

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

CHARLES H. HALL

INTERVIEW 1501.2

The following is a taped interview with Charles H. Hall, conducted for the Memories of New Bern Committee on April 28, 1992 in New Bern, N. C. This is the second interview with Mr. Hall and has been designated Tape number 1501.2. The interview was conducted by Bill Edwards, interviewer number 1500, for the Transportation Task Force.

Mr. Hall: My name is Charles Henry Hall, Jr. I was born on March 8, 1911, 39 South Front Street, New Bern. That goes back way before Tryon Palace restoration, Bill. My early years were spent down where the Neuse and Trent come together. A lot of that time, on New Bern's only trash pile, which was Union Point where South Front and East Front Street come together. That site was originally an oyster shucking factory. Later, a saw mill. Steam to the mill supplied by the J. A. Meadows Milling Company, which was adjoining that. When that site later became a trash pile, there were probably a thousand early model automobiles hauled to that trash pile. If anybody ever tries to drive a piling into that end of New Bern to build a motel or something, they have a problem. I spent a lot of time on the water. When I was a teenager, I got in the boat racing business with the Barbour boat people. I won a lot of races and got New Bern a lot of publicity.

At the ripe old age of nineteen I joined the bus company. I started selling tickets and ended up managing the company in 1946 and I retired in 1976. During that forty-six years with the company, I took time out to do a lot of fishing and hunting. I spent six years driving airplanes. I built me a place on the coast in '53 as a retirement home. On this date, April 28, 1992, I've been enjoying full retirement

for about fifteen years. My daddy was named Charles Henry Hall, a native New Bernian for two generations before him. My mother was Mary Macon Berry of Hyde County origin. Incidentally, Bill, if you ever go to Hyde County and get on Matamuskeet Lake on the road across the lake and head south, you'll come to a cemetery at the end of that crossing, where the road crosses. That cemetery is three fourths full of my mother's people.

Bill Edwards: I was up there in January.

Mr. Hall: It's a pretty sight. Every chance I get, I like to go up that way. All during these years in public transportation, Bill, I did a lot of research in transportation. Because early on, I made up my mind what I wanted to do and sought transportation. In 1930, the best thing was a young and small but growing bus line here in New Bern that had started five years earlier. So I moved in and started selling tickets. I went from there to driving. Then in my wisdom as a twenty-one year old, went in the bus office one day and told the boss if he'd take me off the road for a little while, I'd fix those buses that were breaking down all the time. The old timer took me up on it. I never got back under the wheel. From then on, I was in the working end of the business. I was interested in transportation and did a lot of research. I'm still interested in it. I found out way back that the first transportation of a public nature in this area was stage coaches. They were very active up to the early 1800's. There was obviously a lot of boat traffic, but that was all sail then and sail could not be used dependably as a public carrier. It was

good for heavy freight, bulk produce and stuff, but it just didn't work for passenger service. However, when Robert Fulton got busy in the early 1800's and built a steamboat, things began to pop and establish public carriers. At that time, the early 1800's, regular stages were running Wilmington to New Bern and north; Fayetteville to New Bern and New Bern west. They were slow. No paved roads. So any of those links that could be done by boat, speeded things up tremendously. For example; one of the stages that ran from Fayetteville to New Bern continued many years after the steamboat started. But, the boats picked up at New Bern, ran to Elizabeth City, used a second stage to Norfolk sixty miles and then by boat up the bay and off shore to New York. Regular passenger service operated from New Bern to points north. The scheduled time, even with those slow steamers, was to me amazing. A trip from New Bern to New York was only a four day trip and that included a sixty mile ride by stage coach, Elizabeth City to Norfolk. Steam began to come in more and more. By 1800 to 1820, steamboats were running regular out of New Bern in passenger service. The steamer Neuse in late 1800's and up in the early 1900's was a very famous passenger carrier between here and Norfolk. It ran regular trips.

BE: That had to go out in the ocean for part of that trip, didn't it?

Mr. Hall: No. At that time, Bill, there was plenty of water from New Bern to Elizabeth City out of the mouth of the Neuse river across Pamlico Sound.

BE: The ship didn't go all the way to Norfolk then?

