

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

ROBERT L. STALLINGS, JR.

INTERVIEW 1009

This is Dr. Joseph Patterson representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 1000. I am interviewing Robert L. Stallings, Jr. at his home. I will give the street address later. The number of this interview is 1009. The date is August 31, 1992. A third voice which may be heard is Mrs. Margaret Stallings, Mr. Stallings' wife. The interview is taking place in New Bern at Mr. Stallings' home.

DR. PATTERSON: We are beginning the interview with Mr. Stallings now and the address is 517 Hancock Street. This is his home and we are sitting in the parlor on the sofa ready to go with the interview. The first thing I would like to ask you, Bob, is your full name.

MR. STALLINGS: Robert Lee Stallings, Jr.

DR. PATTERSON: And where were you born?

MR. STALLINGS: I was born in Bridgeton, North Carolina in the family home at that time. There were about three houses there.

DR. PATTERSON: What year was that?

MR. STALLINGS: 1912.

DR. PATTERSON: You mentioned three houses. Did your family share three houses?

MR. STALLINGS: No. Actually, the families there were the Rymans. I don't know whether you ever heard the family name of Ryman.

DR. PATTERSON: R E I M A N S?

MR. STALLINGS: R Y M A N S. He had about seven children, he and his wife. All of them were well educated. I remember that the oldest daughter and son were graduates of, it wasn't Duke at that time, it was, what was it, Trinity?

DR. PATTERSON: Trinity.

MR. STALLINGS: Both of them have very nice careers in Washington.

DR. PATTERSON: Who were the Rymans?

MR. STALLINGS: Mr. Ryman was a Swedish.

DR. PATTERSON: Was he kin to you?

MR. STALLINGS: No, no.

DR. PATTERSON: But you were living in their houses in Bridgeton?

MR. STALLINGS: No.

DR. PATTERSON: What is the connection?

MR. STALLINGS: These were the first houses.

DR. PATTERSON: Oh, I see.

MR. STALLINGS: He owned his house and my grandmother owned ours at that time.

DR. PATTERSON: And you were living in one of the Ryman houses?

MR. STALLINGS: No, we were living in my grandmother's house.

DR. PATTERSON: I see. I just wasn't sure where the Rymans fitted into this story.

MR. STALLINGS: There really is no particular way other than they were early friends. I knew the children. The family was a relatively large one.

DR. PATTERSON: Bob, what did your father do?

MR. STALLINGS: My father was in the plumbing and heating business.

DR. PATTERSON: Was he in Bridgeton then?

MR. STALLINGS: No, he was in New Bern. I'm not too certain of some of the things about that.

DR. PATTERSON: Sure. What was the name of the business in New Bern.

MR. STALLINGS: Well, he was in business, and I can't think of the man's name. He and my father were in business together. He was a well known New Bern person. You would know his name immediately if I could say it. I can't say it. I'm sorry. If it comes back to me, I'll tell you.

DR. PATTERSON: Tell me about your brothers and sisters.

MR. STALLINGS: Well, I have one sister, Elsie, who lives in New Bern. She's the wife of Ralph T. Morris. Ralph was in business with us and Ralph ended up owning... My brother chose to go into the insurance business.

DR. PATTERSON: That's Livingston.

MR. STALLINGS: Livingston. I stayed in the business. I broke away from Ralph. The reason for our dividing the business was each of us had families and each of us felt that we had children who would probably want to take over our businesses. Of course, I went into the petroleum business; gasoline, oils, and so forth, and that was very good. My son, from that, went into aviation fuels and now his area of service is the southeast from Florida to Maryland and over to Louisiana. He enjoys his business, and I'm glad he did what he did. I have one daughter too. Don't let me forget to say that I have a daughter.

DR. PATTERSON: Yes. You have a son who's successful in the aviation fuels.

MR. STALLINGS: Aviation fuels, and my daughter is...

DR. PATTERSON: Mary.

MR. STALLINGS: Mary. Her field of specialty was counseling. Margaret would know her title of the high school, but she works for the New Bern High School.

DR. PATTERSON: She's done very well.

MR. STALLINGS: Yes.

DR. PATTERSON: I know both of your children. My children have known them through the years. How long did you all live in Bridgeton?

MR. STALLINGS: Really, my mother and father lived there until about 1952, and of course, I left in 1929 and went off to school. I went to The Citadel for one year and then came back to North Carolina State, did my undergraduate work at North Carolina State. Then in the late thirties I went over to Carolina and did graduate work.

DR. PATTERSON: In what, Bob?

MR. STALLINGS: Economics and business.

DR. PATTERSON: Now, you went to the New Bern schools. Did you go to school over in New Bern?

MR. STALLINGS: I went to the New Bern schools after the seventh grade.

DR. PATTERSON: Before that, you were in the Bridgeton schools.

MR. STALLINGS: Bridgeton schools, right.

DR. PATTERSON: When you came to New Bern, was it much of a change?

MR. STALLINGS: Oh, not a great deal. Of course it was making new friends, because the high school was large enough there were more

people with whom I became acquainted than I'd had an opportunity of before. I knew many of them, of course, from associations and activities within New Bern.

DR. PATTERSON: Do you remember any of your teachers in those days?

MR. STALLINGS: All I can remember is Miss Blackwelder?

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MR. STALLINGS: Do you remember her?

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MR. STALLINGS: I remember a very beautiful lady, that we all thought, who taught commercial typewriting and commercial courses. I can't think of her name. Do you remember?

DR. PATTERSON: No, I don't.

MR. STALLINGS: I should be able to remember her name. Of course, I remember Mr. Shields, who was the principal, very well, and Mr. Smith. We were good friends with both of them. I later became a member of the Rotary Club, and both of them at one time or another were members of the Rotary Club while I was a member. I thought a great deal of both of them. I remember when I was getting ready to go to The Citadel for my first year of college work, I had to have my transcript and Mr. Smith took me over and prepared my transcript from the original, which was in the high school office.

DR. PATTERSON: Bob, we're sitting here in this beautiful building that you and Margaret have done over and made into apartments and you all live in the top two apartments. This is the building where you

went to school and where I went to school.

MR. STALLINGS: Yes. Right.

DR. PATTERSON: Can you think back and describe this building the way it was in those days as best you can.

MR. STALLINGS: Well, of course, the colors used for decorating the rooms were different. My recollection is that part of the walls were an off-white and then the wainscoting was, I don't remember what it was, but it was more conventional. What you would have expected it to have been. There were two rooms on each side of the building.

DR. PATTERSON: On both floors?

MR. STALLINGS: The first and the second.

DR. PATTERSON: There were two rooms on each side on the first and second floor.

MR. STALLINGS: That's right. One of the later additions to each side was a fire escape on each side of the building. I don't know whether you remember that or not.

DR. PATTERSON: I'm not sure.

