

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

JOSEPH F. PATTERSON, JR., M.D.

INTERVIEW 905.2

This is Dr. Joseph Patterson. Call this monologue interview 905.2.

It is a continuation of an interview by Dorothy Richardson some time ago. This information will supplement the other interview. The date now is November 14, 1992 and the recording is being made in my home at 604 East Front Street in New Bern.

I thought it might be interesting to try to identify the people who lived in my neighborhood when I grew up as a boy in the 1920's and 1930. I lived on New Street, the first house next to East Front Street. Now, as you stand on East Front Street facing New Street westward, the two houses on the corner, on the right-hand side is the large home where Mr. and Mrs. E. K. Bishop lived. Mr. Bishop had a business located on one of the piers down at the foot of Craven Street I think. He was a very successful business man. He and his wife were a very great, gentle, childless, older couple who sat on their porch a lot and lived in this large house by themselves. Mrs. Bishop was the sister of Mr. Mark Stevenson. Right behind their house, which was the first house on the right on New Street, is where I lived with my family. We moved there when I was six months old and that is where I grew up. The house was in our possession until the early 1940's when my parents sold it to Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Tolson. Next to that was where Judge Romulus Nunn lived with his wife and two daughters, Elizabeth and Eleanor. Judge Nunn was a very prominent man in New Bern and he was quite a historian and everyone regrets that we do not have his memories on tape. Next to them, lived the Footes. Mr. Foote was a carnival man and he kept a trailer, small trailer, in his backyard.

He kept costumes and other gear in this which he would take around to various locations for shows. I never knew Mr. Foote very well. I knew Mrs. Foote better. She was a small lady who was very kind. They had three children. Dolly, a nice girl who went to nursing school in Washington D.C. and married a physician there. I haven't seen her in many years. An older boy, Harry, who became captain of yachts down in Florida. He disappeared from sight after we grew up. And, Sonny, who was a little older than I and who was fairly wild sort of person who was constantly in trouble with his father. Next to them in the little house where Mrs. Joe McDaniel now lives was a man named Mr. Ulrich who lived alone and I never knew much about him. Going back to East Front Street and starting on the left-hand side facing west, the big white house on the left-hand corner was my Grandfather Simmons' house and that is where he lived until he moved out in the country to spend his last years with his daughter, Mrs. Wade Meadows, at Green Acres on Trent Blvd. My parents later moved into that house as it was left to my mother. Behind them, and this is the first house on the left as you face west, lived Mr. George Attmore who owned a Chevrolet dealership, which at that time was located on Craven Street right next to the Owen G. Dunn building. He and his wife lived there alone. I don't think they had any children. Next to them was a house which for a long time was inhabited by Harry Jacobs and his family. They were relatives of mine. Mr. Jacobs was head of the Chamber of Commerce in New Bern during the 1922 fire and had a lot to do with the aid given to the people who were burned out. He later had a soda shop on the

corner of Middle Street and Pollock Street where Mr. Bradham began his pepsi-cola business. Harry Jacobs was married to Nina Gibbs who came from Hyde County, and that is where our relationship lies. They had three children, Olier Farrow and Virginia, and Harry. Both girls moved away when they got married and live in different places now.

Also living with them were Nina's two sisters; Margaret who married Johnny Dunn and Florie who married Redmond Dill and moved out on the Trent River. Next to them was a lot inhabited by a black family. The lot was surrounded by a rambling wooden fence and a typical share cropper's shack was inside where this black woman and her grown son Harvey lived. They raised animals in there. I never got into that yard, although I looked through the cracks a lot of times. Next to that was a vacant lot for a long time and then B. G. Hines (I think it was B. G. Hines) built a house there. B. G. married Helen Stevenson and that's where they lived. In the back of that house in the backyard, which was a deep yard, several of us boys dug a deep hole to play in.

It was so deep it was very dangerous and our parents had to close it. Next to them going west, lived the Baxters, Mr. Baxter and his wife and children, Bill and George Dick. They were a sort of unusual family and we did not know much about them. They were great outdoors people. Going up the street a little bit further, I can't remember who was in the next house, there was a well known lady in town, but then the Ferebee family lived. They were very famous people from the standpoint of athletics. The children were all athletically endowed.

There were about eight boys and several girls. They could form an

athletic team of their own. They were good friends of Simmons and mine and of most people in New Bern. Mrs. James Cason lived next to them. Crossing Craven Street and looking west on the right, the large corner house was where Mr. Hagood lived who owned the Ford agency.