Mr. Hall: No. When the inland waterways, the intracoastal, was dug up that way, and that was dug first between Elizabeth City and Norfolk, then boat service from here to Norfolk, was a reality including the steamer Neuse. But her early trips were to Elizabeth City from New Bern. My daddy rode it frequently. That service went out about the time that I showed up. In early 1900's, 1910, it was just about gone. I was born in 1911. He was a licensed steamboat engineer and loved steam. He grew up in steam. He often liked to tell the story to anybody who would listen; how he was on that steamer Neuse one night coming up Neuse river. They had reached Oriental, off shore. The Skipper looked at his watch and grabbed that little whistle tube they used to have in the cabin and he could talk to the engine room. He called the engineer and said, "Joe, we're running a little late. Give me one more turn on that engine." One revolution a minute, Bill. They made up twenty minutes from Oriental to New Bern. Now, that sounds crazy to you today when you think of boat engines turning up in the thousands of revolutions. But these first steam engines were very slow in revolutions per minute.

BE: They'd turn five or six hundred maybe?

Mr. Hall: No, that was fast. You're getting up into the first gasoline speed when you talk that fast. I should tell you here the reason for that real slow engine speed; of course, the engine couldn't stand high speed, but the engines were very low pressure steam which required a tremendous piston! Phmm! Phmm! Phmm! Phmm!

BE: You had a large mass there to move.

Mr. Hall: That goes into another part of my memory about these boats. I lived next door to a marine railway down on the Meadows marine railway.

BE: I remember that.

Mr. Hall: They'd haul these big boats out. My first impression of those boats was to crawl around under them and look at the enormous iron propellers with the blades of the propeller bolted to a hub with tremendous bolts. There was no such thing as bronze or brass wheels then. If you damaged a wheel by hitting a shoal or log, just unbolt one blade and put on another. That was common practice. The steamer Neuse's propeller was a tremendous thing - 8 to 10 feet in diameter, with tremendous pitch in each blade due to its slow speed.

But if you added one revolution per minute to that tremendous bulk of iron, you'd come up the river. Another vivid recollection of those early boats, remember now this was before we had anything that resembles a bottom paint that was good for anti-fouling purposes. They just didn't have it. Some of them tried tar, just black tar. But the most successful coating these boats had, Bill, under water, was sheet copper. They actually clad the entire bottom of the boat with large sheets of thin copper. That copper in contact with water, particularly if it had a little salt in it, would begin oxidizing. When these boats would haul out, the bottom of that boat looked like pure gold. Brilliant bright copper! To me as a youngster, I'll never forget how clean those boats were. As I learned later, this type boat was always on the move.

They didn't tie up much. They were constantly moving in the water. More recently I've learned that marine growth won't touch anything overboard if it's in motion over about two or three miles an hour. It just can't cling to it. It's got to be in dead water to get established; barnacles, marine worms, you name it. They just won't take over.

BE: Did you nail those sheets on the boat?

Mr. Hall: Yes. Copper headed nails. Looked like roofing nails, big heads, short, so they wouldn't go through the planking. In case you had one pulled out, you wouldn't have a leak. They were all copper clads from the water line down.

BE: That's amazing.

Mr. Hall: That's all they had. Later on when they started catching menhaden down in Carteret County in the ocean off Beaufort, they tried the early bottom paints but they weren't much good. Everyone of them, that entire fleet of fatback boats, would come to New Bern and spend the winter when the fishing was done to kill the marine worms that got into those bottoms during the summer. That would get them, the fresh water up here. As you know, pilings that were driven in the New Bern harbor before the Civil War are still there. The underwater part is perfect. The tops rotted and gone, but they're still there.

BE: I had a little boat one time and I had to take the barnacles off, so I know how sticky they are.

Mr. Hall: I have fun with my dentist every time I go in. I tell him I'm working on a glue that he can stick my fillings in my teeth

that would be as good as the glue a barnacle uses to stick on a wet bottom of a boat. They grin at me and bear it, but they haven't got a glue that good yet.

BE: Apparently not.

Mr. Hall: The first scheduled runs, Bill, around here in steamboats were upstream from New Bern. In 1847, now that's before the Civil War remember, there was early freight and passenger traffic by boat from New Bern to Smithfield. It ran regular. That's a fact.