MR. STALLINGS: I think the state, or whoever promulgates fire rules, require that they have an upstairs and a downstairs additional exit for each of the rooms in the building, and of course, there were four rooms in the building. I beg your pardon, eight rooms in the building; four upstairs and four downstairs.

DR. PATTERSON: You mentioned a folding door for the partition in the rooms.

MR. STALLINGS: That's right. I did have those. I kept those

doors until about a year ago. They were interesting. I finally just had to get rid of them because I didn't have enough space to keep them.

They were large doors. I'd say they probably consisted of four folding, four doors which folded. They were large enough that the two rooms could be successfully opened into one room.

DR. PATTERSON: It certainly is interesting to think that all of our contemporaries, including the two of us, went to school in this building.

MR. STALLINGS: It is, isn't it?

DR. PATTERSON: Bob, when you finished New Bern High School, you went to The Citadel and then you went to State.

MR. STALLINGS: That's right.

DR. PATTERSON: And then you went to Carolina to study Economics.

MR. STALLINGS: Right. Then I went to the University of Illinois.

DR. PATTERSON: What did you do at Illinois?

MR. STALLINGS: Well, of course, I had a teaching fellowship and I went ahead with my graduate work toward a doctorate. I completed all my graduate work and took my orals and all that. I had to write a thesis. Well, I started my thesis and it seemed imperative that I come back to New Bern about that time. my father was getting older.

Well, I'd gone back to Carolina and had been appointed an associate professor.

DR. PATTERSON: In what?

MR. STALLINGS: I taught accounting. I really loved it.

DR. PATTERSON: How long did you stay there?



MR. STALLINGS: Well, of course, I went to Carolina in 1938 and then I was out for the four years for the war and then back to Carolina and then to the University of Illinois and then back to Carolina, and I was there until about 1952.

DR. PATTERSON: Then you came to New Bern.

MR. STALLINGS: Then I came to New Bern.

DR. PATTERSON: Let me backtrack a moment about these four years in the war. Could you describe your war career briefly? You were in the Navy, were you?

MR. STALLINGS: I was in the Navy. I was in what we call the Supply Corps. That's what I'll call it right now. I don't think that's the proper name. All my service was done within the states. I was attached first to the sub chaser training center in Miami, Florida.

Of course, the purpose of the school was to teach young men to operate vessels which could be used in anti-submarine warfare. The ships were rather small. I think my recollection is now, and of course that's been so many years ago, I think they were 110 feet long, 110 foot vessels. I can remember them. I was attached there to the sub chaser training center and I recall at one time while I was there that Chris Barker, his ship came in into port there. I didn't see Chris. Never had the opportunity. But I saw him from the dock up on the port part of the ship. I just recall that because somebody told me that he was going to be on. Well, I inquired if there was anybody from New Bern on there and he said yes. I don't remember his rank at that time, but Chris was there.

DR. PATTERSON: And you stayed in Supply Corps for four years.

MR. STALLINGS: I stayed in Supply Corps four years. No, I beg your pardon. I wasn't in the Supply Corps at this point. They transferred me to the Supply Corps. I was attached briefly up to the naval...what do you call a large naval installation?

DR. PATTERSON: A shipyard?

MR. STALLINGS: No, it wasn't a shipyard. Navy yard is what it was. There were very few of the large ones. Boston was one, New York, Charleston. Miami was a large naval activity but it was not as large as the others that I'm referring to. I was sent to the naval activity, which was outside of Boston, at Wellesly of all places, which was a delightful place. Margaret was able to go with me, which pleased us greatly. I stayed there for about six or eight months, I've forgotten how long, being trained. I was transferred from there to the Naval Air Station San Diego, which is across the bay really from San Diego. Have you been there?

DR. PATTERSON: I've been to Coronado, but I've never been to the Air Station.

MR. STALLINGS: Coronado was where the Air Station was. Of all the things, I know that we were the envy of so many other individuals, but we were ordered to quarters. But, Coronado, which is across the bay, and the Naval Air Station is really an extension of the island, which Coronado was located on.

DR. PATTERSON: And you were stationed there for quite a while?

MR. STALLINGS: About three years.

DR. PATTERSON: That was pretty good duty.

MR. STALLINGS: That was excellent duty. My commanding officer in the Supply Corps was absolutely irate with me that I wanted to get out of the Navy at the end of the war. He couldn't understand it. Of course, he was a regular Navy and he just thought I ought to stay in the Navy.

DR. PATTERSON: When were you and Margaret married?

MR. STALLINGS: Lord, lord.

DR. PATTERSON: About how many years ago?

MR. STALLINGS: About fifty-two. (laughter) We'll get Margaret in this. But I think it was October 18, in the fall of 1941.

DR. PATTERSON: She was from South Carolina.

MR. STALLINGS: South Carolina, Charleston. We met at the University of North Carolina where Margaret was a graduate student too.

DR. PATTERSON: Now, you came back to New Bern in '52 to enter your father's business, is that correct?

MR. STALLINGS: Well, actually, Ralph and my brother had started another business that we all became a part of. It consisted of appliances and propane gas. Do you know where the funeral home is on...

DR. PATTERSON: Neuse Boulevard?

MR. STALLINGS: Neuse Boulevard.

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MR. STALLINGS: Well, we built that building.

DR. PATTERSON: Your father's business had been down on Craven Street.

MR. STALLINGS: Craven Street. 70 Craven Street. I remember the number quite well.

DR. PATTERSON: That's where Mitchell's Hardware is now located.

MR. STALLINGS: No. They're farther down. Do you know where the little luncheonette is on Craven Street across from the Dunn building?

DR. PATTERSON: Yes, Fred and Claire's.

MR. STALLINGS: Well, my father's business was in the building next to that.

DR. PATTERSON: I see.

MR. STALLINGS: 70 Craven Street was the number. I recall the number.

DR. PATTERSON: When you came back, though, the business had moved out on Neuse Boulevard?

MR. STALLINGS: Right. No, no, it had not.

DR. PATTERSON: It had not.

MR. STALLINGS: Well, we started building and moved out there shortly after I came back to New Bern.

DR. PATTERSON: Did you stay with the business for quite a while after that?

MR. STALLINGS: Yes, we were all together until, I don't know whether I can reconstruct the order of occurrences or not now, it's been so far back. Well, we occupied the building in the early 1950's.

It's the building that the funeral home is in now.

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MR. STALLINGS: I don't recall the name of the current name.

DR. PATTERSON: It's the Cotton Funeral Home.

MR. STALLINGS: Cotton Funeral Home, right.

DR. PATTERSON: Did you stay with that business all through your business career in New Bern?

MR. STALLINGS: Yes. Let me see if I can reconstruct that. We stayed in it until the mid-fifties. Now, I really need to think in order to reconstruct the order of events. We had done very well in the business. Each of us felt that it would be beneficial for us to each take a part of the business and develop it so that we would have something for our sons to do. We felt that it would be impossible to bring all the children into the one business that we had. So we divided the business and I took gasoline and oil. I was a distributor of Phillips 66 products in this area, Carteret, and of course, now, what's wrong with me, I can't recall the name of our adjacent county.

