died. We were trying to auction off all the furniture and stuff that he collected in that big old house on Broad Street there.

Dr. Patterson: That's the Thomas Green house.

Mr. Meadows: Yes, the Thomas Green house. Right in the middle of that they called and said, Ben's trying to take the boat across the river and it's sinking. So I rushed down across the river here. He'd gotten it all the way down to the foot of Trent River bridge and was sitting in there with the water up to his waist. Finally we persuaded him that I'd go get my outboard in my boat and pull him up towards up here. When I tried to tow it, my little motor didn't have enough strength with all that water in the boat to pull it. The boat would yaw one way and then the other. So the rescue boat finally towed it around here for us and put it up on the beach and it's sat there ever since. We rigged a sail. I had a sail off of a skiff I had. So we rigged that sail for Ben's boat and put a thorp in it that would handle the mast and he would use an oar to steer it and a lee board to keep it from yawing, we didn't have any center board like an ordinary

design boat. He didn't want to put one in there cause it would interfere with his rowing.

Dr. Patterson: Ecky, you have told this program some wonderful things about a way of life in New Bern that most folks didn't experience and it's just been great. I think we've covered the area very well and I want to thank you for the Memories program for letting us do this, and I want to tell you that I've enjoyed being here talking to you too. We're first cousins, and as I said earlier, I'm very glad of that. It's been nice being here and thanks a lot.

Mr. Meadows: Well, thank you Pat. I appreciate all the work you and Fred are doing.

Dr. Patterson: Okay, I'll close this then.

(Added remarks by Dr. Patterson.) Both Ecky and I agree about this. We have observed in these last years at looking back, New Bern was divided into definite areas as far as growing up was concerned. The young people on South Front Street knew little about what was going on in town and the other parts of town, and those of us in the town area, the downtown area, knew practically nothing about South Front Street. I have no memories of the Meadows Shipyard or of much of the Union Point story or the waterfront stores down there. There was Riverside, and there was Ghent, and of course there was a black section, and all of these areas were little individual communities where young people stayed to themselves pretty much. It's interesting too, that in downtown



and in the South Front Street area, the young people went different ways when they grew older. The South Front Street folks came back to New Bern and lived and worked after the war was over.

The downtown folks, young people for the most part, left town and went away into careers of medicine, law, and other careers, and the majority of them never came back again. Some of us, like myself, came back after many years. Ecky's remark was that the South Front Street boys came back to New Bern because they loved it and the downtown boys left New Bern because they wanted to make a lot of money! That may be it. But there does seem to be a difference looking back.)

END OF INTERVIEW