It's a matter of record, not my memory. I wasn't here. There was another regular service between New Bern and Trenton by steamboat.

Claude Foy, he has a son still living in the Pollocksville area, Louis Foy. I think Louis is still around. He'd be very familiar with that.

His daddy got interested in Trent River full of snags. You couldn't run a boat of any size up there.

Claude Foy prevailed on somebody or some agency. He got hold of \$7,000 somehow to clear Trent River. They did. They got the major snags out of it; stumps and logs and whatever. Claude started a freight boat service from Trenton to New Bern and it was very successful for the years he operated it.

BE: Seven thousand dollars was a lot of money then, wasn't it?

Mr. Hall: Ohhh! That would do a lot. And he used it for that purpose. He had maybe a personal reason for it because he followed it with a freight boat line. Back then, Bill, the only way these numerous sawmills in the New Bern area could get logs was by water.

No trucks, no highways. Any timber stand that was near water was

bought up quickly by these big sawmills; Rowland, Pine Lumber. My daddy ran several here. I remember when they rafted those logs, they would take maybe several thousand logs and chain them together. Side by side logs, not end to end. They would pull them sideways. Like; a sixteen foot log, that'd be as wide as his tow, but, the tow would reach three or four city blocks on the river. They would snake down these rivers, up Neuse as the case may be, from below town with this long chain running through a ring and a spike on that ring driven into each log. They would come along very slow. Now, that was early on.

I remember that personally because the early gas engines were in the act then. I recall one man that towed for one of the big lumber companies. He got sick and tired of taking two days to tow a raft from Pollocksville to New Bern. He wanted to improve it. He had a little twenty horsepower engine in his tugboat. That's all he had, twenty horsepower. He found out that he could get a sixty horse engine.

Well, he was all for it. He got it, spent months putting that bigger engine in, bigger propeller and said, "Boy, watch me now come down from Pollocksville. I'm gonna cut that time in half 'cause I've got three times the power." Well, everybody was watching the new venture.

He started out and I reckon you can guess, it still took two days to pull that long string of logs. You just don't speed up that much weight, Bill, when you're having to drag each one through the water.

He gained absolutely nothing with three times the horsepower. You may wonder how they got around the sharp turns up Trent River with a raft that was a half a mile long. They put men on that raft and

when the tugboat made a turn, the raft of course would try to get on the point of land. A man on the raft, he would stay at that particular point of land that was gonna grab his logs, stick his pipehole in the bank and walk the logs as they come by that point. That's the way they got by. Just kept a little offshore pressure. Every man had to walk a point like that. That's the way they used to get the lumber to the sawmill. It was quite an undertaking. That was a big time in New Bern, Bill, when those big mills were running. They were on both sides of the river over in James City. You've seen the log ponds.

BE: Rowland was purported to be the second largest in the world at one time.

Mr. Hall: That's right. You remember it burned the same day of our big fire.

BE: I don't remember that. I wasn't here.

Mr. Hall: It did.

BE: I think I have heard that.

Mr. Hall: That's one reason the New Bern fire got so big. Rowland used all the water. In desperation, they finally turned Neuse River into the city water system. Had to to survive. Things were terrible.

When I finished high school, I wanted to go to Annapolis. So I sought local tutelage by a local very learned person, Harold Whitehurst, who taught some in the high school. He instructed me for two years in what I would need over and above high school to pass a college entrance exam. Well, Congressman Abernethy, not Charles, his daddy, got me a first alternate appointment, not a principal one. In other words,

if the principal passed, I didn't make it. I mean, not by my fault.

I took the exam, had no problems with it, passed it. But the principal passed too. So Shoot Hall never made Annapolis.

BE: Do you remember who that was?

Mr. Hall: No I don't. It wasn't a local person.

BE: I see. Somebody in the congressional district.

Mr. Hall: That's right. I don't even recall the boy's name, but he got in there. I hope he was successful. I never knew. But, I didn't make that. I was getting up to high teenager then and so at nineteen I turned toward transportation and went with the bus company. No regrets about that either. One other type of transportation here that was very impressive to me as a youngster on the rivers here was three-masted sailing vessels rams that came in. Most of them came in, loaded with lumber and left, bulk cargo.

BE: Out-going.