DR. PATTERSON: Pamlico?

MR. STALLINGS: Pamlico County, right. At any rate, my brother went into insurance, which we had started; and Ralph, propane gas, Ralph Morris, propane gas.

DR. PATTERSON: You stayed with the Phillip 66 business for quite awhile then?

MR. STALLINGS: Quite awhile, yes. I had a very nice relationship and got along well with them.

DR. PATTERSON: Did you finally wind up your business career in that capacity when you retired?

MR. STALLINGS: Yes, I sold that when I retired. It was purchased by a man from...lord, lord...

DR. PATTERSON: Well, that's all right, Bob. Now, you have meant a great deal to New Bern through your entire career and you have many sides to this which we really ought to talk about. I'd like to start with your political career. Now, you became mayor of New Bern. When was that, Bob?

MR. STALLINGS: 1957 I believe.

DR. STALLINGS: And how long were you mayor?

MR. STALLINGS: Four years, two terms. You were limited to two terms, which I thought was a very good thing because I know of many towns in which an individual has stayed on and held the office of mayor for a long number of years. I think that really having good people, and New Bern I think has had good mayor. But I had four or five good aldermen with me.

DR. PATTERSON: Who were your aldermen?

MR. STALLINGS: Kathleen Orringer, Dale Millns, "Skeeter" Richardson, Jimmy Simpkins. Now, that's four. Now, the fifth one's gonna come hard - Teensy Hodges, who was a capable individual.

DR. PATTERSON: As you look back at this four year period, could you just talk about what you did, what your regime accomplished, problems that you had perhaps.

MR. STALLINGS: Well, it was a good board. All of the individuals

who comprised the board were intelligent and wanted to see New Bern progress. I can't name any one of them who in anyway tried... We tried to do everything that we could to increase the prospects of New Bern becoming a better city. One of the things of course was, which wasn't completed until after my two terms were over, but at that time we did not have a sewage disposal plant. But we got the vote passed so that it became a matter of carrying on from that point, which was a lot left to do, but it wasn't anything that threatened to keep it from becoming a reality.

DR. PATTERSON: Was there opposition to that?

MR. STALLINGS: What's that?

DR. PATTERSON: Was there opposition to that?

MR. STALLINGS: No. I mean, we put it up. I mean, we had to have a referendum and it was carried by a surprising majority. Of course, there wasn't an alderman who wasn't in favor of it. I mean, there was no great controversy. It seemed to be just the right time to get it done. Of course, I went to Raleigh after this. I remember that I wasn't able to keep in touch with it closely, as close as I would have liked, but they did a marvelous job of handling it and getting the vote passed.

DR. PATTERSON: Is that the plant that is out at Glenburnie now?

MR. STALLINGS: That's right. That's the plant that's out at Glenburnie.

DR. PATTERSON: What are some other issues that your career faced then?

MR. STALLINGS: I need to refresh my memory.

DR. PATTERSON: Was it a time of pretty peaceful politics or was it pretty turbulent?

MR. STALLINGS: Well, we didn't have any evidence of any opposition from individual members of the board. Everybody wanted to get things done for New Bern. We were limited by, of course, money. When the referendum was held for the construction of the treatment plant so that we could take the sewage out of the rivers, why, it passed by a good majority.

DR. PATTERSON: Now, at that time sewage was being dumped actively into the Trent and Neuse Rivers.

MR. STALLINGS: Right. I was surprised that there were as many outfalls as there were.

DR. PATTERSON: And some along the Trent.

MR. STALLINGS: Along the Trent, right. Some along the Neuse.

DR. PATTERSON: One at the foot of New Street I know because that's where I lived.

MR. STALLINGS: That's right.

DR. PATTERSON: But there were others out toward Riverside?

MR. STALLINGS: I'm not certain just where they were located or how many were on the Neuse River side. I remember very vividly the one that you referred to at the foot of New Street.

DR. PATTERSON: Now, your years were from '57 to '61, is that right?

MR. STALLINGS: Correct.



DR. PATTERSON: By that time the bridge had been put at the foot of Broad Street and that was a fait accompli. Had Broad Street been widened by then?

MR. STALLINGS: Let me come back to that because there are several things that relate to it. I'm forgetting one of the other things.

Of course at this time, during this period of time that I was mayor, Tryon Palace was completed and opened. That was a great event. I mean, I thought that was a great event, because as mayor of New Bern I had served on the board of Tryon Palace from the times that I became mayor, and then I remained on it a number of years. Mr. and Mrs. Kellenberger were both living. Gosh, I should have written this down, the two ladies who were sisters.

DR. PATTERSON: Gertrude and Rose?

MR. STALLINGS: Well, Gertrude was there.

DR. PATTERSON: Carraway.

MR. STALLINGS: Gertrude was. Miss Rose didn't become so involved with that. She was working at that time and retained her job so far as I know. I have one or two other names that I should mention here.

DR. PATTERSON: Well, that was a pretty great accomplishment, that Tryon Palace thing, and we'll get to that. That's another facet of your career that deserves special attention. You were gonna get back to Broad Street.

MR. STALLINGS: Yes. Well, of course, Broad Street had to be widened in order to have two-way traffic, four lanes. Bill Babcock, I believe was his name, was the head of the highway division, the

civilian. He was a great person. He was enthusiastic about helping us get the money to widen Broad Street. He felt that something had to be done about the traffic going across the Neuse River and the Trent River. We really didn't know what would have been a real problem had he not been with us. I don't know what we would have done. But I can recall during our 250th anniversary, for example, the street had been widened to the extent that we were able to use one side of the street to have (I'm trying to find the name for a group of seats. You know, constructed, you see them at the high school football games and so forth.)

DR. PATTERSON: Bleachers.

MR. STALLINGS: Bleachers, right. We had a good program.

DR. PATTERSON: The bridge was put up about '52.

MR. STALLINGS: What's that?

DR. PATTERSON: When was the bridge opened? It had been several years before that.

MR. STALLINGS: Yes.

DR. PATTERSON: So, all the traffic that was coming from that bridge was coming from Broad Street as it used to be, the narrow street.

MR. STALLINGS: But the Neuse River bridge hadn't been opened.

DR. PATTERSON: It opened in the early fifties.

MR. STALLINGS: In the early fifties?

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MR. STALLINGS: The Neuse River bridge did open that early. I lost track of the date.

DR. PATTERSON: But to accommodate the traffic you had to widen Broad Street.

MR. STALLINGS: We had to widen Broad Street.

DR. PATTERSON: What was the public's response to that?

MR. STALLINGS: Nobody really particularly liked it, but we couldn't exist with the traffic trying to use Broad Street as it did exist then. It was too narrow. I think Broad Street was wide enough that there was room for some parking on it. The amount of space that was left was not sufficient for four lanes of traffic as we now have it. I really don't remember the width of the bridge now.

