

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

WILLIAM LYNN DILL

INTERVIEW 425

This is Marea Kafer Foster representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 400. I am interviewing William Lynn Dill, interview number 425. This interview is being conducted on Tuesday, the 17th of November 1992. We're at 1504 Lucerne Way in New Bern.

Marea Foster: Now, Billy, if you'll give me your full name and personal history, and you just relax.

Mr. Dill: William Lynn Dill.

MF: And your birthdate?

Mr. Dill: 11/02/52.

MF: So, that's the 2nd of November, right?

Mr. Dill: Right.

MF: Okay. And your daddy's name.

Mr. Dill: William Lloyd Dill.

MF: And your Mother.

Mr. Dill: Evelyn Bryan Ipock.

MF: Okay. And you were born in New Bern.

Mr. Dill: Born in New Bern at St. Luke's Hospital.

MF: And you have a twin brother.

Mr. Dill: Identical twin.

MF: You sure are, except he wears glasses. (laughter) Well, you do too, but his are different. What's his full name?

Mr. Dill: Hal Glenn Dill.

MF: Okay. And you have a younger sister.

Mr. Dill: Evelyn Anne Dill and she's seven years younger than us.

MF: So, ya'll were very protective of Anne.

Mr. Dill: Very.

MF: Now, tell me, where did you grow up in New Bern? Where were you living?

Mr. Dill: We started out on the end of East Front Street in a little cinder block house, two bedroom with a kitchen and living room. That house is still there. It sat behind a house that my father was born and raised in that sat to one side of the property.

MF: Before you go any further, is that particular piece of property on East Front Street down near King Street? Am I going the wrong direction?

Mr. Dill: It's catty cornered from where Frank Bell had his salvage yard.

MF: Oh, okay.

Mr. Dill: It's right next door to what was the City Lumber Company. The little block house is still there that had the upstairs where our grandfather lived. We tore down the house that my father was born and raised in. Just before his death, we finished tearing it down.

MF: Who was your grandfather?

Mr. Dill: Marcus Cicero Dill.

MF: Okay. And his wife. Do you remember?

Mr. Dill: Anna Louise Connelly.

MF: How long did you live down there?

Mr. Dill: We lived down there until Hal and I were seven years old. My grandfather died about 1960, and we moved from East Front

Street out on McArthur Avenue.

MF: Where you're living now.

Mr. Dill: Where my mother and grandmother live now.

MF: Okay. Who were your playmates down on East Front Street.

Mr. Dill: It was an infamous group. "Tuffy" Hollowell, or Ed Hollowell, was with us. Bobby Daniels.

MF: Oh yes. He was in school with me.

Mr. Dill: Which one?

MF: Bobby Daniels. Well, we must be talking about different ones.

Mr. Dill: His father.

MF: No.

Mr. Dill: The one that we grew up with was Coplon-Smith's grandson. That was the store's name, I forgot what Mr. Smith's first name was. (Bynum)

MF: Oh, okay.

Mr. Dill: Mary Daniels' son.

MF: All right. The Bobby that was in school with me was killed our freshman year in high school and he would have been Mary's brother-in-law. He was Darryl's younger brother.

Mr. Dill: Okay. And that's pretty much it. There were different ones from time to time that would move through. Hal and I pretty much stayed close to home. Since mama didn't work, she carried us to a lot of places. We took a lot of long walks to Cedar Grove Cemetery to feed the fish. And having our grandfather living right upstairs

overhead, he enjoyed taking us downtown and to get our haircuts and then around and then driving out to McArthur Avenue, which at that time was just on the suburb of New Bern, or outside the city limits.

We would go out and spend a lot of time there. Mama being from out in the country, we'd go out there a lot in the summer and those kinds of things. So, growing up, we stayed pretty much close to home. Then when we moved out on McArthur Avenue, then all of our friends came.

MF: Talking about your friends on East Front Street, you played probably the normal games. Did ya'll play marbles?

Mr. Dill: We had marbles. We even messed with hopscotch and jump rope and some of the other things. You played with what you had then. You didn't have all the expensive toys and things. In fact, I remember, we were about (and I'll probably refer to it as we, being Hal and I) first got our bicycles when we were like six years old and that just totally occupied both of us until we learned to ride. Daddy was all the time bringing something home. I remember one time when we were little. Since he was in construction business, he had dug up a great big giant bullfrog that must have been at least sitting about a footlong up his back and he had been hibernating and so he was real sluggish. But he'd been in a box on the back of the truck and he had began to kind of thaw out somewhat I guess. When they got home that afternoon, they sat this giant bullfrog, you know, here's two little 4 or 5 year olds, and they sat him on the front porch. We're just standing there looking at him; like, is he dead, is it a statue, or what it is, and all of a sudden he started taking these

10 or 12 foot leaps. He took just about four good strides and he was across the yard, cleared the chain link fence, and he was going just as hard as he could go to the river the last time we saw him. So, we had a lot of things. And I think one of the things that made it enjoyable for Hal and me was being two brothers as close as we've always been. I always had a playmate. I always had a companion to get into mischief or whatnot. Granddaddy always had dogs that he raised, rabbits. You know, we'd have 30 or 40 rabbits around there at one time. When we got rid of the rabbits, they caught a squirrel and put that in the rabbit cage. So, Granddaddy, it wasn't beyond him to have everything, goats and everything else around there. Whatever struck his mood at that time is what we were raising. He devoted a lot of time to Hal and me. We took our daily strolls around the corner to Mr. Winfield's barber shop, Pinnix Drug Store for a soda, and those kinds of things. They kept us pretty busy.

MF: Well, did you start school at the Central school?

Mr. Dill: Um huh. Hal and I started in the Central school. I had Martha Gibbs in the first grade and he had Miss Bennett.

MF: So, ya'll were separated. You were not in the same class.

Mr. Dill: They insisted on separating us. They said it would be better for us to be separated, so we were separated at Central. We were in the old Academy building.

MF: In the first one.

Mr. Dill: The primary building I guess. We were in the primary building. Our rooms were across from each other, but we were separated.

Now, we did attend the Christ Episcopal kindergarten when we were almost old enough to start school. Since our birthdays were in November, there was a lot of discussion on whether we'd start on time or not. And since Hattie Dill was the first cousin in the family and was the school teacher, she recommended that they hold us back. So mama and daddy put us in the Episcopal kindergarten with Miss Anna and Mrs. Ferebee and we went there. So when we started to school, shortly after starting, we turned seven and they decided it was better to separate us and so they did. Granddaddy died in the middle, like, January or March. I guess it was March of our first year in school. We moved out to where grandmama lived. They didn't want to move us. They thought it would be bad for us to move in the middle of the year, so mama continued to carry us to Central. And then from the second grade through the sixth grade, we attended Eleanor Marshall.

MF: When you say you moved out with your grandmama, you're talking about you moved with Mrs. Ipock, your mother's mother.

Mr. Dill: Right. We moved out there and we went to Eleanor Marshall grades two through six. We had three different principals while we were there.

MF: Oh really?

Mr. Dill: We had Guy Rose and we had Al Hardison and we had Calvin Stokes. They were all three principals while we were at Eleanor Marshall, and all three of them's philosophy was to put Hal and I back together again in the same class. So, we went second through the sixth grade in the same room.

MF: Well, who were some of your teachers there?

Mr. Dill: We had Hattie Dill in the second grade. Vivian Smithwick in third grade. Myrtle Rose in the fourth grade. Mrs. Daniel in the fifth grade.

MF: Oh, Mrs. Christine Daniel.

Mr. Dill: Mrs. Dupree in the sixth grade. Then we, of course like everybody in the seventh, from all of the elementary schools in the district, we all were pulled back to Central for the seventh, and we went in the Bell building. And they split us again.

MF: Well, Billy, getting back to your sixth grade. Now, this was about the time they were having freedom of choice for schools, is that right?

Mr. Dill: Just about that time.

MF: And your classroom was integrated. Did you have black students in your room when you were in the sixth grade?

Mr. Dill: Um huh. We sure did. In fact, I believe that's when Stephanye Kenyear and Tyrone Stiles joined us. Those were the two black students that chose to come into the white school. Stephanye and Tyrone would continue with us from the sixth grade and graduate with us.

MF: How did ya'll, the white students, feel about having blacks come into your school and share your school and share your lessons?

Mr. Dill: I don't ever remember any problems at school. Of course, Stephanye was just as sweet as she could be and Tyrone was exceptional.

They were both exceptionally smart. I don't ever remember any problems

between a white student and one of these the whole way through. They were both very quiet students. They were there for their education.

We probably caused more havoc. I know I did. I talked more than anybody else probably in the class. We didn't have any problems at all. There may have been some curiosities among other students. Hal and I were somewhat different having a mother and grandparents right here that had been out around Asbury and Cove City and grown up on farms. We were more exposed. We would go out in the summers to our great uncle's farm where everybody was working in tobacco. Hal and I never worked tobacco, but we had the run of the farm and we would come and go like we wanted to. We'd go out where they were tying and cropping and putting in the barns and stuff, and we had always pretty much been around them. We were pretty much raised to believe in the dignity of all individuals and that everybody had value. We were not raised that one was lesser than the other. I think most of the students that were in our class over in Eleanor Marshall School, were drawn from the middle class population of New Bern. There were some that came out of the now Trent Woods Country Club section. But we were predominantly the Ghent area and it was more of a middle class feeling.