Mr. Hall: Yes. All export. They were massive things, Bill. I remember seeing one of them on a real light wind one day. He was coming into New Bern. So I took my skiff and a pair of oars and rowed to meet him. I figured I'd just row along with him as he came on in. They were tremendous things comparable to the old lumber barges that a lot of people can recall tied up around New Bern. They were not powered vessels but were towed. This sailing vessel, three-mast, looked to me like it was barely moving coming toward me. But I got news for you, Bill. When I got close to that thing, rowing as hard as I could, it was just like I was tied to a net stake. That thing

went right on and left me in the lightest kind of wind. It was very impressive when they'd come to a dock and want to stop. They had no reverse engine. They couldn't reverse. I was impressed as a youngster how that Skipper could stop that thing anywhere he wanted to and almost instantly! He'd be moving, say, a mile, two miles an hour. Not much speed, but when you consider the bulk involved, there's a lot of energy there. The piers here then, Bill, were not parallel to the shore.

They were perpendicular. The warehouses stuck out in the rivers with room between them for large vessels, either sail or steam. These old sail vessels would start up in that hole with land or building right directly in front of them and at the last minute I'd hear a yell from the Captain and that boat would stop quick. Finally, I got curious and I kept trying until I found out how he did it. They dropped that twenty ton center board in the mud. When they'd come in the slip, course, he'd have it up in the hull, in the center board well. But at the signal from the Skipper, somebody either chop a rope or turn it loose and that live oak board that was saturated with water, heavy as lead, would fall 10, 15 feet below the bottom of the boat and jam right into a muddy bottom and she stopped.

BE: I can imagine.

Mr. Hall: But that was his brake.

BE: How tall were those masts, 40, 50 feet?

Mr. Hall: 60 feet. Most of the rams could not come in empty they were so narrow and so high. There were places on those warehouses for guide ropes from the top of the mast to the warehouses to hold

a vessel upright when it was empty of cargo. In other words, the way they were built, they were built to sail with a load in them. Well, when he was empty, a lot of them could not sit up. They guy the masts like that to tremendous anchors to hold them up. As a youngster, it was very impressive to see those boats come in here and leave. We had in addition to the steamer Neuse, Bill, we had two other very active steamboats here. Although I never rode the Neuse, I did ride the other two. One was named the S. J. Phillips. It was a two deck steamboat, two stories on that. It had the main hull deck and then a second deck which started with the wheel headquarters where the Captain was with the stern wheel, and then passenger space behind that.

What impressed me about the S. J. Phillips was the public restrooms. As a kid, that got me. Here's why it impressed me. It was on the second deck on the very stern of the boat and built over the stern paddle wheel. It was similar to about a four hole outdoor privy. That's about what it added up to. No other facilities but a hole.

Why it's so sharp in my mind today, anybody that rode that S. J. Phillips regularly, learned early on that you didn't go to the restroom if you had a fair wind. That paddle wheel back there a grinding, bringing the water and the spray up, it just missed the bottom of the restroom. If you had a fair wind, you got a wash job that you didn't want. So you stayed out of there if the wind was behind the boat.

I'll never forget that boat for that reason. I rode it several times.

I recall one trip up Neuse river. Another, we used to take Sunday school picnics. Most of them went to Slocum's Creek. I remember a

trip to Slocum's Creek on the S. J. Phillips. We tied up in the narrows of Slocum's Creek. It was deep in the narrows. You could go right to the bank. Everybody on there threw a crab line overboard. In 1915-1925 was a living mass of hard crabs in Slocum's Creek and picnics would go there. There would be up to a hundred lines with chicken necks or beef bones and scoop nets. Some fellows just went along the lines scooping crabs. They had lard stands. Fifty pound lard stands, Bill. When they got it full of crabs, they'd take it ashore with a little Slocum's Creek water in it and steam those crabs. I'd never eaten one in my life. I was, I reckon, ten years old on my first trip and I didn't know what to eat, what part of the crab to eat. I kind of watched the grown-ups and I'd see them pop the shell off and start sucking the meat. Well, I ended up eating about a dozen hard crabs. But instead of eating the meat, I was eating their lungs.

BE: Ugh.

Mr. Hall: You know what the lungs are?

BE: Yes sir.