DR. PATTERSON: Did the people of New Bern make a great protest about this?

MR. STALLINGS: No, they really didn't. I know that there was some opposition. None of us wanted to change the attractiveness of Broad Street, which we knew was going to happen with the widening of the street. But the bridge was opened then.

DR. PATTERSON: But something had to be done. The trees had to come down.

MR. STALLINGS: This is one of the things which is much over exaggerated. Actually, you know, we've had about four hurricanes. I'd say that seventy percent of the trees have been taken down by nature, of the storms that occurred.

DR. PATTERSON: That's important to know because not many people speak of that.

MR. STALLINGS: That had occurred over several years and people

were just not aware of the fact that there weren't that many trees left because of the storms. I don't remember now how many trees there were. But, really, trees that had not been materially ruined by the storms, were, my recollection is something like seven or eight trees.

DR. PATTERSON: Well, that's really interesting Bob. Let me ask about another thing. During your tenure as mayor, were streets renamed? That wasn't a big thing.

MR. STALLINGS: That wasn't a big thing for me. I really didn't object to its being done. I didn't raise any objection, but I really wasn't enthusiastic about it neither.

DR. PATTERSON: How about annexation of additional territories?

MR. STALLINGS: No, we really didn't get annexation of additional territories at that time. One of the reasons was that when we went into office, we had practically no build-up reserve of funds or assets which could be used. We had to depend entirely upon our tax revenues and the revenues which came from the city ownership of the water and lights. So we did have that as a help. But had it not been for that, we could not have done what we did. When the disposal plant was constructed, there was a referendum and there were bonds issued at that time as I recall, but that occurred after my term.

DR. PATTERSON: At that time, was the city manager form of government in effect?

MR. STALLINGS: Yes.

DR. PATTERSON: Who was your city manager?

MR. STALLINGS: Craig Barnhardt.

DR. PATTERSON: For both terms?

MR. STALLINGS: No. For all of the first term and part of the second term.

DR. PATTERSON: Who relieved him? (pause) That's all right. Bob, let me ask you this question, what prompted you to get involved in running for mayor?

MR. STALLINGS: What prompted me? Well, I thought I could be progressive and I thought I would support things. I was enthusiastic about the fact that the board, I felt, would be cooperative in doing things for New Bern, and they were. I don't remember any squabbles on the board.

DR. PATTERSON: That's unusual these days.

MR. STALLINGS: Well, I guess it is. If there were any differences of opinion, they were very minor so far as I can recall.

DR. PATTERSON: When it was all over, when these four years were finished, were you satisfied with what you had done?

MR. STALLINGS: Well, yes I was satisfied. I mean, I felt that with the help of the board, with what the board had done and what I had done, why, we could look back with pride on those four years.

DR. PATTERSON: Who was the mayor before you?

MR. STALLINGS: Mr. Lupton.

DR. PATTERSON: Mack Lupton. And who succeeded you?

MR. STALLINGS: Well, I succeeded him.

DR. PATTERSON: You succeeded Mack, and then when you left, who became mayor? Was it Dale?

MR. STALLINGS: Dale, yes.

DR. PATTERSON: Well, Bob, when you left New Bern, you went back to Chapel Hill. No, you went to Raleigh.

MR. STALLINGS: Raleigh, right.

DR. PATTERSON: Now this began another important phase of your career. Would you tell me something about what happened then and how you got to Raleigh?

MR. STALLINGS: One of the things that we're neglecting is Tryon Palace.

DR. PATTERSON: We're gonna get to that.

MR. STALLINGS: All right.

DR. PATTERSON: That's a special topic.

MR. STALLINGS: All right. Now, what was your question?

DR. PATTERSON: I'm wondering about how you got to Raleigh and what you did in Raleigh?

MR. STALLINGS: I don't know whether you remember Joe Zaytoun.

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MR. STALLINGS: I had known Terry Sanford. Terry was then governor. Joe and I were friends. Joe was living in Raleigh then, and he suggested to Terry that there was a vacancy. No, what it was, Skipper Bowles, did you ever know Skipper?

DR. PATTERSON: I knew Skipper.

MR. STALLINGS: Skipper had been head of the Department of Conservation and Development. When I accepted the appointment from Terry, I became the Director of the Division of Conservation and

Development and Skipper became Chairman of the Board of Conservation and Development. The board sat in setting policies and I executed presumably those policies. Of course, I could be influential in the policies that we selected. Skipper Bowles, if you knew him, was just a grand person. Did you know him?

DR. PATTERSON: Yes, I knew him.

MR. STALLINGS: He was just one of those persons.

DR. PATTERSON: His brother was a good friend of mine, John.

MR. STALLINGS: John. I knew John, but not well. Skipper had held the job of Director of the Department of Conservation and Development. He wanted to be out of that and this is when I was appointed by Terry.

DR. PATTERSON: How long did you hold that position?

MR. STALLINGS: Well, I held it until the end of Terry's term. I believe Skipper served one year and I served three.

DR. PATTERSON: You came back to New Bern after that?

MR. STALLINGS: Came back to New Bern, yes.

DR. PATTERSON: Now, Bob, during those three years, you indicated to me recently that New Bern was still on your mind and you had certain things to do with getting industry located here.

MR. STALLINGS: The Department of Conservation and Development was divided into forestry, industrial development and six other divisions. I can't name them without making a list of them and I didn't do that before we began our conversation today. But next to the highway department, it was one of the largest departments of state government.

My job was the administration of the department. Skipper was a great help to me of course, but Skipper had only a policy setting board.

That was one of the things we were best known for. We had more calls from the citizens of North Carolina to "get me an industry." Everybody wanted an industry. New Bern had wanted one for so many years it seemed to me and worked so hard. Do you remember Olin Wright?

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MR. STALLINGS: He was head of our Chamber of Commerce and Olin had worked real hard. We hadn't been successful in getting the right fit between ourselves and an industry. Bob Whitfield, whom I spoke about, was assigned the Stanley Power Tools as a prospect who was interested in locating a business in New Bern.

DR. PATTERSON: Bob lived in New Bern? Bob Whitfield was in New Bern?

MR. STALLINGS: No, Bob Whitfield was a part of my department - which worked with industrial development for the state. He worked in Raleigh and wherever his work carried him.

DR. PATTERSON: In Raleigh, yes.

MR. STALLINGS: There were eight divisions of the Department of Conservation and Development.

DR. PATTERSON: And he was assigned Stanley Tools (which was an industrial prospect).