MF: Right. Like when I went to school.

Mr. Dill: And I think even at that point, and somewhat today, there's more of a cliquishness between social classes than between white and black.

MF: Did your teacher prepare you for the black students coming before they came into the classroom? Do you remember?

Mr. Dill: I don't remember any preparation. In the fifth grade, that would have been about 1963, because I remember being on the playground on Friday afternoon when John Kennedy was shot and we were in Mrs. Daniel's class. I don't ever remember Mrs. Daniel ever saying anything about the black students coming or not. I think it was pretty much we just showed up at school and here were these students. I don't ever remember any problems or anything that was said towards the black students or from the blacks students towards the white students. I think it happened with me and the rest of us at such an early age. You know, if you leave the children alone, they'll get along. It's the adults that kind of tend...

MF: To muddy the waters. So, then after the sixth grade, as you said you went down...

Mr. Dill: Back to Central and we went in the Bell building.

MF: About how many black students did you have with you there?

Mr. Dill: I don't know. It seemed like there were more because we were now changing classes. And where there might have only been, well, there were only two with us, there were two six grade classes at Eleanor Marshall, so there were probably about two in each class. So, there were only about four that we were really accustomed to. When we'd go downtown to the Academy building, pulling from all of the elementary schools, all of a sudden, instead of seeing two or four that we were accustomed to, we were seeing about five times that number, I would say something like that.

MF: But this was still during the time of freedom of choice?

Mr. Dill: Yes. In fact, freedom of choice pretty much remained with us until fall of '70, which would have been our senior year and that's when they integrated. It was total, court ordered, mandated integration.

MF: Well, before we get to that, when you were downtown at what I would call the Moses Griffin building, and in the Bell building, (laughter) I'm talking about my day, not yours, what were your school activities that you participated in?

Mr. Dill: There weren't any real athletics like there are now. Now, the middle schools have Inter Scholastic Athletics. We played in the basketball leagues at the recreation center on George Street. All of us were either just leaving the church league baseball leagues and going into Babe Ruth. Babe Ruth had just begun in New Bern as we came up. We were some of the first to go into the Babe Ruth league here.

MF: But no really planned student athletic program at that time.

Mr. Dill: No. There was nothing there. We pretty much went to school. We were in school until like 3:10 in the afternoon, and then were picked up in the afternoon. I never rode a school bus to school. Mama always carried us. Even as close as we were to Eleanor Marshall and to the high school growing up, mama didn't work, and she said, "I'm gonna take my children to school and I'm gonna bring them home." If we stayed later on after school or something, sometimes we'd get detention or something, and we would want to walk because it was a pretty spring day or something and there was a whole group

that would cross over and come home. But she didn't like us crossing Highway 70, so we didn't walk a lot.

MF: I don't blame her. The schools had cafeterias at this time.

Mr. Dill: Yes.

MF: You remember when I went to school, they did not.

Mr. Dill: Right.

MF: So you did not have to go home for lunch. You ate in the cafeteria.

Mr. Dill: I ate in the cafeteria until I got to the high school.

MF: Okay. As a matter of curiosity, what did your school lunch cost you? Do you remember?

Mr. Dill: I don't remember. I remember taking money for a week and they gave us a lunch ticket and it was good for five days and they would punch it each day. I remember that. And I remember the meals; like, the vegetable soup. It seemed like a lot on Mondays we'd have hotdogs with chili, and Fridays you had a lot of fish sticks. One of the big meals would be like meatloaf. It was all good. I remember the big school rolls that were real hot and buttery. Our choice was the white or chocolate milk. I remember going in the first grade.

If I'm not wrong, Mr. Flowers was Principal. I remember we were all scared to death of him and that we would go in the cafeteria and he would walk around and pick the milk cartons up and shake 'em to see if you had drank all your milk, and if you hadn't, he'd make you sit back down and he'd stand over you til you emptied the carton before he let you get up and go back to class.

MF: Why were you afraid of Bill Flowers? He's the nicest man.

Mr. Dill: Because we were a bunch of 5 and 6 year olds, basically 6 year olds, and here comes this man in who we have been taught to respect. He is the Principal, and he comes over here and says, "Have you drank all that milk!", and pick up your carton and shake it, and "You will sit down and drink that milk!"

MF: (laughter) And you sat down and you drank it.

Mr. Dill: And about the only thing you'd say to him is "Yes sir" and you'd sit down and you'd drink your milk whether you wanted it or not. We would have a little bit of that, yeah.

MF: Okay. Billy, when you went to high school, you went to New Bern High School, and that is now the Grover Fields Middle School.

Mr. Dill: Right.

MF: Tell me about that, activities over there.

Mr. Dill: We walked in and I was looking at an annual the other day, and gosh, I looked like such a tiny, young little fellow.

MF: Don't we all.

Mr. Dill: I probably was lucky to weigh about 98 pounds. In fact, I joked that my senior year at the state wrestling tournament, I didn't weigh but 126 pounds. We got involved in athletics. We were heavily encouraged, or I was, by my parents to become involved in the school. So, we went the normal route of the average or above average student and we joined the Junior Science Club as freshman, we tried Junior Civitan, a social organization at that time called the Boys Tri-Ky.

MF: It was Hi-Y when I was in school.

Mr. Dill: Um huh. It was Hi-Y. We began to involved ourselves in a lot of things. I remember going home and telling my father I wanted to play football. He said, "No. You need to join the National Honor Society." Of course, I was hard-headed. But he refused to let us play football. So then as wrestling season rolled around, I asked him to let me wrestle. His first impression was ring ropes and this stuff on Saturday night late and he said, "No." I really got in my blood I guess in PE when we went through the PE activities and we hit wrestling and I was encouraged by my PE teacher to go out for wrestling.

Daddy still said no. I didn't wrestle my freshman year. The beginning of my sophomore year, they had open gym in the afternoons where you could go in and play basketball and the coach would roll the wrestling mats out and you could go in there and roll around. It had to be unsupervised. We were in there one day just messing around and a bunch of us were kind of just grabbing and mess'n, you know, just free-for-all like we normally do. We ended up rolling around with some of these wrestlers that were juniors and seniors. I guess it was just having had a twin brother that I had wrestled with all my life, it was pretty easy for me to wrestle. The coach, I guess, got impressed and he made a special effort to go to my house and just about got on his knees and begged my father to let my brother and me both wrestle. Daddy reluctantly said yes. My grandmother said, "I will never go watch you wrestle." My mother said, "If you get in a bind, I will walk out of the gym", and these kinds of things. That ended up being about

everything to me. You know, you hear different things about people in school. I've got a drill team advisor now that was a drill team girl when the drill team first started at New Bern High school, and she said, "I can't imagine high school without the drill team." And that's pretty much how it was with me and wrestling. That was the way you went. We were concerned, as most students are, more in the social aspects of school than the academics. You had to have "Weejuns."

You wouldn't dare go out there without a pair of Weejuns. You wouldn't dare go to PE class without a pair of Converse, canvas, All-Stars, white, low cut. You wouldn't dare dress in jeans. That's the kids that took auto shop and those kinds of things, were in dungarees and jeans. We wore dress slacks. We wore knee high socks with the garters to hold them up to keep them from sagging down.

MF: Oh did you really!

Mr. Dill: We wore french cuff shirts. I must have owned fifteen pair of cufflinks. I look back on them now and some of them are the gaudiest looking things with big stones with jewelry around them. We wore alpaca sweaters, either the pull over or button up the front.

Most of us had them monogrammed. Hal and I learned real early that we were short changing our wardrobes, that if we'd get them without the monograms, we had twice the clothes of anybody else. So, he'd buy a brown one and I'd buy a blue one. He'd get a white one, I'd get a green one. And we doubled our wardrobes. We still wore the short hair and the white walls around our ears. Of course then, they had a cafeteria at the school. It didn't seat a whole lot of people.

Since the school had always had an open policy at lunch, we were allowed to leave at lunch and we went to places like Mike's Hamburger Shop down on Craven Street. The Little Mint across from the old bus station was there then. Charburger was a big item for people. The cafeteria at the hospital, we'd sneak in there and eat. Back then, there was a little snack bar in the back of Montgomery Wards and we would go there.

MF: Yes there was. I remember that.

Mr. Dill: We would go to the bowling alley. We would go a lot down to Mike's when I was a sophomore and a junior. New Bern has always been cliquish. I'm from New Bern, and I'll say that.

MF: Right. It's true.

Mr. Dill: Most people won't. It's very cliquish and you don't cross from clique to another clique very well. I had my group of about 8 or 10 of us that we went out together, we double dated together, we went to the proms together, that was our house party at Junior/Senior, and we just all hung out together. Some of us were wrestlers, some of them were basketball players. They supported us, we supported them. We were just all good friends. In the summer we all stayed together and did things together and stuff, and so we ate lunch together. We all thought we were gigantic card players and we would play Hearts or Spades, normally Hearts. We would go down to Mike's because he would let us sit in there and play Hearts while we ate lunch. It was cheap and we could go there.

MF: At this point let me interrupt. You had a car. You were

old enough to drive?

Mr. Dill: Having started school almost an year later, I had a driver's license when I was sixteen. Our family only had one car.