Mr. Hall: The lungish, gilly looking stuff under the shell. So, if there's any harm in that, I don't know it because I'm still here. But that was my first experience on something like that.

BE: I think down in Florida we used to call that the dead man's fingers.

Mr. Hall: That's a good name for it. Maybe it's not a dead man because I'm still here. On one occasion, and this came the closest to disaster, Bill, I can recall; I was a boy scout at Camp Kiro. That

was near Johnson's Point down Neuse River on the right as you go down stream. I was there for a week with my scout troop number 8. There came a terrible bunch of squalls one day. In summer of course. There were two steamboats with Sunday school picnics trying to get back from Slocum's Creek to New Bern. This camp was about half way from Slocum's Creek to New Bern and in one of the widest parts of Neuse River above Wilkerson Point. A series of squalls hit those two boats. There was quite an article in the local paper. That would have been in the mid 1920's if anybody wants to dig it out. I stayed at that camp where we had a full view of the river. We were on a high bank. I counted seven water- spouts, Bill, in one afternoon on Neuse River. Goose Creek was almost across Neuse River from the camp. The local paper later described the terror that was going on on those two boats. The skippers, and to this day I don't know why they did it, they lashed the two boats together. I reckon fearing that if one went down, the other could help. I can't imagine two boats in a big sea grinding each other. But they did. I saw them actually lash them together.

BE: Maybe they were hoping for a catamaran effect.

Mr. Hall: Well, whatever, that was done. There was a lot of praying and a lot of hoping. They all lived through it. Because as you know, a squall on a river doesn't last too long. But I got news for you. It can kick up an ugly sea in a short time.

BE: I'll bet.

Mr. Hall: Six foot seas in lower Neuse are quite common, and one squall can do that. I'll never forget that experience of seeing

that. I actually counted seven waterspouts in sight of that camp. It was a terrible summer day.

BE: It must have been. The Phillips; the Neuse, of course, were passenger carriers. The Phillips was a passenger carrier mostly up Neuse River and bulk freight. There was another here, the Ellen S. She was a steam driven boat. I rode on her quite a bit. It was more of a local boat. I don't recall it being in passenger service, but, it was a freight hauler.

BE: They were all about the same size?

Mr. Hall: No. The Neuse was by far the biggest of the three.

BE: I've seen a picture of that one.

Mr. Hall: Yes. The Phillips was, oh I guess, eighty feet long probably, double deck, low hull. They didn't need a lot of free board in the hull, Bill, cause they didn't have much weather to deal with on the rivers, especially above New Bern. The Ellen S. was just more of a local freight hauler than anything else. Steam came rapidly to river transportation because they copied your railroad. Your railroad had already done it, see. It was a simple matter of putting a boiler in the boat and putting a little single cylinder steam engine in there and put a shaft on it and away we go. When my daddy was running a sawmill in James City and living on South Front Street in New Bern where I was born, there was no car bridge. There wasn't no cars hardly. The only thing crossing Trent River was the train bridge. As you know, that was built before the Civil War cause the Yankees used it when they captured New Bern. They came up from the coast.

BE: That railroad opened in 1858 I think.

Mr. Hall: That's right, just before the Civil War. With no way to get from home to work, my daddy had a small open boat. A big skiff is what it was. He had a little upright boiler in it about head high to a man, a little steam engine in there. Every morning he'd get up and on the way from the home to the boat behind the house, he'd pick up an armful of chips, from the shipyard probably, walked down to his boat, built a little fire in that boiler and kick himself over to the sawmill to go to work.

BE: How about that.

Mr. Hall: He used to tell about so many people had little boats like that with steam power. A fad came along one time to see who could make the most noise or get the biggest whistle. One man finally got a whistle almost as big as his boiler. He could only blow it once.

That's when he got where he was going. He'd pull the lanyard on the whistle and blow her right down. But he would make one awful noise.

There was a period during the history of this country when mechanical power was changing from steam to internal combustion. My daddy lived through that period. He started in steam and got well over into gasoline engines. The people that went through both had a saying about the two types of engines that impressed me and I'll never forget it. They said, "In steam, if you were looking trouble, it took ten minutes to find it and ten days to fix it. In gasoline, it took ten days to find it and ten minutes to fix it." If you're mechanic enough to know, you'll see the reasoning behind it, which certainly fits.