MR. STALLINGS: And industrial development was one. Bob had become, and I think I had a little bit to do with it because I thought he was likely to be the most likely one successful with this prospect,



was assigned this prospect and he brought them to New Bern. Bob, of course, worked to encourage the prospect to locate in the place that he seemed most likely to feel would be satisfactory for the proposed company to operate. Bob was real anxious to help me once he got involved. I remember one of the New Bern persons that really was enthusiastic was Genevieve Dunn. I never was able to learn, but I think Genevieve worked real hard too in entertaining the individuals who came to New Bern from the company. She worked with the people who came here to an unusually great extent. There were many other people too, I just can't call all the names. I shouldn't mention anyone's name because I know that there will be some other persons, New Bernians, who also were real anxious to have New Bern get an industry. Of course the enthusiasm of New Bern people felt this was an ideal industry; no smoke, no bad associations. Everything seemed to be ideal for an industry for a town like new Bern. Of course, Genevieve was one our friends, personal friend of Margaret's. I felt that I knew her and I was real delighted that she took an interest in it. Genevieve can do a lot of work. Of course she was younger then as I was. But we all felt very fortunate in getting an industry such as Stanley Products.

DR. PATTERSON: Stanley Tools came and stayed her for quite a few years.

MR. STALLINGS: Yes, long after I was back in New Bern, several years after I was back in New Bern. I recall when it was later sold to another company. I went to the ceremonies having to do with the

transfer of the company.

DR. PATTERSON: While you were in Raleigh in this particular setting, were there any other dealings with New Bern that came through your department?

MR. STALLINGS: Well, there was always some flow of activity. Through forestry, we have the Department of Forestry for example, and forestry of course is, you know, a great thing in New Bern. This division of forestry represented the forestry in state government. That's an example. State advertising was another division of the department and we had a man who had been there and was excellent at advertising. I'm so happy that he was there.

DR. PATTERSON: Was it about 1961 when you and Margaret came back to New Bern?

MR. STALLINGS: Yes, about 1961.

DR. PATTERSON: What did you do then?

MR. STALLINGS: Well, I went back to work among other things.

DR. PATTERSON: With this Phillip 66 enterprise?

MR. STALLINGS: Well, actually, after I came back and possibly a year or so after I came back, I went back of course into my original work with my family company. Then it was about two years after that, that we decided, (I don't remember the exact year, but I think about two years) that we decided that Livingston would take a part of the business, I would take a part that we wanted, and Ralph would retain the other. And Ralph's, natural of course, was propane gas. Mine was gasoline and motor oils. Livingston wanted insurance.

DR. PATTERSON: Bob, during this time when you came back to New Bern and while you were here and all of these years we've just talked about, you had told me that there were some other people that were important in New Bern. You mentioned Bill Edwards.

MR. STALLINGS: Bill Edwards, right. Well, Bill worked with Olin Wright. They were close friends. I don't know what Bill's arrangement was. Did you know his father?

DR. PATTERSON: I remember his father.

MR. STALLINGS: Yeah. Well, I think Bill was able to find more time and he worked a great deal with Olin Wright and the Chamber of Commerce. At times I think there was large heavy load of work, I think Bill was employed by the Chamber. Now these are things that I had nothing directly to do with.

DR. PATTERSON: But you were very impressed by these individuals. You spoke of Olin Wright.

MR. STALLINGS: Olin, of course, had this difficulty of both legs.

DR. PATTERSON: Both legs were amputated.

MR. STALLINGS: Amputated, and I've never known a man who had the determination and endurance that he had. You knew Bill's father too.

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MR. STALLINGS: What was his first name?

DR. PATTERSON: Was it William? I'm not sure.

MR. STALLINGS: No, I'm not sure either. I can't recall his name.

DR. PATTERSON: But, Olin Wright was a special person in your

mind.

MR. STALLINGS: Olin was a person who worked hard and he was determined. He had worked for so long for so many years for so many people in New Bern. Mr. Edwards who was head of the railroad.

DR. PATTERSON: The railroad.

MR. STALLINGS: The railroad, right. He owned the railroad I believe. In fact, I'm sure of it. He worked with us and put a great deal of effort into it. There were many others I can't name.

DR. PATTERSON: You mentioned Mr. Barnes with Maola.

MR. STALLINGS: Oh, Mr. Barnes, yes! Mr. Barnes with Maola and Mr. Edwards. Mr. Barnes was a real workhorse. These things involved many meetings and it took a great deal of time. He willingly gave of his time. Of course he had Maola too.

DR. PATTERSON: But he was working with you to make New Bern progressive.

MR. STALLINGS: Oh, yes. He was real anxious to help us. He did help us tremendously in getting the industry. He and Olin Wright got along very well together.

DR. PATTERSON: So both of these men were pretty important in getting things to New Bern.

MR. STALLINGS: They were enthusiastically interested in trying to get something for New Bern. Now, I don't know what other associations outside of New Bern that Mr. Edwards may have had of course. The railroad went from Goldsboro to Morehead City. I know that Mr. Edwards had two sons; Bill and Winslow, both were outstanding citizens.

DR. PATTERSON: His other son has a business out on North Craven Street. I know who you're talking about.

MR. STALLINGS: If we use his name, let's use his full name, Bill Edwards. But anyhow, they were the kind of people we really needed at that time.

DR. PATTERSON: Were there any other people who come to your mind as playing a major role in New Bern's development?

MR. STALLINGS: There were many other people. I didn't have the opportunity of becoming fully aware of all the people who were involved in the day to day work with these prospects.

DR. PATTERSON: Bob, in all the things you have done, I don't suppose any is more important than your role in developing Tryon Palace and working with Tryon Palace. Would you discuss that?

MR. STALLINGS: Well, it was something that I enjoyed and led me to an interest in supporting Tryon Palace by doing what I could. Margaret and I were both interested in doing what we could to supplement Tryon Palace with old homes and the restoration thereof. I got along well with Mr. and Mrs. Kellenberger, which I was very grateful for. Let me get another name. Margaret will know it.

DR. PATTERSON: Who is it?

MR. STALLINGS: Virginia Horne from Wadesboro.

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MR. STALLINGS: She was a wonderful person. I suppose that just by chance that the persons who worked closest with the Kellenberger's were Miss Virginia and myself and the two Kellenberger's and her sister.

Virginia had a sister who was never a member of the commission but who came with her sister whenever we had a meeting.

DR. PATTERSON: Mrs. Kellenberger was head of the commission then.

MR. STALLINGS: Mrs. Kellenberger was. Of course you know that Mrs. Kellenberger was the source of the funds which created and restored Tryon Palace.

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MR. STALLINGS: She was a wonderful lady.

DR. PATTERSON: What was she like, Bob?

MR. STALLINGS: Oh, just as nice as she could be and a charming person to be with. Margaret and I were able, and we weren't just trying to create something with the idea of getting an reward for it in terms of our community or in any other way for that matter, but they were just such outstandingly nice people and we met repeatedly. It wasn't twice a year or anything of that sort. Mrs. Kellenberger, by my being here and my being mayor at that time, why, they looked to me to do a lot of things that they might not have had we not gotten along so well. But we did get along well.