It was like a '69 Dodge, Polaris, or something like that, it's a green bomber, and that was our family car. Daddy told us we could drive it to school one day a week. But we would not leave our mother home stranded. That was an interesting topic about the car because daddy said, "You realize you're gonna want to use it, your brothers gonna want to use it, and they're other members of the family that will need to use it and stuff." So, he limited us to the use of the car one night a weekend and he would let us drive. So what we did as we got older, I would drive the car somewhat, or my brother, when we were sophomores. By the time we were juniors, everybody in the group had a license. So what we did was, if I drove on Monday, then Tyre Moore drove on Tuesday, then Stas drove on Wednesday, John Hudson drove on Thursday, Glenn Russell drove on Friday, and we rotated around. It was a matter of, okay, who drove today, and that's the car we got in and went to lunch.

MF: I see.

Mr. Dill: As we got towards our senior year, we thought we were big shots, so then we began to eat in the Lantern Inn, which is now where 37th Street Pizzeria is, and started out a Lums I believe.

MF: Yes, it did.

Mr. Dill: We would go there to eat our lunches.

MF: Billy, then, as you said, you rotated drivers and that's

how you got to Mike's and different to places and to Lums, Lantern Inn. Now, what was is it, 37th?

Mr. Dill: It is now 37th Street Pizzeria. It was originally Lums. When we were going, it was pretty much Lantern Inn. And that was a big hangout for us after ball games and things like that on Friday nights.

MF: Let me ask you, of course in high school, you changed classes, and we are still having freedom of choice at this time. How large were your classes, 25, 30 students?

Mr. Dill: They'd average between 25 and 30 depending on the subject.

MF: Okay. Let me ask you about discipline. Discipline in high school is certainly different from discipline in elementary school. How were high school students disciplined?

Mr. Dill: You occasionally heard of somebody being suspended. I don't ever remember anybody in the group that I ran with, or anybody that would come and go from our group, that was ever suspended from school. We would all serve detention from time to time for excessive talking in class and occasionally our conduct grades would drop a little bit. I remember an incident where my brother was in an U. S. History class and he made a 100 for the six weeks and an F on conduct.

MF: Oh my gracious. What did Hal do? (laughter)

Mr. Dill: Just like the rest of us, just talking too much, and it was a young teacher. I remember mama going out there and going straight to the teacher and saying, "Please tell me how my son can

be this bad and make a 100. Are you not teaching the class?" He said, "Yes, I'm teaching it. But he's smart enough to get it. He reads at home and he studies on the side and he's able to pick up and get this information that he needs." Mama, trying to work it out, how do you go home and tell Hal, the family, daddy, that he's got a F on conduct. Daddy would have just about killed him.

MF: (laughter) That's funny, Billy, when you say your daddy just about kill him.

Mr. Dill: That's pretty much the way we were raised.

MF: I know Billy. (laughter)

Mr. Dill: So mama was trying to save her son and wanted the F off anyway, so she was doing anything she could to get it off, and she said, "Well, tell me something. Is he the worst student in that class?" Mr. Eubanks said, "No, not by any means is he the worst in the class." He said, "Paul, over here, is by far worse, maybe four times worse, than anybody in the class." Mama said, "Well, what'd you give Paul?" He said, "An F." She said, "Well, then you're saying my son's as bad as that one is." I remember mama coming home, I was listening as she explained all this to daddy, and I remember her getting to that and saying, "Well, did it do any good?" and mama said, "Yes. He changed the F to a D."

MF: (laughter) Well, a D looks better than a F.

Mr. Dill: How do you flunk conduct, you know. That would never set well with my father 'cause daddy raised us pretty strict. He said he did not raise us as strict as he had been raised. But I know like

in church on Sunday, even before we were able to read, he would have us sitting in the pew and when we knelt for prayers and stuff, we had to have a book open and we had to do all we could to keep it on the right page. And when the sermon was going on, he expected us to sit with our backs erect and our head turned and cocked up towards the minister. He said whether your eyes are shut and you're asleep, you better be staring directly at him. Now, mama, we'd play with her, you know. She'd go to spank one of us, and she'd grab a belt up and gonna spank us, and she'd grab me by the arm and draw back with belt and Hal would grab the belt, so she let go of me and grab him and draw back and I'd grab the belt. She would do this for five or ten minutes and then she would say something like, "That's all right. When your father gets home, I'll tell him", and we just stood still and took a whipping at that point. Daddy would sit in church and all he would do was turn his head and look at us and everybody, including mama, would just kind of straighten up and get real solemn.

MF: (laughter) I can't imagine Evelyn straightening up.

Mr. Dill: Cause Hal and I used to fuss with daddy. When we got older, well, by the time we were seventeen, Anne was just ten, and we would all the time get on him, "Well, why are you so easy on Anne?"

When Anne was four years old, she'd get under the pew with marbles during church and she's shooting marbles. Hal and I would look at her and look at each other. We wouldn't dare look at daddy. Cause if we'd gotten down there shooting marbles, he'd snatched us up. He always told us, "You cut up in church, I will take you right down

that center isle and everybody inside will know what happens to you cause they'll hear you hollering out in the churchyard", and we believed that. He was very firm that he would not have sassy children. He may not have the smartest, but he would have children that behaved and he would not have sassy children. He made believers of us at an early age.

MF: I believe he did. (laughter) I can certainly understand that.

Mr. Dill: And you answered him, "Yes sir and No sir." Cause I know Hal got a bad spanking. I guess we were about fourteen years old and daddy spanked him about as bad as he ever spanked us because he referred to mama as his old lady and daddy really lit into him. Really did.

MF: Yes. That was just not very nice then, and I don't think it's nice now.

Mr. Dill: That's pretty much the underlying difference between the schools then and the schools now.

MF: Exactly. The respect and the discipline. Now, when we had the disturbance in the high school, this was 1971, wasn't it?

Mr. Dill: We integrated in fall of '70. We were pretty much a year behind most of the other larger cities in eastern North Carolina.

MF: This is court ordered integration. Is that right?

Mr. Dill: All integration was court ordered from the Brown v. Board of Education in the early fifties. I think '53 and '54. There were two cases. The original Brown v. Board of Education

declared separate but not equal; and therefore, the schools were to be integrated. They had to come back with a later decision and order it done and give some guidelines on what they would allow and what they wouldn't allow because everybody drug their feet. It pretty much hit in the South first. They were given time periods, that by this date, these things had to be in place. We pretty much, as I understand, looking back on it now, we were probably a year behind most everybody else. And I think that was wise. It gave us an opportunity to look at what was being done in other school systems and what was working and what wasn't working and to adapt some of those things and to avoid many of the problems that they just walked in and said this is the way it will be. There were a lot of things that we were spared that other communities didn't. I know in the athletic contest is where you would see most of it. When I first started in high school, Kinston were the Red Devils and wore red and white. Now, they're the Phantoms and they're green and white, I believe, or green and silver. Wilmington's schools had a violent time. They burned part of the city.

There were some really bad times there, a lot of fighting and everything. In fact, the night of my junior year, we went to New Hanover High School to wrestle and a boy leaving the gym was stabbed that night.

Greenville Rose had been the Phantoms and had been green and white, and now they are like green and a light blue or silver and they are the Rampants. So, there was a big merger of school colors and mascots were changed and everything, so that it wasn't just, the blacks are being merged into the white schools. In most areas, unfortunately,

the white high school, the population was larger white. Therefore, the larger of the two schools was the white school. Therefore, that was the one that was used in the integration process. I attended school at New Bern High School, grades nine through twelve, and shortly after integration, changed to ten through twelve. The ninth grade was placed at the old J. T. Barber school, which had been the black high school.

Their colors were gray and burgundy and they were the Warriors. I believe that's right. New Bern High School was red and black and the Bears. We were one of two schools I know. I know Little Washington, and I'll probably catch the devil for calling it Little Washington from my wife, but they stayed the Pam Pack and kept their blue and white colors. It was done that way because the red and white and the Bears symbolized the city of New Bern and the Swiss background, which was the background for all of the community and not the fact that we were purple and blue or something colors and it was just something that was decided on when the school was built or something. So, we held to that. In the new high school that we're in now, a lot of the burgundy and gray has been brought back into the school.

MF: Oh really?

Mr. Dill: And a lot of those colors are used throughout the school. There's a nice merger. The traditional black is not used as it has been in the past. The red is used. We're using, like, burgundy and gray lockers throughout the building. And they're some more subtle colors than just a fire engine red and a shiny gloss, enamel black.

MF: But we're still the New Bern Bears?

Mr. Dill: We're still the New Bern Bears.

MF: Okay. Now, I want to get back to the disturbance, I will politely call it. Can you tell me what led up to it and what happened?

Mr. Dill: I think if you asked the average person, especially those that I went around with, we didn't see all the fighting and the disruptions that probably the Administration saw because we were pretty much removed from most of it. We were all either average or above average students, and therefore, the black students that we were in class with were average to above average and that's not where the problems came. I had always argued that when they got in and started settling these thing, they seemed to always go and they would say, "Okay, who are the top five black students in the school?", and they would get them, and then "Who are the top five white students?", and they would get them, and they'd put them in a room and say, "Okay, now, we need to consider these things, and how can we work this out?"