Right next to him going up New Street were my grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Patterson. They had four sons: my father; my Uncle Donald who was a Navy Captain and the father of John and Donald; Albert, who helped run the mill supply company and lived with them; and John, who died when I was a young boy. The house next to them I think was owned by Mr. L. C. Scott, and next to that was Mr. Albert Bangert's house and he was the mayor of New Bern. Right across from Mr. Bangert's house was where the Methodist minister parsonage used to be. Across the street from my grandparents is the large historic house on the corner of Craven and New. Mr. and Mrs. Joe Mullineaux and their children, Kitty and her brother, lived on the first floor. Going back to East Front Street where New joins East Front and going south, next to my grandfather's house was where Bryan Duffy lived. He had a pharmacy on the corner of South Front Street and Middle Street where Captain Ratty's is located now. Next to him was the Claypoole house where lived Mr. and Mrs. Jessie Claypoole and their children, Stanley and Frances. Frances married Vermont C. Royster who later became editor of the Wall Street Journal and they moved away. Stanley went to the Naval Academy and now lives in Alexandria. Next to them was a beautiful double house with a full length porch where the Broadfootes lived. They were relatives of the Claypoole's. This house was demolished

when the Shriners made a parking lot. Next to this was the original Shrine home on the corner of Broad and East Front Street. It was a beautiful Victorian house surrounded by the same iron fence which is there at the present. There was an u-shaped driveway from East Front Street to the front of the house leading out. It was a very nice house as was the Broadfoote house. Crossing Broad Street and continuing on East Front Street, on the right hand side was where the Duffy family lived, Francis Duffy and his family. Iris Rawls and her family lived in a house right along there. Starting back at Broad Street and looking south on East Front (you must remember that there was no bridge there at the time) and just on the other side of Broad Street on the left hand side was where the Lumsdens lived. Mrs. Lumsden had a cafe in the upstairs room of her house and Mrs. Foote used to help her run this. Mrs. Lumsden made fine deviled crabs. I know my mother had me go down there many times and get deviled crabs from her. There was a vacant lot next to the Lumsden house where we boys played a great deal. Then a house which was just about one-story, as I recall it, and I think Dr. Civils lived there before moving on Pollock Street.

Next to that was where Billy Dawson and his family lived. They were my very close friends. And on the corner, I am told that Mr. Barbour of Barbour Boat Works lived. Crossing Pollock Street and continuing down on East Front, on the left hand side, on the corner where there is now a vacant parking area was an unusual brick building, a home, a large home, with many different architectural designs, which was called the "Blackbeard house" because the rumor or the story was, that's

where Blackbeard lived supposedly. There was a tunnel in this house underneath the ground to the waterfront. This is not true because the house was built after Blackbeard's death, but the story persisted and the folks who lived there were constantly bothered by people passing through town wanting to ask questions about Blackbeard. Rody, (Rodolph Duffy) and his wife Elizabeth Nunn lived there as did other relatives of mine. This was torn down to make a parking area, I think, for the Holiday Inn. The brick building, which is standing, was next to that.

Then beyond that where the Comfort Inn is now being built, was the Gwaltney house where Joe Gwaltney and Maude and all of the Gwaltneys grew up. Backtracking to New Street and looking north on East Front Street from New, the house next to the Bishop house was where Dr. and Mrs. R. D. V. Jones lived. Dr. Jones was my father's partner. Together, they built St. Luke's Hospital. Dr. Jones had one son, Robert, who was a surgeon in Norfolk. Otherwise, the two lived there alone except when Robert visited. Sorry, there was also a daughter named Elsie who came back every now and then. But mostly the Jones lived alone.

Next to them was where the Dunns lived; Mark Dunn and Johnny and Bay and other sisters. Linden Street was called Short Street and was filled with small houses side by side and many people lived there. These folks were of a social group that was pretty poor financially and they were their own group and did not mingle with the rest of the folks around too much. As kids, we used to have lots of fights with the Short Street kids. Going downtown, on Broad Street just behind what used to be Williams Cafe which is now the Chelsea, on the same side,

right in that area was a bowling alley where small pins were used.

We used to bowl there a great deal. Ronald Ipock had a grocery store right in that same block. Then further down on the corner of Broad and Hancock Street was a telephone office. At the intersection of Broad and Middle Streets, on the northeast corner where there's a vacant lot next to the Christian Science building, was a filling station.