DR. PATTERSON: Was the commission then just the four of you?

MR. STALLINGS: No, no. We have a number of outstanding people on the commission. But most of them, of course understandably, could do special things, take a special assignment, but they didn't live in New Bern. The Kellenberger's were here almost constantly. The Horne's, Virginia, was here almost all the time with the Kellenberger's. I'd almost have to sit down and think of the sequence

of things that we did work on and how we worked. I was fortunate at that time, and I enjoyed it so much, in having my own business, so that I could work at night if necessary or do whatever was necessary and give time to Tryon Palace. I tried never to refuse to do anything that Mrs. Kellenberger asked me to do or the Horne's or Mr. Kellenberger. We did have a good relationship. I got more out of it I'm sure than they did.

DR. PATTERSON: Now, you became head of the commission subsequent to this.

MR. STALLINGS: Yes.

DR. PATTERSON: You remember what year that was?

MR. STALLINGS: Well, it goes on for a number of years and I can't recall the exact year. Miss Virginia Horne was the first vice-chairman.

I mean, this sounds like something I ought not to be talking about, but at any rate, she was getting elderly too. I don't know the background of it, but apparently she and her sister and the Kellenberger's had been close friends for a number of years, and I'm sure they had in other activities. As I said, Virginia had been the first vice-chairman. They decided that Virginia would resign and I would be appointed by Mrs. Kellenberger as first vice-chairman. I think Mrs. Kellenberger and Virginia, all of them were concerned about what was going to happen when Mrs. Kellenberger died or if anything did happen to her. None of us hoped it would and we didn't see it coming on so far as we were personally concerned, but she was elderly and she'd worked hard. She devoted whatever time was necessary to

the restoration of Tryon Palace to see that it was done properly and right. We owe a great deal, I mean, we just owe a tremendous amount to Mrs. Kellenberger and the Horne sisters; particularly Virginia, who was active on the commission. They decided, and I think this was about 1973, I need these dates straight, Mrs. Kellenberger and Virginia decided that Virginia would resign as first vice-chairman and that I would be elected to fill that position. I don't mean to sound as it may, but I enjoyed so much working with these people, and I was so enthusiastic about Tryon Palace that I was willing to make any sacrifices I possibly could in order to do it. But I thoroughly enjoyed it.

DR. PATTERSON: Now, you did become the chairman of the commission when Mrs. Kellenberger stepped down.

MR. STALLINGS: Yes. Well, first, Kel died.

DR. PATTERSON: Her husband.

MR. STALLINGS: Her husband. Kel looked good to me. I couldn't understand his death, but I know that he was ill. I remember one weekend he became sick and needed a doctor and I went and got Dale Millns to come and see Mr. Kellenberger on that Sunday morning. I recall that very vividly. Apparently at that time he was having difficulties which led to his death. At any rate, I don't remember the year that he died.

I should have reviewed these dates, but I didn't think of doing all that.

DR. PATTERSON: That's all right.

MR. STALLINGS: Anyhow, Virginia did resign and I was elected



as first vice-chairman. Then in the seventies, and I can't recall, Mrs. Kellenberger became ill. I had several meetings with her in Greensboro, her home, and then I saw her at the hospital. I mean, we knew that she was in effect going to die. She wouldn't be active again, so she resigned and I was appointed as chairman. I don't know whether there was ever a vote taken. (laughter)

DR. PATTERSON: She wanted you to do this.

MR. STALLINGS: She wanted me to do it and that's the way it worked. But to really do justice to this I need to go back.

DR. PATTERSON: About how many years did you continue on as chairman of the commission?

MR. STALLINGS: I continued on until the change of administration in the 1980's, wasn't it, '84, '85? It must have been '85.

DR. PATTERSON: Who succeeded you then?

MR. STALLINGS: George Ives. A very fine man.

DR. PATTERSON: During your years, what sort of things happened at Tryon Palace? It was developing all the time of course.

MR. STALLINGS: Oh, yes, it surely was. Mrs. Kellenberger, anything Tryon Palace needed, Mrs. Kellenberger found the money for. There was money left at her death too, her and Kel's death, considerable amount. I really need to go back. To give you a good story on this, I need to review some things.

DR. PATTERSON: I'm interviewing you. But if you'll let me speak to Mrs. Kellenberger for just a minute, I'll tell you a story about her.

MR. STALLINGS: All right.

DR. PATTERSON: When I was in practice in surgery here, I became ill and left Simmons and Larry Erdman and moved down to Freida Sultan's house at the corner of Broad Street and Metcalf Street and had an office there. This was in 1959, '60 era.

MR. STALLINGS: Right.

DR. PATTERSON: One day Mrs. Kellenberger came into my office. She sprained her ankle at Tryon Palace walking around. I forget who brought her there, but one of the ladies in New Bern. I examined her and sent her to St. Luke's to have an x-ray taken, cause I didn't have any x-ray facilities, and it was a negative x-ray. So she didn't fracture her ankle, she just sprained it. I wrapped it for her, and I remember I felt very good about this, I didn't charge her. I told her that anybody who had done as much for New Bern as she had done, wouldn't get a bill from me.

MR. STALLINGS: Right.

DR. PATTERSON: And that was my only contact with her. But, Bob, you did a great job in this particular role. As you look back on that, after you left, did you feel satisfied that that had worked out pretty well?

MR. STALLINGS: It worked out well I thought. I mean, of course, I'd had all the training that one could ask for under Mrs. Kellenberger and under Miss Virginia Horne. She was a wonderful lady too. I can see all three of them, her sister and Mrs. Kellenberger now. They were very positive about things they thought right, all of them.

Everybody was not always in agreement. I mean, we worked out an agreement and I have the benefit of really being one of them.

DR. PATTERSON: What was Gertrude Carraway's role?

MR. STALLINGS: Oh, Gertrude has been a wonderful person. Of course, she was just as close. I should have said more about Gertrude. I don't know why I didn't while we were talking. Gertrude was just, I mean, you know Gertrude as well as I do and she had been a life long friend of Mrs. Kellenberger's. I'm sure that Gertrude, I feel certain that she was influential in Mrs. Kellenberger going through with this thing of providing the money of the restoration of Tryon Palace. Of course you know they all worked together. I don't know why I hadn't mentioned Gertrude.

DR. PATTERSON: She was active all during this time when you were there.

MR. STALLINGS: Oh, yes. You know Gertrude became Director of Tryon Palace. She was director when Tryon Palace was opened.

DR. PATTERSON: Yes. Bob, do you remember the way it all looked down there before the restoration started?

MR. STALLINGS: Oh, yes, I can remember quite well. You know, of course, the street went straight on through.

DR. PATTERSON: That's George Street.

MR. STALLINGS: And part of a bridge. And down at the water's edge, why, off the highway, they had about eight or ten businesses down there. I remember Mr. Hamilton had a fish market and a restaurant down there. Do you recall that?