What they should have done was gone and got the five rowdiest fighting white kids in the school and the five rowdiest fighting black kids in the school and put them in a room. Because if they could agree and come to some solution, then you're not going to have any fighting.

Because certainly, I was not going to fight with Tyrone Styles whether he was coming in my senior or his senior year in the school or not.

That year Julius Parham, who works in the central office now with the school system, is an alderman, was in my class. He was the class treasurer.

MF: Oh, I didn't know he graduated with you.

Mr. Dill: Julius graduated with me. Julius and I, we would have never fought one way or the other. He wasn't a fighter. I wasn't a fighter. We valued the education and we were there to get the education. So, we were removed from a lot of the things that probably broke out in the shop classes and the ones that the lesser motivated students would have been in. It was pretty much a racial thing between a black student and a white student and that kind of thing. So, we were pretty much removed. We did have a major incident in January of that year. Of course, we had Black studies in the school at that time, something we had never had before, and it was extremely crowded.

The school was extremely large. Our graduating class was somewhere right around 500. The average class now will run about 335. So we were extremely large. All kinds of standards were changed. I think that's one of the things that has hurt education today; in that, they didn't go in and just say, well, we've got to do this to help this group of students. They took the lesser of the standards from each school system. We've just now gone back and put in Algebra I as a graduation requirement for all students. So, if you can't pass Algebra I, you can't get a high school diploma in North Carolina anymore. That was put back in because prior pre-integration, it was a graduation requirement in the black schools that you had to have Algebra I to graduate. It was preferred in the white schools. So, at integration, they made it preferred across the board. Most kids quit taking it.

And that's one of the declines in our student's math scores. There was not a high enough expectation that you had to prepare for Algebra

because you had to have it to graduate. So there was some laxing on both sides. Minimum grade, you couldn't get below a certain grade.

No matter if the child came and did absolutely nothing and brought no pens or pencils to class, he still received a minimum grade, whether it 50 or 60. I don't know exactly what it was. It's like even today, a lot of policies and regulations are put in but it doesn't really govern the majority of your students. The students I was with, it was unheard of to say that somebody was going to fail a class or wasn't gonna to graduate. So, all these regulations and policies are put in for a very small percent of the student body, and it's unfortunate because the majority of the kids are good kid. So we had new programs and things. And I think things pretty much went along fairly well.

We came up on an assembly program for Martin Luther King. It was held in the gym. It was predominantly, or it was viewed by the students, it was held for the black students. It really didn't matter. Because I don't think if they had just come in and said, "Any student that wishes to go, may go", I don't see at that point in time, for whatever reason, large numbers of white kids going to the gym to be involved in this. When it was over, for whatever reasons, the black students were released from school and then the white students were released and they took them off campus. That began a series of events that triggered the major incident. Through the weekend, in different pool rooms and things where the kids would frequent, like the Metropolitan Club, different people began to just get rowdy and talk. Different people who were class officers would get up and all of a sudden, "I'm

gonna exert my leadership potential. We're not gonna let a bunch of black kids come in and take over our school. We're not gonna do this, we're not gonna do that." That was their mistake. They came in on Monday. They organized this memorial service for Robert E. Lee. If the white kids had left the blacks out of it and said, "Hey, look.

They got a memorial service for Martin Luther King on Friday and we all got out of school early, so we'll have one on Monday for Robert E. Lee and we'll all get out early." But no, these kids had to come in and tilt it towards, "They're not gonna take over our school. They're not gonna change our school colors. They're not gonna do this. We don't want them. Blah, blah, blah." Well, I think the average black student you would have talked to at that time probably wanted to be at New Bern High School less than the white kids wanted them there.

They would have preferred to have stayed and graduated from J. T. Barber and continued as they were. Being ordered through the Supreme Court decisions that separate is not equal, therefore, you will be merged together, was not what was the desire of the majority of the people that were involved, white or black. So, on Monday we go in and they have this sit-out. When New Bern High School's classroom building, what we refer to as the classroom building, the two-story building that housed the library, was built, it was one long hallway with twenty classrooms on it. If you go in that building today, it numbers up to about number 8 and 9, and then rooms 10 and 11 are missing.

They were on opposite sides of the hall. That was tore out the summer of '70 and made into a foyer. One of the things they had learned from

another school was if you have long hallways and there is an incident and a fight, kids are trapped in the middle of the building and they can't get out and too many get hurt seriously. You need to have shorter hallways where things can be pushed out to get away from things, people can get away. A lot of innocent people get hurt when fights break out, and they still do today. But when you have big fights, it's usually the innocent that get hurt the worst. So, they tore out these two classrooms and put a foyer, put two assistant principal's offices in there with all these glass doors where if something broke out, it could easily spill to the outside of the building. So, that was a change that came in the physical structure of the building. The other changes to the school, large numbers of trailers. The whole campus was covered in them because of the overcrowding. Students with first period study hall didn't come until second period. Students with sixth period study hall were released at the end of fifth period to help alleviate the overcrowding and that kind of thing. But on the particular morning, in this foyer area that they had created, all these white students went in there and sat down. Having been a student that wasn't exactly allowed to hang out in the Metropolitan Club at that time, we hung out with James Wiley, who was an English teacher at that time at New Bern High School, because he was our wrestling coach. He was about 9 or 10 years older than us and he was single, so he was still close enough that we had somebody to drive us around. He was an excellent math student, a double major in college English and Math, so he tutored a lot of us in Math and English and helped us with our studies and

was a good role model for us. So, on that particular Monday morning, there were about five or six of us wrestlers. Because here it is January, it's the middle of wrestling season. Of course, we were hanging out in the coach's classroom. All of a sudden here comes this mass of white students from this foyer area to the auditorium. We kind of opened the windows. They had the windows that you pull the handle down and it folded down. We'd stick our head out and asked what they said, and they said, "Well, all white students are to report to the auditorium." So, I get up and I go over to the auditorium and I go in and I sit down. I'm sitting just ahead of the balcony, maybe three rows ahead, looking straight up and seeing the front edge of the balcony and Ida McKinnon walks in, the Guidance Counsellor. You know, Ida McKinnon was a real sweetheart. She just told it as it was.

If you walked in and said, "I want to go to Duke", she'd say, "No, I'm even going to give you the application. You're not Duke material."

And if you said, "I want to go to UNC Wilmington", she'd say, "Here's your stuff. I think that's an excellent choice." She would ask us when we registered, "Are you going to college when you graduate or are you going to work?" And whichever you told her, she gave you a sheet and on that sheet is what you would take your first year, second year, third year, fourth year. She'd say, "Now, don't fail one, because if you do, you're going to have to double up. You're going to put yourself in a bind. These are the courses you will take." The only choices were between a study hall and typing your senior year or which foreign language you were gonna take. She was very cut and dry on

those kinds of things. Well, she walked in that day and she tapped me on the shoulder and she said, "Billy, what are you doing in here?"

I said, "Well, they said all white students come to the auditorium."

She said, "No, this is not where you want to be." She said, "This could be trouble. You don't want to be here." I said, well, I'm not gonna go home and face my daddy and tell him I got in some bind at school. So I turned left, and as I was coming out, coming out from under the patio from the C building where I needed to be going, was a large population of the black students. They also had refused to go to class that morning I guess, and were heading to the auditorium.

So, I went back in and sat down with Mrs. McKinnon and she said, "I thought you were leaving." I said, "Well, I was, but I don't think now is the time." So, the black students came in across the balcony and across the back of the auditorium. As soon as everything got settled; of course, there were students up on the stage and some of them were sitting in there trying to be some stand-outs and make statements like, "We're gonna stick together. And we're gonna do this. And we're not gonna allow them to do that."

MF: These were white students?

Mr. Dill: These are all white students at this point.

MF: On the stage?

Mr. Dill: Uh huh. Ricky Goldman was up there, Junior class President, T. W. Parker, James Hill, several students. A lot of them. And they were coming and going. They were changing a lot. So, as everybody got in and kind of got settled, I moved to the back of the

auditorium to where lobby was. I remember turning around about the time things started really breaking loose. Of course, there were students in there. I don't really remember many of the names of many of the blacks. I know Melvin White was a black student that was involved in it. But some of the black students, they would wear their black, long overcoats and things, and they were walking around. I don't remember the first punch really being thrown because I didn't stick around. In fact, I was leaving about that time and I hurried back over to the classroom building and went right inside the door. The first room on the right was Gerald Eubanks' classroom, and I had him for study hall, first period. There were some of us that just didn't have transportation at odd times to come and go, so we were in this study hall. I was in there with Gene Stilley. I remember walking in the door and Mr. Eubanks asked me, said, "Where have you been?" I told him that I had just come from the auditorium and that he needed to get ready, there was going to be a major problem. We all knew that in case of a problem, the male teachers would be called and they would have to leave. I went and sat down in the front seat with Gene Stilley behind me. Gene got out his deck of cards and we were preparing to start up another two-handed pair of Spades when the intercom came off requesting all male staff to report to the auditorium, and at that point, the fight had broke out. Of course, we heard all kinds of rumors. I knew that the white children, all that were in the auditorium that were there for purposes of defiance, were carrying small Confederate flags. And I understand there was some discrepancy with one of the

black students going on the stage and snatching one of the flags out of one of the boy's hands, and he hit him. Of course then it all broke out into chaos. There were certain students that had problems during the course of the year. There was one little girl, and I cannot remember her name, that went in her English class about a week prior to this and a black girl was sitting in her seat and she asked her to move and she said, "Our seats are not assigned", "But I sit there everyday", she said, "Well, I'm gonna talk to my friend today, you'll have to sit somewhere else." The white girl sat in her lap, the black girl dumped her in the floor, they were just about to go to blows then.