On the corner opposite, that is the southeast corner, was the Green Door restaurant. Right along in that same area on Middle Street was Joe Caprio's Shoe Shop. There was a Chinese laundry right in that area. Baxter's Sporting Goods store was there. And then there was a house which I think was adjacent to the Episcopal church property where a family lived upstairs and one down. I know the Henry family lived upstairs. Starting at Williams Cafe on Middle Street and heading south, in that general area was Kafer's Bakery and an A&P store. I recall that in this store you would be waited on. There was sawdust on the floor. You bought what you wanted and carried it on home. On Pollock Street across from the Episcopal church was where Mr. J. J. Tolson had his electric store. The Central Cafe was right along in there also. On the corner where Mr. Bradham had his pepsi-cola/pharmacy place was located Shaw's Soda Shoppe. This later became Harry Jacobs place. Catty cornered across from that was the Elk's Temple building and the Elk's barber shop in the basement. Right across from the Elk's building was a large hardware store. Going to the corner of Craven and Pollock Street, across from the City Hall where there's a city parking lot, used to be Jane Stewart's house. This was a very



large Victorian house which was a little bit scary. It looked like a Halloween house, but it was full of beautiful things that Jane Stewart, who was an interior decorator, had put together. Up in the Tryon Palace area, the Stevensons lived in the Stevenson house. That's where Mark Stevenson lived with his wife Elsie and their two daughters, Eleanor and Helen. Aunt Elsie, I've called her, though she was no kin, was a great friend of my mother's and she was my godmother. We used to go to the Stevenson house every Christmas morning for a party.

In the days before Tryon Palace was built and when the bridge was at the foot of George Street which ran right through the Tryon Palace complex, there were houses on both sides of George Street. One of the houses right behind the Stevensons was where Sam Eaton and his mother lived. I remember some of the ruins of the Palace when I was boy and used to play on them.

This may be a good time to mention that New Bern was the home of three Lt. General's following World War II. One was Sam Eaton who went to West Point. He married a girl from California and after the war moved out there and didn't come back again, but he had a great career. Jack Tolson who's father had the electric store on Pollock Street also went to West Point and was in the same class I think with Sam. Jack became a Lt. General. He died recently, but he was world famous. He had a great deal to do with developing the Army Air Corps and the paratroopers. He also was instrumental in using the helicopter as an attack transport instrument. When he died, I was sent by my daughter in England, a very long article from the obituary page of The

London Times about him. Then, there is Bob Breitweiser who married Eleanor Stevenson. Bob is not from New Bern, but he came here and he and Eleanor live out on the Trent River. Bob was an outstanding officer in the Air Corps and was in command of many major installations during World War II.

I'd like to comment briefly on the physicians and the situation about specialization in New Bern. My father and his generation of doctors did most everything. They were general practitioners for the most part. They would make house calls. They would do major surgery.

They would treat most everything because they had to. I recall my father telling me that in earlier days he used to go out by horse and buggy and operate on tables down in Pamlico County. But it would be unfair to say that in those days there were no specialists because Dr. Daniels was an ear, nose, and throat specialist here and Dr. Bender was a pediatrician. But for the most part, there was general practice.

This included doctors like Dr. Gibbs, Dr. Pollock, my father, Dr. Jones, Dr. Charles Barker, Dr. Joe Latham, Dr. Primrose and Dr. Wadsworth. When my generation came back, starting really with my brother Simmons and myself, we brought specialization into New Bern.

Ernest Richardson was here and he soon limited his work to obstetrics.

Dr. Charles Ashford then limited his work to surgery. Then Dr. Millns and Dr. Houghton came in and Dr. Alan Davidson. And from that point on, specialization increased. But the general surgeons in those days, like myself, did most every kind of general surgery. We did brain surgery when we had to; we did chest surgery when we had to; abdominal

and neck surgery; occasional vascular cases; gynecology surgery, but very little urology surgery was done until Dr. Millns came. But the general surgeon was a true general surgeon. Then orthopedics specialists started coming in and neuro surgeons and pediatric surgeons and gyn surgeons, and the whole picture of surgery changed and the days of the true general surgeon faded. As far as anesthesia goes, when we first came here in the very early fifties, all that was available was open drop ether. Ernest Richardson was using caudal anesthesia for deliveries and made quite a reputation doing this. Spinal anesthesia was also used. But as far as inhalation anesthesia was concerned, the only thing was open drop ether. The first endotracheal case was done by my brother and myself for a chest injury one Christmas day when a nurse anesthetist who was trained happened to be visiting my brother. From that point on, other individuals became trained in anesthesia and more modern anesthesia began to be given at all three hospitals; Kafer, St. Luke's, and Good Shepherd.

I'd like to mention a couple of other filling stations that were located in downtown that have long since gone. Where the New Bern Public Library now stands, there was a filling station on that corner.

At the foot of Johnson Street when the bridge was there, where the brick house stands at the northeast corner of the Johnson Street-East Front Street junction, was a filling station operated by Ham Ferebee.

Let me speak to railroads just for a minute. The railroads were active in those days and there were passenger trains coming to and from New Bern. My grandfather was a senator in Washington and a pullman

car would be stationed here and I was told it was for his purposes whenever he wanted to go back to Washington. I rode that pullman car with him on a number of occasions to Washington.