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MR. STALLINGS: I can't think of that boy's name now. I liked him. His father had a tire place down there. Can you recall that?

DR. PATTERSON: I'm not sure.

MR. STALLINGS: I may think of that name later, but anyhow, he was a nice person. Of course there was some opposition. We had to get one or two pieces of property and I can understand that the individuals didn't want to give up their property.

DR. PATTERSON: There were houses all along the street there.

MR. STALLINGS: There were houses along the street.

DR. PATTERSON: This is George Street.

MR. STALLINGS: Yes, George Street and Metcalf Street, and what's the street now just beyond Tryon Palace?

DR. PATTERSON: I can't tell you either.

MR. STALLINGS: I can't think of it. It's a street that the Tryon Palace parking lot is on (Eden Street).

DR. PATTERSON: That property had to be purchased. Those houses had to be paid for.

MR. STALLINGS: Purchased, that's right. That was done with Mrs. Kellenberger's money if I my memory is correct.

DR. PATTERSON: Where did all those people go?

MR. STALLINGS: Well, it wasn't as many people, really, as you think. None of the houses on Pollock Street, except for the house, and I can't call their name now. You know their father was in the building and supply business at the foot of Craven Street.

DR. PATTERSON: Stevenson.

MR. STALLINGS: Stevenson's, right. Eleanor's father and mother lived there.

DR. PATTERSON: Mark Stevenson.

MR. STALLINGS: Mark Stevenson, right. They were all very cooperative. There never seemed to be any difficulty in getting the property that they had there. I wasn't on the Tryon Palace Commission at that time.

DR. PATTERSON: At that time, the Stevenson house was right on the corner of George Street and Pollock Street.

MR. STALLINGS: Right.

DR. PATTERSON: And the street ran right...

MR. STALLINGS: Straight on through.

DR. PATTERSON: And the Eaton house was behind them on the same side, as I recall. Do you remember, as a boy, playing on the ruins of Tryon Palace in that block?

MR. STALLINGS: No. I mean, I never got involved in that. I wish I had. I remember the house that was left that became a part of the Tryon Palace.

DR. PATTERSON: That was a house that people were living in?

MR. STALLINGS: Yes. Then also, I think my memory is correct, you know the dependencies on each side of the Palace, one is where the carriage, or was the carriage house, and on the other side was the, what do we call it? There's a good name for it and I can't think of it. But, it contained the secretary's office, the kitchen, and

upstairs was a sleeping quarters for the servants. And if I remember correctly, I believe part of the servants were housed in the attic of the Palace itself.

DR. PATTERSON: Um huh. Well, let's leave Tryon Palace. We'll come back to it if necessary. But you and Margaret have done so much in other ways for the city of New Bern with restoration of old homes. How many homes have you restored?

MR. STALLINGS: Actually, including the Bell Building, four. And we've enjoyed every one of them

DR. PATTERSON: Which ones are they, Bob?

MR. STALLINGS: Well, the house, and I always think of it as the Duffy house, down on the corner of Craven and Johnson Street, that was the first one that we did. We lived there and we thoroughly enjoyed it. I was mayor. We were working on the restoration when I became mayor the first time, or for the first term. The house had not been occupied for several years. It was sound, of course, but I remember that there were vines growing through the windows and things like that which made it look much worse than it really was. Of course, we bought the house and we restored it from the basement up, and it was a beautiful house to live in.

DR. PATTERSON: That was one of Thomas Jerkins' houses.

MR. STALLINGS: Right. Of course we had our two children. This was in about 1955, '56. We had moved in before I became mayor, or before I was inaugurated, or whatever you do to become mayor after the election. We had to do all the basic restoration that was necessary

to the building. So far as the structure itself was concerned, we didn't have to do but very little work to the structure. The back porch, and I don't know whether you recall it or not, but was enclosed in glass. Do you remember that?

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MR. STALLINGS: The kitchen open was two stories and opened on the other end of the kitchen away from Craven Street. We didn't try to use the kitchen. We just took that down and added what is there now as a kitchen and made it more a part of the main body of the house.

Actually, we made it large enough so that we had a breakfast room and a kitchen too that served us very well. Of course we did the basement over too to suit us. We wanted a playroom for our children, and we did that and then used the front part of the basement for the utilities; furnace, water heater, and so forth. We did not put a basement underneath the office. But the office was a great addition to the house. I tell you, it really made it.

DR. PATTERSON: That was Dr. Duffy's office.

MR. STALLINGS: Dr. Duffy's office. We kept that. Well, we made it into one room, really, and opening off the one room was a bath for the downstairs room. Then we had a small, what do you call it? Kitchen, not a kitchen, but a place to prepare suppers and things of that point, supper for ourselves when we were home. Then the big part of the office, which had been the waiting room, we made that into our family living room. I know you've been in the house many times. The door opens directly from underneath the stairway into the office.

DR. PATTERSON: Right. Bob, how long did you all live there? About how many years?

MR. STALLINGS: I'd say about seven years.

DR. PATTERSON: Who bought it from you? Was it Pop Beasley?

MR. STALLINGS: Pop bought it, yeah.

DR. PATTERSON: And where did you go next?

MR. STALLINGS: Well, from there we went around the corner down on Change Street. It's the house that, (my mind's getting tired) his father ran a wholesale grocery down on Craven and South Front at one time. Also, his father did the little hotel on the corner of Broad and Craven. I can't call his name to save my life.

DR. PATTERSON: I don't recall either. There's a house on Change Street. Is that where Mary is living now?

MR. STALLINGS: No, no. The house on Change Street we did is the second house in there.

DR. PATTERSON: (interruption) We were talking about your house on Change Street and it was the Henderson House.

MR. STALLINGS: The Henderson House, right.

DR. PATTERSON: Was that moved into that position, the house?

MR. STALLINGS: No, it was in that position, except I raised it.

DR. PATTERSON: So, this was the first house on Change Street from Craven Street on the right as you go toward the river?

MR. STALLINGS: Yes. You remember, there's one house that faces Craven Street on that corner.

DR. PATTERSON: Yes. And then right behind that where Ray



Henderson lives now.

MR. STALLINGS: Where Ray Henderson lives now. It was a delightful house and we loved it. I don't know why do another house. That was the second house that we'd done.

DR. PATTERSON: That was a very old house.

MR. STALLINGS: Oh, yes, it was an old house, and a beautiful house.

DR. PATTERSON: And you had to do it over completely?

MR. STALLINGS: Yes, I did. It had been added on to with a one-story addition. The house had suffered from lack of attention. I don't remember who in the world owned the house when we bought it. I can't think.

DR. PATTERSON: You stayed there for a few years.

MR. STALLINGS: Stayed there for a few years and then we did the house over on the corner of...now, this was a house that was located originally on Hancock Street.

DR. PATTERSON: And I remember who lived there. The Lassiter's lived there.