I know that there was a lot of concern as to where these two were, had they gone somewhere and locked up. It was a very dangerous situation because it's an all fasten seating in an auditorium with an orchestra pit, a balcony, and everybody was pretty much trapped in there because the only ways out were just six foot of doors on each side down by the stage and 3 or 4 just cased openings at the backend of the stage.

So, the people in the center were trapped in the seating and inside the crowd. About that time the head custodian, unbeknowing to him what was about to take place in there, would bring his drinks, his coca-colas, by crates in a wheel barrow. He'd bring them around to the side door down by the stage, to the right of the stage, and he would stop his wheel barrow there, routine there every couple of days, and he would take his crates up the steps, there was about 10 or 12 steps up, through the double doors, turn to the right, and go into the teacher's lounge to fill up the drink machine. Well, he gets there

and here's all this wheel barrow full of crates of drinks, the doors fly open, and kids started taking the drink bottles and just throwing them back in the crowd just as hard as they could throw them. They didn't know who they were hitting. They didn't even know who they were throwing at. Kids were getting their heads split open. They were getting hurt bad. Because here was a loaded soft drink bottle with a cap on it, and it's like a projectile just flying into a crowd of people. People getting hit in the head, in the back, in the chest and face and stuff with these bottles that were being thrown. The male faculty as they got there, they forced it out the back of the auditorium pretty much into the courtyard under the patio and everything where they finally got it split up. It'd be hard for me to say exactly what went on. I know a lot of windows were broke out in the building. We had stayed in the classrooms and locked the door.

I know that in the classroom where I was, right there on that end, that was a potential explosive area because if you stepped out that door and went twenty feet, you were out the end of the building under the patio where all this fighting was. The whole glass wall, you know, those walls are only about forty inches high and then it's glass the rest of the way. So when Mr. Eubanks left, we had just locked the door. There were white students and black students in that room. Nobody said anything out of the way to anybody. I think all of us were more scared of what was outside waiting for us if we went out than what was inside, because there was no potential danger inside.

We were all kids that were there pretty much to get an education and

were not the defiant ones or the ones looking for trouble. So we had no problems. I stayed in there quite awhile. We were pretty much scared to go anywhere. You didn't know if you left by yourself, what would happen to you, or you didn't know if you left in a group, what would happen. You didn't know what was right outside the door. There was no way to see down the halls because you just had a small glass in the doorway, so we stayed there for a real long time until a teacher had come by and said, "It's safe. You need to leave campus now." My brother, as soon as it all broke out, he had left campus. I know my mother, and she's told this and it just tickles us, she said she was sitting there that morning ironing or cooking or something and watching TV. You know, they had the shows on that come on in the mornings, the "I Love Lucy" and the "Danny Thomas Show" and "Mary Tyler Moore show", I mean we had a regular routine. If you were home sick, you knew what time everything came on and with thirty minute increments and you knew what followed what on a regular weekday. Hal walked in the back door and she spoke to him and she said, "What are you doing home?" He said, "Oh, the riots broke out at school, everybody's fighting." She said, "Well, I'm glad you're home safe", and she kept right on. About five minutes later, she turned around and she said, "Where's your brother?" He said, "I don't know. I guess he's still at the school." Of course she panicked and here she jumps in the car and comes flying out to the school. Well, by that time it was on the radios and everything else that this fight had broken out. Worley Knowles was a police officer at that time. He was up on the highway

directing traffic trying to get people out, keep them off the campus, and those that had gotten on, get them off. Men were parking on the shoulder of the road coming on campus with their revolvers and stuff, you know, "I'm gonna get my daughter. Nobody's gonna hurt my child."

Everybody was pretty much just trying to get their children out because of what this handful had caused a larger number, and it's always a small number who incite a bunch of others and then you can't back down kind of thing. The number that were actively involved in the fight and would have problems throughout the course of the year, were not representative I don't think of the student body. Most of us got along really well and had no problems. Eventually, I would get home later on that day later when it was over. School was closed for a considerable amount of time. That time period, or that Friday and Monday, was just prior to exams. So, while they were trying to sit down and talk all this out and work it out, the school was locked up. Most people didn't have their books. Because when they left that Monday morning, they just left as quick as they could. Nobody thought about going in their lockers and getting their books. Most people pretty much just walked backed in the school when the ban was lifted and walked right into their exams pretty close. There again, having a wrestling coach who had keys to the building so we could get into the gym and stuff, we would, a day or two later, actually go out there about seven o'clock one night and he would let us in and we would all get our books. So we did have something to study. We were better prepared for our mid-terms than the average student that was locked out and couldn't

get to their stuff for about ten days I think.

MF: When this was over and you went back to school, was there a lot of tension?

Mr. Dill: Yes. There was a lot of tension, and they stopped everything. Most of the so called privileges that students ask me for today at the high school, went by the wayside that year, before the year ever started. The tradition had always been that the underclassmen stood for the seniors coming into an assembly. Well, we knew, they knew I guess, that if they made the student body stand for the seniors, then you would have white kids refusing to stand for black kids, black kids refusing to stand for white kids, and it was just another potential ignition of some explosive situation. So, that went by the wayside. In fact, we had very few assemblies, very few pep rallies, and those kinds of things. In fact, I only remember one assembly that year and that would be the Athletic Award assembly that was held right at the end of the school year. I know graduation, we had a tremendous number of students in the senior class, and I remember they weren't really prepared for that. They had been accustomed to smaller graduating classes. Everybody rushed out on the field. I remember coming off the stage and having to go through spectators to get back to our seats and that kind of stuff. A lot of things were unfortunate about that year and would be for the next several years until things began to settle down. Everything was split; two homecoming queens, one white one, one black; two student council presidents, one white and one black. Your class officers, everybody had a president,

vice-president, secretary, treasurer. Two of them would be white, two of them would be black. Everything pretty much fifty/fifty. You had so many girls on the cheerleading squad were white and so many were black, the basketball teams, football teams. A lot of that was watched real close. Wrestling, we kind of faired different. My senior year, we had an all white wrestling team. Basically because all the black males, I guess, wanted to play basketball. We didn't have girl's basketball then. Most of them were in that, and very few of them wrestled. In fact, I only wrestled on the team with one black and that would have been my sophomore/junior year. He graduated when I was a junior, James Johnson. They just weren't interested, didn't come out for it. It's pretty much like soccer is now. We had a very successful soccer program this year and only one black kid on it. Traditionally, we'll have two or three. But the numbers are smaller now. They go to football, they go to basketball, and the white kids go to soccer and golf.

MF: I think it's been that way since integration, don't you? As a result of this, your Principal resigned and New Bern High School got a new Principal.

Mr. Dill: That's a bone of contention with me. When I talk to others out there, they tell me that my Principal, who was H. P. Hunnicutt, resigned that year. H. P. Hunnicutt did not resigned until the '71-'72 school year, which was the following year.

MF: The following year. Okay.

Mr. Dill: H. P. Hunnicutt finished that year.

MF: He finished the year. I've been led to believe that right then he resigned.

Mr. Dill: In fact, H. P. Hunnicutt's name is on my diploma which was June 2, 1971.

MF: I'm glad to have that clarified.

Mr. Dill: His name is on there. His successor was Grover C. Fields, who stayed at New Bern High School, if I'm not wrong, nine and a half years.

MF: He was there when Betsy graduated and your sister graduated.

Mr. Dill: Tommy Phelps became Principal of New Bern High School July 1, 1980 and Grover Fields was there the prior nine and a half years. So, I guess that would have put H. P. Hunnicutt leaving around the middle of the year, well, '71, that winter. Just before January 1, of '72, I guess is when he went.

MF: But he did not resign right after the riot?

Mr. Dill: I do not remember H. P. Hunnicutt resigning, and as far as I remember, he finished that year. His picture is in the yearbook and his signature is on our diploma. Our diplomas do not come in for signing until about the middle of May. That's when they would sign the diplomas.

MF: And this riot was when?

Mr. Dill: January 21st, 23rd, whenever Martin Luther King's birthday is. It was right around that time period. Our mid-term exams are usually around the 23rd to the 28th, somewhere in that time period, and this was just prior. So, it might have been a little earlier.

It might have been around the 15th or something, somewhere in there. But it was the middle of January.

MF: Billy, after you graduated from high school, where did you go to college?

Mr. Dill: I went to East Carolina University.

MF: Majored in what?

Mr. Dill: About everything they had over there for a while. I left New Bern High School and was gonna be pre-dental, so I went in Chemistry major and did well in chemistry. I just didn't do well in everything else. I would have been one of the students that would have been better to have stayed home a year or two and then go. I wasn't mature enough to go at that point. I went over there and it was one big party. I never cut a class my freshman year. Didn't cut any classes, went to everything, and just about flunked out. I just wasn't happy. In fact, I remember coming home and telling my father that I wanted to quit, that I was wasting my money, and that I wanted to quit and go in the Navy. He was one of these that would kind of sit down, and by that point, he and I would do all this bargaining and horse trading and stuff. He said, "I don't want you to go in the military at this point." He said, "I think it would be a good way of life for you and it would probably do you good, but this is 1971 and things are too hot in Viet Nam." He said, "You're nineteen years old and that's where you're going. And I don't want you to come home in a body bag." He said, "I will do this. I don't think you've given college a fair shake. You haven't really put forth your best and tried.