BE: They used to say something similar about the diesel electric compared to the old steam locomotive.

Mr. Hall: Oh yeah, yeah. As you know, you can have car trouble for a month before you find it sometimes. But in steam, everything was so simple. Just a simple matter of building your energy over here in a hot boiler and then piping it to an engine. That was it. If you had any trouble, it didn't take long to find it, but it might take a long time to fix it.

BE: That's right. Just about everything was massive. In those days anyway.

Mr. Hall: One side note, Bill, from what we've been talking about. As I mentioned to you before we went on tape, I enjoyed that talk at the library about the New Bern fire of 1922 I believe it was.

BE: Your memories about that would be interesting.

Mr. Hall: I had quite a day. The Rowland Mill burned that morning and took all the water we had in the fire system, which at that time was only a big standpipe about where Park Avenue and Spencer Avenue come together in New Bern.

BE: That was still there when I came here.

Mr. Hall: Umhuh. That was all we had in that standpipe and it was used up. So in the emergency, they had to turn Neuse River water into the system to get the fire water back. This fire started up in the colored section. As an eleven year old kid, I went a running.

I got up in that area and watched the fire come toward me. I retreated ahead of it till I got to the Cedar Grove Cemetery. I spent a lot

of time in that cemetery because there were a lot of trees in it at that time. Most of them are gone now, but it was heavily wooded. The fire reached George Street from the west. I watched it leap over Cedar Grove Cemetery. The debris on fire and the flames actually just arced over the cemetery and came down on the train depot side, on the river side of that cemetery, and went on to the river. Three incidences happened while I was in that area. I was watching the fire. Of course, there were other people there too. There was this girl walking. She had her back to the fire at the time I looked. She was about twenty feet away. She had just passed me walking with a friend. I looked and a real bright burning ember came right down on her head. Her hair was piled up like they used to wear it. Her hair was burning when I got to her from the rear. I must have scared her out of two months growth when I started slapping her on top of the head. I got it put out. She didn't know for a few seconds what was going on. But I saved her I think a serious injury. Another thing that was impressive to me; well, it scared me half to death, they were dynamiting the homes that faced the cemetery on George Street. There was a long line of two-story wooden dwellings there where the ball park is now. In trying to stop that fire, they put about a half a box of dynamite in each dwelling, the first floor, put a short fuse on it and ran. There was some frightening sights as those buildings came down. What was frightening to me, they picked two homes there, side by side with a little alley way between them and put at least a half a box in each home, lit them and ran out and ran across George Street and jumped

the cemetery wall where I was and a lot of other people. Just seconds before those charges went off, who should walk up from the back of those homes toward George Street but my daddy. Between the two that were fusing! Everybody was trying to wave him back. Well, it blew while he was between them. Now, it's a matter of record that nobody died in the New Bern fire. I think one invalid did. When those houses blew, they came down but the dirt and dust went up. You couldn't see nothing for five minutes on account of dirt. Even though the wind was howling, you couldn't see nothing. When the dust cleared, there was no daddy there. The report went down to South Front Street to my mother that she didn't need look for Charlie, he's been blowed to little pieces. Late that afternoon, who should come limping home but Charlie. Those explosions, Bill, blowed him just as flat on the ground as he'll ever be. Not enough to knock him out. But during the dust and tumbling lumber, he got up on his hands and knees and crawled out the way he had come in, out the back way away from George Street and left. My mother and me spent a terrible afternoon.

BE: I bet she did.

Mr. Hall: One other thing as a youngster that impressed me about that fire. The next morning I went back out there, went to the cemetery.

Everything was black all around it. At that time, I don't know whether there's any of them left, there were a lot of wooden mausoleums in the cemetery. Built out of wood, with shingle roofs. Little low built things. About six feet high was about as high as they were. Those wooden mausoleums had burned. Of course, that threw everything to

open view. Several of the caskets in them had burned too. There lay these remains right to open view. To an eleven year old who'd never seen a dead person, that shook me just to see people laying in those mausoleums with the wooden part burnt and gone. The fire, well, it's a matter of record where it started. Early on in the fire, I went up near the source of it. Once it got in the top of those homes, all of them shingle roofs, nearly all tar paper, it came downtown just about as fast as you could walk. I got to a high board fence that offered me some protection. I stayed as long as I could, then I'd retreat. I watched this man. He had packed a trunk. The fire was coming toward his front door, he couldn't get out the front. He came out the back with a trunk full. He was a husky fellow and he was carrying it pretty good. He came to that high board fence. He couldn't get over it and he couldn't go back where he had come. He was debating to drop his trunk and climb the fence. But he took another course, Bill. He took that trunk and got to swinging it and used the trunk to knock about four boards off of that fence at the same time and come through the hole with the trunk.