Two poignant memories I have of my father and Dr. Jones are in their older days when they had both stopped practice and were both unwell. Dr. Jones had a walking cane which would make a sitting cane by spreading out two mechanisms at the top and he used to sit on the cane, half standing of course, on the corner of New and East Front Streets just looking at the river for a long, long time. When my father became ill, he used to go over to the river shore and sit on the concrete wall there adjacent to the sidewalk and just stare out at the river for what seemed like hours at a time. I remember the two of them looking at the river in their old age.

In my younger days, two out-of-town specialists used to come and operate at St. Luke's. One was Dr. Lee Cohen who was an ear, nose, and throat specialist from Baltimore. Another was Dr. Claude C. Coleman, a neuro-surgeon from Richmond. They would come down and do cases which had been selected for them at St. Luke's. After World War II, I trained for a year under Dr. Coleman at the Medical College in Virginia.

In the fifties, the Trent Pines Club was run by Morrison Barwick. We called him "Wimpy." He and his wife ran the finest place to go for the evening and have dinner anywhere around, and many a night was spent there with friends.

The Gaston Hotel burned in the fifties or early sixties. I was

down in Texas, I think, at a medical meeting when it happened. My mother was there. Dad had died and mother was alone. She moved around New Bern from place to place trying to get settled after she sold her house and ended up in the Gaston Hotel where she had all of her fine antiques, and they were really beautiful things. She had all of the silver services that her father, Senator Simmons, had been given when he left the Senate and just really great things. She received a call one evening telling her to get out, that the hotel was on fire. She was by herself in her nightgown and she opened the door to the hall and the hall was filled with smoke. She got down on her hands and knees and crept along from door to door, all of them locked, and nobody came, until she found a door to the balcony over the entrance. This was the second floor. She crawled out there in her nightgown. All these people were around. The firemen were there with their ladders and they ran a ladder up to where she was and carried her down, and all she had was her nightgown. The hotel burned completely of course, and she lost everything that she had, the fine portrait of her father and all of the valuable possessions she had.

I remember when I was a young boy living on New Street that the telephone numbers in town were usually two digits. Our number at 4 New Street was 58. There were operators who would take your calls.

Helen Ruth Scott was one of them and Gretchen Jones was another. Gretchen and I used to go around a lot. I would pick up the phone just to talk to Gretchen as a telephone operator. It got to the point that whenever any of the other girls answered the phone heard my voice,

they would automatically switch me to Gretchen. I liked that system.

Let me end these memoirs with a couple of personal notes. While I was on the faculty of the medical school in Chapel Hill, two great things happened to me. One was that the UNC class of '38 was able to put together a gift to the University which we thought was very meaningful. Through our own contributions, we set up an endowment, which now amounts to over \$300,000, to do three things: To send students at Carolina abroad for summer study at some great place where they could learn about other people and then bring their knowledge back to share with other people on the campus. The interest from the funds would do this. Part of the interest would also be given to the International Center to help with its programs and expenses and then more of the funds would be used to award a prize to that student on the campus most impressive in international leadership. We did this because we were a war class and we remembered the war and remembered our friends who were killed and we wanted to do anything we could to keep this from happening again. So we thought that if we could get people of our country mixing with people of other countries, this would help at least a little. We hoped that as time went by and as we grew older, the young people we selected as recipients of the award, we called them Class of '38 Fellows, would take the program over and perpetuate it. This has come to pass and the young people now run this program entirely and look upon it as their own. We have sent over sixty young people abroad now and we've reached a point where we can give them \$2,500 or more each to help them with these expenses.

Another great thing that happened to me was I was able to go to Viet Nam during the war over there to work in a children's hospital.

I did this for three months in late 1969 and early 1970 and two months in 1972. I served as an anesthesiologist in a children's plastic surgery hospital in Saigon during those five months. It was a difficult job because the children were so badly injured and had such terrible disfigurements, such as cleft lips and other abnormalities. My job was most difficult, but it was a very rewarding thing and I'm glad I could do that. I have perhaps the best collection in the world of colored slides of the Vietnamese children injured by the war and affected by other abnormalities. I made friends among the Vietnamese physicians and worked with them while there. Many of them escaped to this country and we remain great friends. So this was a special time for me.

One final thing personally is that I became a professor in the medical school at Chapel Hill. I had a lot to do with establishing the out-patient surgery department there and I think that had something to do with my promotion. It was a long dream of mine to teach in the UNC medical school and I hadn't really figured on being a professor but I made it and I'm very proud of that.

So, unless I can think of something else, this is the end of this additional information. If something else does come up, I'll just tack it on to this.

END OF TAPE