So, you go back and stay to the end of this year and you give it your best, and if you do, and you still want to go in the military, you can go at the end of the year with my blessing." So, he had postponed me. So, I told him, I said, "All right. I'll do it, but you've got to allow me something. I'm in pre-dentistry, living your dream for me. I've got to be allowed to go back in general college and find what I'm happy doing." He was kind of disappointed in that, but he said okay. I guess he saw it as the only way to keep me in college.

So I went back and finished the year. Grades made a big turn around when I got into general college. I kind of bounced around the rest of that year and the whole next year, and the first quarter, we were on quarter system, of the third year, just trying things. I had taken a job with my father who worked construction and he gave us everything he had. But with two boys in college at the same time, it was tough on us. I had taken a lot of pride in working in the summer and saving everything I could. Our agreement was, I would spend my money, and I had one of these National Defense Student loans that everybody bought on not paying back, I had one of those and so did Hal. Between that and what I earned in the summer, I think I borrowed a hundred dollars from daddy in the spring to buy my spring quarter books. Then the next summer, I came home and worked again. I began to see the need to get rid of this loan because that was something I was gonna have to pay back or daddy or somebody. I dropped the loan and took a job as a resident-advisor running a dormitory, which was a pretty good deal back then. I think our tuition was like \$330.00 a quarter, and

if you took a job as a resident-advisor, they'd pay you \$98.00 a month, which would pay your tuition. Your phones were free and you got a private room and you didn't have to pay any dorm rent. There was no residency fee. So, it cut that part of your housing cost out of your tuition right to start with it. So, with what I could earn, I would earn about, say, between twelve to fifteen hundred dollars in the summer; that, with the hundred dollars a month, I could take the fifteen hundred, pay my tuition and stuff and then live off of the hundred dollars a month with what little bit I had left over from what I earned in the summer. If you ate, we used to call them wish'n sandwiches, two pieces of bread wish'n you had something to go between them.

MF: (laughter) Yes.

Mr. Dill: And of course we were all smart enough to find girl friends that could cook and they would help take care of us and that kind of stuff. You always came home about once every four or five weeks because that's when all your clothes were dirty and had to be washed.

MF: (laughter) How well I know.

Mr. Dill: So, we went the whole route. I ran a dormitory. One morning, of course, we from time to time would have to get up and check the dorm and stuff, and for some reason one morning I was up about, I don't know, about three thirty in the morning and I just couldn't sleep so I was just walking through the dorm. I went by Alan Spivey's room. He was sitting on his bed with his legs crossed with a drawing board across his lap. I went in and started talking to him. He and

I had been friends and what-not, and I said, "Alan, what are you taking up here that you get to do that?" Because it wasn't anything but mechanical drawing. I had wanted to take drafting all the way through high school, and that was one of those things that Ida McKinnon said, "No, you're going to college, you take the academic courses." He said, "I'm in the School of Technology, Industrial Technology." And he said, "You can just about major in mechanical drawing." I said, "Gosh, I'd like to try that", and he said, "Well, go down and see Clarence Kelsey, Mr. Kelsey. He'll take care of you." The next morning I went to my morning class, then I went by his office. I knocked on the door and I opened the door and just as soon as I opened it, he turned around; and he was an older fellow, almost bald on top, and he combed his hair straight forward on the sides and it had a little wave and curl on it, he looked just like what I would think Julius Caesar was gonna look like, with this white hair, curling on the his forehead, and he had this funny slur about his speech, and he turned his head and he looked at me, and he said, "Another unhappy college student. Come in, you found a home." That's the first thing he ever said to me.

I went in and I sat down and we talked a little bit and he said, "Well, you need to be in this department." I liked to work with my hands and that kind of stuff and this department was based around machinist courses, construction courses, a lot of drafting and design, a lot of graphic arts for printing, a lot of electronics, and you had to take a full year of everyone of them. Every quarter, you had to be in one or two of these courses. And after one full year of it, then

you had to take one of these areas and specialize in it. So, my area was drafting. Ed Campbell, who teaches graphic arts, he took the same graphic arts that I took the first year. Just where I took more drafting, he took more graphic arts. So, we got a well rounded education running metal lathes, welding outfits. But we also studied the industrial side, the scientific side of the metals and why they merge together and we studied a lot of load bearing structures and stresses on materials. So we got a big input of the engineering side. But we also had to work in the manual side, that we had to go in and actually weld things. We had to learn to heat metal and do foundry work, make molds and pour it like it was done for years and years in the mills up North. Safety was a big item. Electronics, I remember going into the third level electronics class and the teacher coming in and passing out these schematics and opening them up and right out of the clear blue sky he said, "Mr. Dill, can you tell, me", and he named some section of the schematics, "Can you tell me what this is?" "No", I said, "Can you tell me what kind of circuit this is?" I looked at it and I looked at it and I said, "Sir, if you can tell me what this is a schematic of, I can probably tell you what the circuits are for." He said, "This was a color television set." I said, "Sir, I don't have any idea what any of this stuff is." But we had to take a whole lot of those kind of courses. Mr. Kelsey took me in and he sat down and he said, "Okay, I'm gonna be your advisor. Don't let anybody tell you any different. I'll put you on my list. You're now working with me. I'm gonna get you through school and you're gonna enjoy school." The department

only had about six hundred people in it, so we knew every Professor, they knew everything there was to know about us. It was almost like being back in high school, except, we were on a college level. Mr. Kelsey, he was a real treat, and he taught most all the drafting courses I had except the architectural classes, and Dr. Leath taught those.

But he would take a little schedule out that had Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, and then 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and then 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 down the side, so you could block your schedule and fill it all in. He looked at it and he said, "Now, the courses you need to take", and I started naming courses, he said, "No, no, you never fill out a schedule like that." He said, "Look, people at East Carolina party on Thursday night. So, he scratches Friday off. He says, "You're not gonna feel like sitting on class on Friday." He says, "And nobody in their right mind wants to get up at eight o'clock in the morning", so he scratches eight o'clock off. He says, "Now, let's see what kind of schedule we can fix you in what's left." And that's the way he did our schedules and stuff. He was just a super neat guy! Because I got in the department late, it took me five years to get finished.

I actually finished the industrial technology degree, which is a professional degree to go into industry, in four years, because I had taken enough of everything else to have all those. I took nothing but technology courses the last year and a half. I came home and told daddy that I wasn't gonna graduate, that I had everything. Hal had his application to go off and graduate. You know, that's the biggest rip-off. You gotta pay them to let you graduate. You know, you've

already spent all this money, and now you've got to pay them. Back then, it was like twenty dollars to process your application fee. That had been a point of contention with Hal and I all the way through school. We roomed together for awhile until I took a job as a resident-advisor. Hal was the real conservative one in the bunch. He joked and played, but he was conservative, gonna be a CPA, big business major, ends up in banks and finance and real estate. I ended up in the School of Technology. He's still wearing his dress pants and short haircut. I've got the long sideburns and the fu manchu mustaches.

MF: (laughter) I can't imagine that!

Mr. Dill: And the wide bell bottoms and that kind of stuff you know. I mean long hair. That didn't set very well with daddy either.

MF: (laughter) I'm sure it didn't.

Mr. Dill: I was on that side. And Hal would do things, like he would come home at Thanksgiving and he'd say, "Here are my grades."

Daddy would look at them and say, "Oh, you got an A, a B, A, A, A", says, "Why do you have a C on statistics?" Hal would say something like, "Well, that's the course they use to weed out the accounting majors." I passed it the first time. Most people, take it five or six times before they pass it. He'd look at me and he'd say, "How about your grades?" I'd say, "Not posted!" He'd have to wait for my grades to come in in the early going. But once I found the School of Technology, I really found where I fitted in and what my nitch was.

I did go back for the fifth year. The only thing left for me to take

were the education courses; methods and student teaching and stuff.

So, I did that. So, I have both the professional and the education tacked on to mine. No intentions whatsoever to ever teach. When I was in that fifth year, if you'd have told me you were going to be working in education, I would of said your crazy, I'm not gonna do it. I student taught at Havelock High School. Red Gainey, who is still Principal, was Principal when I student taught there. I student taught under Lyle Lewis. The greatest student teaching experience you could ever have. But I was not gonna teach! Did not teach. I graduated in May and spent the whole summer and winter building. I wanted to build. That's all I wanted to do. I stayed in Greenville. I had gotten married coming right out of college.

MF: And your wife's name is.

Mr. Dill: Margaret Gurganus.

MF: Margaret Carol.

Mr. Dill: Margaret Carol Gurganus.

MF: And when were you married?

Mr. Dill: June 27, 1976.

MF: I'm so glad you can remember that Billy. I'm proud of you. And you have three nice boys.