BE: (laughter) Must have had something valuable in there.

Mr. Hall: All he had. All he had. It was an awful time.

BE: If that were today, you'd say it was drugs.

Mr. Hall: Yeah. He might have been drugged, but it was survival drugs that got him.

BE: It was alcohol then if possibly anything.

Mr. Hall: One item that was so much pleasure to me as an youngster

growing up in New Bern was I built me a seventeen foot sailboat when I was a teenager, early teens. I worked a whole year on it. I had a place down Neuse River about a mile, mile and a half below New Bern with a bunch of old tree stumps. It was over on the Bridgeton shore sort of. It was full of striped bass. Rockfish, they call them today.

The reason I mention this now is because if it's done today, I've not seen it. I used to troll for rockfish with a sailboat. Just a swish of the water. I had this spot down Neuse River that I could mark from range stakes a shore. I had it zeroed in. One morning, Bill, on a light northeast wind, I trolled across that place twelve times, got twelve strikes, and came home with ten rockfish. You know you can regulate your sailboat speed regardless what the winds doing by the amount of wind you let fill your sail. If you're too fast, slack your sheet rope and slow down. The rope that hoists the sail, I ran it aft to the rudder through a pulley at the base of the mast.

So when I got a strike, I just snatched that rope, pull a little slip knot loose, sail would drop and the boat would stop. I'd wind my fish in, knock him in the head, haul the sail back up and go again. It worked so nicely. Why youngsters today, maybe they're in to big of a hurry to enjoy those kind of fishing trips.

BE: I think that's it. They get these 150 and 200 horse motors and they head up Trent River 40, 50 miles an hour and then turn on a little electric trolling motor.

Mr. Hall: Bill, I've watched enough of high speed boating. In fact, enjoyed a lot of it myself in boat racing. But I've learned

something from it. The faster you go in a boat, the fewer fish you're gonna catch. There's a good simple reason for that. If you go ten miles down the river and fish a spot for ten minutes and don't get a bite, you'll say, "Well, there's a better one fifteen miles over there." You spend the day boat riding instead of fishing.

BE: People just don't have the patience today.

Mr. Hall: I used to leave the Meadow Shipyard behind my home at first light on many summer mornings, row across Trent River to that little marsh that's directly across from town with a piece of old beef or a fish head. I kept a bushel peach basket in my skiff. When I filled it full of great big blue clawed hard crabs, I'd quit. I'd row back to New Bern, eat breakfast, and sell my hard crabs for ten cents a dozen on the streets of New Bern. That gave me all the show money I needed. That to me was an enjoyable way to live. I wasn't spending nobody's money. I had a good home, a place to stay, decent clothes, plenty to eat. What else is there?

BE: Speaking of eating, that brings up the topic, what was the food like in your early days?

Mr. Hall: Very wholesome and not fancy. Biscuits, meat, at least once a day and a lot of vegetables. At that time, we had peddlers, hawkers was a better word, every day except Sunday. Year round, they'd be selling something. Walking the streets of New Bern yelling their wares. You could sit on the porch, and if you wanted collards that day or soft crabs or gray trout, just wait, you'd hear it in thirty minutes. The price was right.

BE: They had a mobile farmer's market then.

Mr. Hall: Yeah. Little push carts most of them. Some once in a while a horse and dray. Two wheel horse rig, you know.

BE: I think the peanut man was the only one left when I came to New Bern in 1939.

Mr. Hall: A lot of them would get downtown a little too early to get around before the competition did and started waking people up before day and that kind of slowed it down a little bit. (laughter) But, that's the way it was.

BE: Them was the good old days, weren't they?

Mr. Hall: Yes sir.

END OF INTERVIEW