MR. STALLINGS: The Lassiter's lived there. Mrs. Lassiter was real anxious to sell the house and she was delighted to sell it without the land. So we bought the house from her and moved it down to the corner of Broad and Hancock, turned it, carried it one block up and then carried it down Metcalf Street to where it is located now.

DR. PATTERSON: On Metcalf and New.

MR. STALLINGS: Metcalf and New. We not only kept that house,

we added on to it. We had to add on to it. We couldn't have a kitchen in the basement. (laughter)

DR. PATTERSON: That's where it was?

MR. STALLINGS: That's where it was. Now, Mrs. Lassiter had added on to the house and many additions made the houses. It didn't conform to the architecture of the house and didn't become an integral part of the house. It was just added on. I think there was a little walkway and a door from the house and a door going into the kitchen, but I'm not certain of that part.

DR. PATTERSON: Well, you made it a beautiful thing.

MR. STALLINGS: Well, we certainly enjoyed doing it. I must say that I can't understand why we left any one of these houses.

DR. PATTERSON: What prompted you to do the restoration of this Bell Building?

MR. STALLINGS: Well, let me see if I can reconstruct in my thinking. When you're doing something which is a major thing in your life you think of many options that you might have to justify your doing it. We're talking about this building now, aren't we?

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MR. STALLINGS: This building was sitting here and the roof had been replaced. A new tin roof had been put on it. But in the intervening period, during the time that it wasn't used; for that matter, none of the school buildings located on this old school green were being used at all, it just occurred to us that this particular building, and complimenting as it did, the building next door, which has been

restored...

DR. PATTERSON: That's the Academy building.

MR. STALLINGS: The Academy building, and that this building should be restored also. This is on the National Register too. By the way, three of the houses that we did, including this one, are on the National Register of Historic Places.

DR. PATTERSON: Now, the one on the corner at Metcalf and New, is that one of them? The Lassiter House?

MR. STALLINGS: Yes.

DR. PATTERSON: And the other one is the Duffy House.

MR. STALLINGS: The Duffy House and this building.

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MR. STALLINGS: You know, I'm so worn now.

DR. PATTERSON: (interruption) The Academy building had not yet been restored.

MR. STALLINGS: Had not been completed.

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MR. STALLINGS: The restoration was being worked on, I believe, at that time. I believe we had finished this house before this building.

DR. PATTERSON: And you made this into four beautiful apartments.

MR. STALLINGS: Four beautiful apartments we think.

DR. PATTERSON: Well, I think too.

MR. STALLINGS: We had in mind the possibility that we'd want to occupy one of them someday when our family had grown up and we wanted a smaller place. That wasn't so strong a thought, but I think we would

have done it anyhow, we would have done this building. I think it turned out real well for us. We made it into the four apartments.

But you can't imagine, it looked much worse than it really was. Of course, the roof had leaked perhaps over all of it. I don't know how much, but anyhow, the roof had been repaired and there were one or two small traces to the building when that was done. I don't know how to describe them, so I won't talk about them. When we bought it, it already had the new tin roof on, which I'm very glad of. We bought it from the New Bern Preservation Foundation. I don't know that I have that full name. I remember we were planning a trip. I paid an option on the building and left it and we went on our trip, came back, and then decided to work on the building. We got an architect, and we needed one too on this. This was a big project. A good part of the building I'd say was in excellent condition. Some of it was in deplorable condition because the roof had leaked for several years and it resulted in deterioration of the floors. We had to take up floors, then combine flooring, and then I had to buy new hard pinewood to make the flooring for the rest of the building. I think there are other things I should, but I can't think of them.

DR. PATTERSON: Well, you did a fine job, and New Bern certainly is proud of this and proud of all these things that you've done. I've just about talked you out now, and I'm not gonna carry this on much longer. But I do want to ask you one question. You mentioned to me the other day that Olin Wright had a donut store downtown.

MR. STALLINGS: That's right. That is correct.

DR. PATTERSON: Would you just speak to that for a minute.

MR. STALLINGS: Yes, but one other thing. Let me say this. My wife wasn't sitting at home holding her hands while all these things were done either. Margaret, of course, wanted to do the buildings.

I mean, she was just as enthusiastic about doing these buildings as I was.

DR. PATTERSON: I think most everybody understands that, Bob.

MR. STALLINGS: Well, I just wanted to be sure that I say it.

DR. PATTERSON: Yes, that's good, but we know that it's been a joint effort on your part.

MR. STALLINGS: On our parts. Olin Wright had a donut place on that block of South Front Street it was then. One of the nicest things about it, of course, Olin and his wife operated it and it was really just a nice gathering place and we enjoyed so much going down there about ten thirty in the morning and ruining our appetite for lunch. Olin knew New Bern, and I think he learned a lot more of it down there. It was a nice street. Of course, Mr. Mitchell was still in his store. The, now, I can't recall their name. The one down on the corner.

DR. PATTERSON: Braddy's had a clothing, dry cleaning place.

MR. STALLINGS: No. John...

DR. PATTERSON: John Mitchell?

MR. STALLINGS: No, not John Mitchell. The Mitchell boys and their father were up in the hardware store. We had moved the business into the building two doors from the Mitchell's. Then the Pepsi-Cola

Company, I think it was Pepsi, on the corner as a bottler.

DR. PATTERSON: Coca-Cola perhaps?

MR. STALLINGS: What?

DR. PATTERSON: Was it Coca-Cola?

MR. STALLINGS: Pepsi-Cola.

DR. PATTERSON: Okay.

MR. STALLINGS: I think I'm right on that.

DR. PATTERSON: I've heard both stories. I don't know.

MR. STALLINGS: Then across the street were John and his brother.

The Whitty's.

DR. PATTERSON: John and Fred Whitty.

MR. STALLINGS: Well, they were down there, and of course, that completed the area pretty well.

DR. PATTERSON: And the Gaston Hotel was right in the middle of it all.

MR. STALLINGS: Yeah, the Gaston Hotel was in the middle of it all. The A&P Store, I believe, was on the corner of the Gaston Hotel building, of course at street level.

DR. PATTERSON: Bob, I think we should stop. There are many more things that we could talk about, but we've talked about enough and you've been great.

MR. STALLINGS: Well, thank you.

DR. PATTERSON: I want to thank you for the Memories of New Bern Committee for letting me come and talk to you. We're gonna get all of this transcribed and bring it back to you so you can look it over

and approve it. But it's been a great interview and you've told us many things that are gonna be important to the New Bern story and we thank you.

MR. STALLINGS: Well, thank you. I've enjoyed doing it.

DR. PATTERSON: Well, I'm delighted that we could work it out.

MR. STALLINGS: And Margaret, of course, deserves credit too.

DR. PATTERSON: Margaret will be recognized as a co-partner in all of these things.

MR. STALLINGS: Right.

DR. PATTERSON: So I'll shut this off now.

END OF INTERVIEW