Mr. Dill: Got three sons. But we got married and I wanted to build. She graduated in '75 and I had gone back and stayed the extra year. When we got married, she was working. I started just doing additions on people's houses and workshops. I picked up and built the gazebo that's on East Carolina's campus. I did that. It was a

gift from the class, I think, of '72. They had left some money and the student council kicked in some money and I designed it and built it for them. Shortly thereafter, well, in that time period in there, I got burned. We had a car running hot and we were gonna fix it. I was checking to see which hose it was and it pulled off and I got burned real bad and got laid up. By that time, the crunch came in the building industry. The big recession hit. That would have been around, well, summer of '76 to the fall of '76. Construction was really off. We were living in Greenville, so I told Margaret, you know, I'm doing odd jobs here and there and what-not, "I'm gonna go back and get a Masters in technology." I went to see Dr. Erber, who had been my student teaching supervisor and had a lot of courses under, to see about it. He said, "Well, I think that's a great idea while you're here in Greenville", he said, "but I want you to go to this interview in Goldsboro." I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "Well, there's a drafting teaching job coming open January 2, 1977, and I want you to go interview." I said, "Dr. Erber, I do not want to teach! I want to build." He said, "Well, I think you ought to go get this til the recession tides over." He called and set up the appointment while I was in his office. He had been super good to me all the way through school. He and Mr. Kelsey just guided me all the way through, and Dr. Erber really guided me hard when I got into the upper level classes. He was the only Professor, and I didn't invite him or anything, that came to my wedding. He had heard that I was getting married and he and his wife came. So, I said, "Well, out of respect for you, I

will go to the interview." I went in there and I just kind of sat down with one of these, "I really don't want this job attitude. I don't know why I'm here. But I'm doing it for Dr. Erber", and they offered me the job. They actually offered it to Johnny Parker who was a year behind me in high school but had caught me because I stayed the extra year. He was offered the job and he turned it down to come to New Bern to work in the banks. So, I got offered the job and I took it. I don't know why, because I was driving that entire semester sixty-five miles one way to get back and forth from Greenville to Mount Olive. School at Southern Wayne was right there in Dudley. I went right in. The first day I was there I met a young man named Eddie Radford who was a wrestling coach and he and I hit it off. He's about five foot two, and he and I just hit it off really good. So, I started coaching with him. I would stay there for the rest of that year and the next three years. Margaret and I, after that semester, moved that summer to Goldsboro. She got a job right there at the school and we stayed there for the next three years. Then in 1980, Tommy Phelps was named Principal of New Bern and I was the first person he hired to come to work at New Bern High School with him. In fact, he hired me in the middle of June. He said, "I'm taking over as Principal and I'm hiring you to be my kind of handyman/gopher." He said, "You've got the kind of education to keep PA systems running, trouble shooting them, and those kinds of things. The program you're going in, you'll have students, it's a disadvantage vocational program, so students are referred. I'd go two or three weeks with no students. He said,

"So, you can work your schedule to get the things done I've got to get done." So, it was like having another administrator. We started the school year, and by Christmas of that school year, he asked me what I thought about administration. I had started when I was in Goldsboro, my Masters in vocational education. So, I was finishing that as I came back to New Bern and he encouraged me strongly to go get my Principal certificate, which meant another Masters in administration for level one to be a Principal. I did that. For some reason I was slow catching on, but once I got in there and started really enjoying school, I was not going to stop! I ended up six years of graduate school at East Carolina and finishing the other Masters in Administration and then going on and getting the level two so that if I ever wanted to be, I was certified to be a Superintendent. Tommy really took me under his wing and worked with me. He exposed me to everything in the world that he possibly could in administration, and he pretty much did groom me to be a Principal.

MF: And you were Assistant Principal under him.

Mr. Dill: Um huh.

MF: Then when he moved into the office, into administration at Central office...

Mr. Dill: I was named interim Principal to start that job January 1st of that year. I stayed there through the spring. Then I guess it was May 16th of that spring, I was named the permanent Principal of New Bern High School. I don't know how permanent that will be, but for that time period, I was the one named that would stay there.

MF: I'm sure until you can go on up to Superintendent or something like that. Well, Billy, I want to ask you before we close this, the changes in the schools from the time you went and now.

Mr. Dill: Parent support is not there anymore. I think all the problems we deal with, if you go back and you look at it, and I don't mean parent support to mean that they've abandoned their children, I don't mean that negative, when I went to school as a student all the way through high school, any activity I was involved in at the school, my parents were there.

MF: Yes.

Mr. Dill: If they had a PTO meeting, my parents went. If they needed a parent's conference, my father would take off work even though it cost him a day's salary. He was there. If there was any problem whatsoever, he was there. We don't have that anymore. We've got a tremendous percentage of our student body that do not even live with an adult. They're out on their own. It's either 3 or 4 girls in a house, and these may be 15, 16, 17 year old girls, living in a house together, or this boy can't get along with his step-father, so the mother has bought him a house and he's got him a three bedroom house and he's living in. Of course, that leads to him renting out rooms to his friends for income and stuff. Most of the people I went around with, didn't work in school. My father told us our job was school and that he would give us the money that we needed to go and date and do things with. The majority of the kids now work because they have insurance to pay and they have car payments to make. That's how they

get these cars. Last night we had a, we don't call them PTO's, we call them Principal's Forums. About every four or five weeks, we'll have a Principal's Forum and I will sit down at the table in the lecture room and the parents will come in, anywhere from 25 to 200 of them, and we'll have a topic that we'll start and then we entertain questions about anything. We just tell them how it is and why we do it this way. Having kids arrested for fighting was something that I have done now, and that was a big topic one night at one of these meetings. But I had a mother last night tell me that she just didn't know what she was gonna do. Her daughter would turn sixteen in two weeks and her daughter was really under the peer pressure because her three best friends had each already turned sixteen and all three of them for their sixteenth birthday got a brand new 1993 car. Some kind of sports car.

All three of them had received brand new cars. We joke about it, but it's very true that if you come on a campus, you distinguish the faculty lot from the student lot by looking for the finest, newest, most expensive cars. That's the student lot. One kid drives a Jaguar to school. They've got Mercedes, they've got all kinds of sports cars, the Jeep Wagoneer's, the Grand Wagoneer's, the Suzuki jeeps are real big right now. You look in the faculty parking lot and, you know, there's Oscar Kafer's Mercury Zephyr and that kind of stuff.

MF: (laughter) Old Mercury that's about to fall apart.

Mr. Dill: Um huh. And, you know, that's pretty much the way it is. These kids don't have the support their parents once had. The schools don't have the support. In fact, I went and found two

of my high school handbooks, because I wanted to compare it to what we put into handbooks today. When you get to things like attendance, it basically just says it's expected of every student to be in class on time, every day. Now, we have just pages and pages of policy governing attendance because that's what it takes to meet the legal requirements of compulsory attendance in North Carolina. I've had cases, and I tell this to a lot of people, one day we had this senior skip day planned and we found out about just by chance. A mother calls at home and says, "Mr. Dill, can you tell me", on Thursday night, "the senior skip day tomorrow, what are the ground rules?" I said, "We don't condone a senior skip day." She said, "Well, my daughter told me they were going to have a senior skip day tomorrow and if the child has good attendance and good grades, then ya'll are going to turn your back and let them go to the beach." I said, "Mam, the law won't allow me to do that." So, we go in on Friday morning and just by chance I said, "Let's see the absentee report." Well, there were about 20, 22 seniors on this list that weren't normally out, and I knew they were all at the beach. What I did was take the list and split up with the Assistant Principals and myself and some of the secretaries and everybody took 5 or 6 names and we called. I called this one boy's house and the daddy said, "Well, Mr. Dill, I'm late for court. I've left some papers that I have to have and I came home to get them. You just happen to call by coincidence when I was in the house. There is nobody in this house." I said, "Okay." I told him about senior skip day. He said, "My sons probably at the beach just like you said",

and he said, "Okay, fine. I'll handle him tonight, you handle him Monday." Well, Monday, he comes in with a note signed by his mother that he was home sick in bed all day. I refused the note, and, of course, he said, "Are you calling my mother a liar?" I said, "No, I'm not, but I'm not gonna take the note." She tried to press legal action on us to take the note and brought an attorney to the school. Those are the kind of things now. If I had skipped school, I would have ducked around buildings all day knowing somebody was gonna see me and tell my daddy. I was scared of my daddy. I wasn't scared of what H. P. Hunnicutt was gonna do to me or Tommy Phelps, he was the Assistant Principal then, what he was gonna do. What I was scared of was what my father was gonna do to me. The kids now days don't respect their parents, they don't respect other students, they don't respect anybody else's property, and least of all, they don't respect themselves. I had a young man at New Bern High School, sixteen year old, who everyday, wouldn't go to class, in the hallways, disruptive, very, very vulgar mouth. His daddy came to see me and said, "Mr. Dill, you've got to help me." I said, "I'm gonna put him out if he can't behave."

The father says, "Please don't. What could I do to keep him in school?"

I told him. The daddy turns just like this and looks at his son and he says, "Now, you've heard Mr. Dill. This is what it's gonna take for you to stay here." He went off on his daddy! Filthy, I mean a sailor wouldn't use language that filthy! I said, "Wait a minute!

You may talk to your father like that at home, but you will not talk to him here like that! Get out my office! Get out of this school!

You are through!" He goes out and sits in the car. So, I look at his daddy and his daddy's got his head down and he kind of looks up and getting teary eye, and he says, "Mr. Dill, can you help me?" I said, "No sir. When you didn't reach over and knock your son backwards out of that chair, I can't help you." He said, "You want me to hit my son?" I said, "No. What I'm trying to impress upon you sir is, if you will take that kind of verbal abuse from your son, then he expects everybody on this campus to take that verbal abuse, and I'm not gonna have my teachers talked to that way nor am I gonna sit here and listen to it." I said, "I will recommend to the Superintendent that your son be put out." It happens to be a case where he was here on special permission to be in the school, and we don't have to put up with that.

I remember going to school and you weren't worried about everybody carrying knives and guns and things. We're not near as bad here as other parts of eastern North Carolina. Kinston High School, you walk through a metal detector to come to school, armed police officer in the building whenever the students are there. Fayetteville, armed police officers. Wilmington, armed police officers. Smith Field Selma, police officers. They're all around us. We just haven't gotten to that yet, and we really don't have the need. We have an occasional fight, but we've been able to contain it by them knowing that if you fight, you're gonna be arrested and the police are gonna take you whether your 13 or 20, it doesn't matter.

MF: So, you do not have police at the school now and you do not have metal detectors?

Mr. Dill: No. There are no metal detectors at New Bern High School, there are no police officers at New Bern High School.

MF: Not yet. What do you see for the future of the schools?

Mr. Dill: We're at a process right now of totally revamping. Things like year round school, they're coming. We'd be crazy not to go to it. It's not going to school 365 days out of the year. You go 45 days, you have 15 days out. You go 45, 15 days out; 45, 15 days out; 45, and everybody has like the month of July off. So, you still have it, you just don't have all these holidays and things we take now. You take that 15 day break in between. We take a child now and we run him 180 days and we give him two months off in the summer. We spend the next three and a half months reviewing what he's forgotten during the summer. So, what we want to do is, we want to teach them 45 days. If a child is not performing up to a certain level, say, you're in Geometry and you are not a good math student and you're falling behind, under our present system, you fail the first grading period.

Then, you keep right on going with the rest of the class and you fail worse the next grading period and worse the next. We would take them in that 15 day period, and if you had a certain average or below, you would spend 10 of the 15 days in remediation. You would continue to come to school while everybody else was out on a break. You would come to school for a ratio of like 1 to 5 with a Geometry teacher.

We would give you your remediation and catch you up then, so as the next grading period opened up 5 days after your 10 days of remediation, you're caught back up with everybody. Hopefully, then you stand a

better chance of being successful. What we do now is we'll put them in there and teach them 180 school days, they fail with a 50, then they come to summer school and they're gonna take Geometry in summer school, and we're gonna teach them a year's worth of Geometry in 20 days, and they come out with an 85 average. So, now they're ready to go to Algebra II, and they're really over their head when they hit there. So, if you're gonna dance, sooner or later you've got to pay the fiddler, and it's gonna come. They make it through the Algebra II, but then, they go to college and they gotta take remediation math.

I was talking to some professors the other day about math at East Carolina and something like eighteen percent of freshmen at East Carolina this year will have to take remediation math before they can go into regular college Algebra.

MF: Well, year round schools sounds like a good idea to me.

Mr. Dill: A lot of things. Mastery learning, throwing out grades, not grading kids, not giving them GPA's and percentile grades based on a 100 point scale, that's coming whether the community is ready to accept it or not. Those kinds of things are coming because we can better meet their needs. We've already gone to future prep, where children are defining whether they are an occu-pre student which would leave high school and go directly to work; whether they're a tech-prep student who would leave high school and go to a technical school and then to work; or college prep where you're academically prepared to go to a college. Each of these offers its own curriculum and what you'll take and where you'll go with it. College is not made for all

students. High school diplomas are not made for all students. In the past, we've taken a child that was mentally handicapped and gave him the same diploma that we gave the Valedictorian who is at Duke University, and to an employer four years later, these kids have the same credentials, and it can't be.

MF: It's not fair.

Mr. Dill: It's not fair.

MF: What do you see for the future of integration?

Mr. Dill: I think we'll see a bigger push towards separation can be equal. I don't think you'll ever see an all white school again.

I think you will see all black schools. I think you'll see a push back towards the neighborhood schools. When I say an all black school, you will always have black students in the white schools, for whatever reason. But if we go back towards neighborhood schools, then you'll see fewer white students who are willing to go into a black neighborhood than a black student willing to go into a white neighborhood. High schools and middle schools, because of the complexity of the school and the cost of the school, will always be integrated now. There's no turning that back. I think they'll continue to be integrated. You can't have two eighteen million dollar high schools sitting in the city of New Bern, one for the white population and one for the black population, and then repeat that in Havelock and again at Vanceboro. It's not realistic. You may see schools grow more towards a certain type of student. We're hearing more and more every year about a true freedom of choice where any child can attend any school

they want to; where students at New Bern High School could elect to go to Vanceboro, to West Craven, if they chose to. You know when you select a college, you go to the school that offers what you want to take. If you want to be an Engineer, you go to State or Georgia Tech or somewhere like that. If you want to be a Teacher, you go to East Carolina or Appalachian or somewhere like that. If you want Business or Liberal Arts, you may go to Carolina. High schools are going to become more like that. And if the State ever goes with a full voucher where the students can select what school they want to go to, it will be interesting, because I've got students that would love to go into horticulture. You know, these kids that play golf and all that, might want to be greens keepers and stuff, but they don't get any horticulture at New Bern High School. In the same respect, certain students may want to leave and go to Havelock. There may be kids in Havelock, because we offer more AP classes than the other two schools, may want to come to New Bern High School. So, there are a lot of reasons to shift and go to the school that you want to go to. I think you'll see more of that kind. I don't think you'll ever see where these are black schools and these are white schools and you can have freedom of choice to cross between a racial school. I think you'll see where you have the choice to go to an educational center for whatever your needs are and whatever your desires are.

MF: That sounds like a wonderful thing.

Mr. Dill: If any of us live long enough.

MF: You think it'll take that long?

Mr. Dill: The State's gonna force a lot of it. We've got a quality assurance program that we're working on now that is to be implemented fully by the year 2000, and that's part of this Algebra I requirement.

All students are part of that. We're now moving towards end of course testing, which we've already had. We used the end of course test for a final exam. The State's gonna use to give credit for the class.

So, by possibly 1995, as early as 1995, you could have an 85 average in a Geometry class and fail the State's end of course test and not receive credit for the class, fail the class, because you couldn't pass that test. We've done in this system in the State, is doing away with California Achievement Test. They're going to end of grade test to give you a test at the end of the year to see if you possess, if you've mastered the minimum skills to go to the next grade.

MF: Well, that doesn't sound so bad.

Mr. Dill: It doesn't until you've got a fifteen year sitting in the third grade.

MF: Oh, okay. I understand, Billy, yeah.

Mr. Dill: There's always gonna have to be a certain amount of promotion based on age. Otherwise, you've got too many kids who are too old in low levels, and that creates a problem. That would be like busing children. Years and years ago when bussing first came out they bused everybody on one bus, first grade through the eleventh grade, or whatever. We don't do that anymore. What high school students will expose a first grader to is not fair.

MF: Right. But that wasn't true when I was growing up or you

were growing up.

Mr. Dill: That's right. But everybody sat in their seat and looked ahead and behaved. I've had buses pull in at New Bern High School some years ago when I was an Assistant Principal running buses that the seats were torn up from the floor and the lights, the wiring, was all pulled out from the ceiling. It just depends. It just depends on what area you're serving and the kids that they come from. The low level, I shouldn't say low level, I should say socio-economically disadvantaged kids, who get a lot of the blame; such as, the kids coming from Craven Terrace or Trent Court, are not always the kids that are the worst to deal with. The higher the social class of kids, sometimes, it's harder to deal with them. If you're gonna deal with a child out of the projects, you know where you stand with them. They let you know. You see them coming down the hall and they make no bones about it that they have a problem with you. As you get into the middle and upper class, black and white families, they become sneakier and things are different. They're the ones that would egg your house or key your car or spray paint your building. That kind of thing.

MF: Oh, Billy, there's so much that you have to deal with. I don't know how you have time to teach.

Mr. Dill: Administration is so much different, or so different, than what it use to be. The kinds of things that we deal with today, that twenty-five years ago...

MF: Were unthinkable. Absolutely unthinkable.

Mr. Dill: Like this year; maybe already this year, I have probably

called the police on more kids and had them taken out of the building than any of the Principals that I had all the way through school had had taken out by police in their entire careers. MF: But it's been necessary or you would not have done it.

Mr. Dill: Right.

MF: Well, I wish you the very best of luck in your job as Principal. And I know, knowing you, that you'll do an absolutely wonderful job. I know that. At this point, unless you have something else you want to say...

Mr. Dill: No.

MF: Okay. Then I would like to thank you very, very much on behalf of Memories of New Bern for this excellent interview. You've really given us a lot to think about, and thank you Billy. I really do appreciate it.

Mr. Dill: Well, the Dill's and Ipock's have never been short on words. (laughter)

MF: Well, you have expressed it beautifully and I am very grateful. Thank you very much.

Mr. Dill: Thank you. I've enjoyed it.

MF: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW