

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

HELEN LEMUEL CANNON MEWBORN

INTERVIEW 1040

This is Dr. Joseph Patterson representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is one thousand (1000). I am interviewing Helen Cannon c-a-double n, o-n, Mewborn, m-e-w-b-o-r-n, at her home at 414 5th Street in New Bern. The number of the interview is 1040. The date is February 8, 1993.

Now Helen, the tape is running and I just want to tell you that I'm happy to be in your home talking to you. I appreciate your letting me come. Let me start this interview by just asking you for your full name, your date of birth, and where you were born.

HELEN MEWBORN: Helen Lemuel Cannon, and I was born November 4, 1907 and I was born on Broad Street, but I don't know which house it was. I think it's been torn...

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What block was it in, Helen?

HELEN MEWBORN: It was right along there where the, what is it Hardee's, is on that street. Well, it was right in there somewhere, right along by Miss Ethel Cook, and the Willis', you know. They were friends of Mama's, you know, in her early days, yeah. And then from there we moved to Pollock Street. That's the only house I know of that Papa ever rented. He always built his houses.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Let me ask you, Helen, were you born at home?

HELEN MEWBORN: Yes.

DR. PATTERSON: St. Luke's Hospital hadn't been built then.

Helen Mewborn: No, no, Dr. Jones was the doctor. Your father wasn't even here. I remember when your father came to New Bern, but

it was Dr. Jones. You know, I guess our whole family was lucky. Up until after I was married, I had never had but three doctors in my life, and that was Dr. Jones, and your father, and Dr. Ashford.

DR. PATTERSON: Helen, we will talk about the medical situation in a little bit, but before that let me ask you about your parents.

What were their names, who were they, and where did they come from?

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, my father was Lemuel Hooker Cannon and he came from Jones County, Maysville. They lived right in Maysville.

And my mother was a Mallard. She was Cora Mallard, and she was born in, I believe, what they call Belgrade, and her father was Frank Mallard and her mother died. You want that much of history? Her mother died when she was six months old and her Grandmother Jones took her and her father was John Starkey Jones, and she was Jenny Owens from Edgefield, South Carolina, and when she was a year old, her Grandmother Jones died. And then her mother's sister, who was Mrs. Lucy Hudson Mallard at that time, she later married Mama's grandfather, Hardy Mallard, and they raised her. And she, Granny, never had any children at all, and Granny mothered 13 children, but Mama was the closest.

She was ..., but any child that was left motherless, they would take her to Granny, and I said she mothered 13. But she had a happy, happy life. She learned, her Grandfather Mallard would take her with him when he was going to graft trees. That's where she learned to graft shrubbery and trees. She loved the outdoors and all kinds of plants and enjoyed raising them. I said she could stick a stick in the ground and root it. And then she and Papa were married. Is that enough of

their life?

DR. PATTERSON: Yeah, well, your father, what did...

MRS. MEWBORN: He came to New Bern and went to school here. And I believe the man's name was, it was a private school, Mr. Harrison, a small school, and that's where he went to school.

DR. PATTERSON: Where was that located?

MRS. MEWBORN: I don't know. I think it was somewhere there on Pollock Street. It seems to me. I really don't remember now, but that's what it. And then when he went to work here in New Bern he went to work for Mr. S. B. Parker.

DR. PATTERSON: Were your parents married by that time?.

MRS. MEWBORN: No, not at that time they weren't, but he was working for Mr. S. B. Parker when they were married, and he, oh he was crazy about Mr. Parker, and he said that when he got the place that he wanted to go in business for himself, and which he did, Mr. Parker helped him. And he told him, don't ever do anything you don't know what you're doing unless you come ask me, which he did.

DR. PATTERSON: Helen, you have a number of brothers and sisters.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah.

DR. PATTERSON: Would you tell me about them, who they are.

MRS. MEWBORN: My oldest sister was named Mildred and she married Wyatt Stallings from Pinetops, North Carolina and had one child. My second sister was Carolyn Mitchell Cannon and the Mitchell was in Mama's family, and she married Walter Gilbert and lived in Charlotte, North Carolina. And you want the deaths as I go along.

DR. PATTERSON: Sure.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, sister died in 1940. She had one child. He was six years old when she died. And then Carolyn died in 1972, four weeks after my mother died. And then Thelma is the next one. She was Thelma Jones Cannon. Of course, that was Mama's middle name also. And she's still living. Lives in Franklin, Virginia and she married Earl McGowan who was a New Bern native.

DR. PATTERSON: Is that Margaret McGowan's

MRS. MEWBORN: No, they're not related. Margaret McGowan wasn't a native New Bernian. You remember Miss Lizzie McGowan worked for Hap Barden, worked for Mr., at Mr. Ward's, A. D. Ward. She was the stenographer. Earl's father died, I think, when he was a young boy. And then I'm next. Helen Lemuel Cannon. And then my youngest sister was Margaret Elizabeth Cannon and she married Tommy Lowder.

DR. PATTERSON: How do you spell that?

MRS. MEWBORN: L-o-w-d-e-r. And she lives in Fayetteville and she's still living and her husband's dead. And then John Mattocks Cannon and he was named for Mama's brother. And then Lemuel Hooker Cannon was named for Papa. He was a junior.

DR. PATTERSON: John was called Jack.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, called Jack.

DR. PATTERSON: And that's the bunch.

MRS. MEWBORN: That's the family. Seven of us.

DR. PATTERSON: Well, that's quite a group and out of the whole seven, you're the only one back in New Bern.

MRS. MEWBORN: Only one living in New Bern, Joe Pat.

DR. PATTERSON: Well, you grew up, you were born on...

MRS. MEWBORN: On Broad Street.

DR. PATTERSON: Broad Street.

MRS. MEWBORN: Broad Street

DR. PATTERSON: And then the next place you moved...

MRS. MEWBORN: Then we moved to, Papa had bought this little house on Pollock Street, but it had, he had to do some work on it. So they rented this house here and sold the one they were living in. And he rented this one until he could get his house fixed. And we lived there til 1914.

DR. PATTERSON: Now that was what block of...

MRS. MEWBORN: It was right across from All Saints Chapel. The little house with the little porch, they tore down when they started doing all that renovation. And I could tell you just as good today how it was built, all about the yard, everything about it. I remember the whole thing.

DR. PATTERSON: Well, why don't you tell me about that area as you remember it.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, I know the Hibbard's lived on the corner, but they call it the Darnell House now, but that's where Mr. and Mrs. Hibbard lived. He was the jeweler here, and then the picture I gave you of their daughter, Mamie. They lived there, and between the two of us was a lot and that's where we played. And the Hibbard children and the Cannon children, that's as far as we were allowed. Down a

block was Long Wharf, you know, which was a bad neighborhood and I think maybe one or two of the houses from the corner up to the Chapel were pretty rough neighborhood. I don't know, but we weren't allowed there. But then further on up the street the Warrenton's lived, and Mr. Fred Hargett. He was an old family and that was the two story house. It was very much like the Jones house and Mrs. Eleanor Marshall, the teacher, was related to them. She lived with them. And I remember them.

DR. PATTERSON: Helen, you mentioned Long Wharf and of course, we've all heard about Long Wharf. It was a tough place you say. How do you remember Long Wharf.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, I remember that you don't cross that street to go down there. I think it was...

DR. PATTERSON: Behind..

MRS. MEWBORN: Behind, down on South Front Street. Down in that area. Evidently, they were drinkers, and, I just don't know, but I mean, you didn't go down there.

DR. PATTERSON: There were a lot of houses down there.

MRS. MEWBORN: I never saw them. I never went down there until after they had put the housing project down there, and, but, that was off limits. We just didn't go. In fact, we, the only place we went was right in that vacant lot between the two of us. We played together there. And, of course, the older ones, when they went to school, you know, they went there. But...

DR. PATTERSON: By that time you were seven years old when you

left there.

MRS. MEWBORN: I was seven years old. I don't remember how old I was, but I couldn't have been more than a year or two old when we left. I don't think I was a year old.

DR. PATTERSON: By that time your father was in business for himself, was he?

MRS. MEWBORN: I think he was. I really do.

DR. PATTERSON: What was his business?

MRS. MEWBORN: He was a sheet metal worker and had a sports store. He always had bicycles and skates, you know, fishing.

DR. PATTERSON: Where was his place of business?

MRS. MEWBORN: Right there on Middle Street. He had one of Mr. Albert Bangert's stores to start with. Dr. Jones had his office along there.

DR. PATTERSON: Where in Middle Street would that be.?

MRS. MEWBORN: From where Penney's building was up to the Episcopal Church yard.

DR. PATTERSON: Penney's building was where Belk's was, is that right?

MRS. MEWBORN: No, J. C. Penney just sold it to the Citizens Bank.

DR. PATTERSON: Then this was on the corner of Broad and Middle?

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, yeah, right. And the first one that I remember along in there was, I don't know who was first, Mr. Bartling had his barber shop there on the corner. And then Miss Janie Shaw, she had a hat shop there, because I remember Mama taking us in there



as little children and getting our hats.

DR. PATTERSON: Was this on the corner?

MRS. MEWBORN: This was on the corner at one time. Now who was there first, I don't know, but I remember Mr. Bartling cutting my hair in that same store.

DR. PATTERSON: Is that Smitty Bartling's father-in-law.

MRS. MEWBORN: Father-in-law. And then next to that was Joe Hatem's Shoe Shop. Do you remember that?

DR. PATTERSON: It was Caprio's then wasn't it.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, I believe it was. Caprio's. And let me see...

DR. PATTERSON: Chinese Laundry?

MRS. MEWBORN: The Chinese Laundry that was first, that I remember was across the street in this house, and it was somewhere along there on the other side of the bakery.

DR. PATTERSON: It was next. Caprio's was...

MRS. MEWBORN: The best that I can remember, it seems to me it was four or five of those little stores in there. I don't remember when Dr. Jones' office was in there, but it, I've heard Papa say in the early days, that's where his office was.

DR. PATTERSON: Is that where your daddy's store was too, right in there?

MRS. MEWBORN: It was along in there. Yeah, he rented from Mr. Bangert. I think this was later on that Everhart's Meat Market was in there at one time, some of those little stores. And Minnie Oxley's

Baby Shop was along in there. And then Captain Henry, you remember the smoke shop, that little store in there?

DR. PATTERSON: Right next to the Episcopal Church yard wasn't it?

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, his father's drug store was there. He had a drug store and they lived up over the drug store. And then it was a little alley-way between it and this little tiny, what I remember, they called it the Smoke Shop. The two Smith brothers got out it, Lyle Smith and Jim Smith, the two brothers, and they called it the Smoke Shop. Well, I think it must have been about 1918, Joe Pat, Papa bought that part of it from Captain Henry and he built his own stores, those two brick stores. One of them was the beauty parlor, you might have known, and Mr. Hobbitt's Shoe Shop in the later years.

DR. PATTERSON: That's right next to where the Henry's lived or was the Henry Building site.

MRS. MEWBORN: It was right next to where they lived, you know. He, they were living there when they sold this piece of property to Papa, and he built, it was just one store with a partition and I think the first ones that were in there with him in his bicycle store and roofing business, and you know, fishing and stuff up front. And the metal part in the back was Mr. Hibbard's Jewelry Store. He moved over there and Albert, his oldest son, had come home from school. He had been off to school studying the jewelry business and they opened up a, maybe a larger jewelry store.

DR. PATTERSON: What did your pa call his store?

MRS. MEWBORN: I think it was called at that time, the new store, his bicycle shop, L. H. Cannon Bicycle Shop. I believe that was the way it went, but he was still doing roofing, because he, he had, he had the city and the county business for all of his life for the roofing business on the schools.

DR. PATTERSON: And he stayed in business there for a long time?

MRS. MEWBORN: He stayed in business there until times got so bad and then he was able to rent a store down on South Front Street that would take care of his roofing business, Joe Pat. So he moved down there and rented to Mr. Hibbard and then to, I don't remember who the first, Nina's Beauty Shop was the name of, who she was, but he could get more rent that way and pay less down on South Front Street. And he went down there and did what he could, and Papa was failing then, Joe Pat, but in 1940 when they opened up Cherry Point, he worked down there awhile until his job was up. And then he went down to Holly Ridge and he got the contract down there for all the roofing. It was for the government. He was paid a salary, but he had the job to tend to it.

DR. PATTERSON: When he moved from South Front Street, where was he located in relation to the Gaston Hotel.

MRS. MEWBORN: Alright. It was Lucus and Lewis Wholesale and Retail on the front. I think Howard had maybe bought it by that time, and right back of it was this little shop. I really don't know who owned it, but now I think it's some of insurance business or something. The little store is still in there. It's a nice looking building

now. It was a nice looking, it was a good strong brick but nothing, but I think it was the first store back of Lucas and Lewis, you know.

Did I say that house on Pollock Street

DR. PATTERSON: Helen, what was South Front Street like in those days?

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, across the street was Goldman's Junk Yard.

DR. PATTERSON: That's up on...

MRS. MEWBORN: It was right across where Wheat, you know, Wheat, it was, wasn't on the corner by it was right back of that. Now I don't remember what was on the corner then.

DR. PATTERSON: McSorley's

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, McSorley's, I think, was more down in the middle of the street, 'cause on Sunday when he was opening up, you know, wasn't suppose to, the boys would go down the alley to go in there. Not to do anything wrong, but he was opened, and maybe get a Coke Cola or something of that kind. This was on Sunday morning.

I reckon between Sunday school and church. I've heard 'em tell it. I never went. I don't know who did. I don't think, Jack and Lemuel did. They were too young, but older ones like

DR. PATTERSON: Is that your doorbell?

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah.

DR. PATTERSON: Helen, I want to ask you about Goldman's Junk Yard. What was that place like in those days?

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, it was just a pile of junk over there from right back of the corner, whatever was on there, old trash as far as

I can, you know, iron and stuff of that kind. Just like probably what's out there now.

DR. PATTERSON: What other businesses were along there or what buildings?

MRS. MEWBORN: Mill Supply was along there.

DR. PATTERSON: That's where the Alcoke Car Dealership used to be. Now it's a cleared piece of land.

MRS. MEWBORN: Uh huh. Uh huh. Yeah. And I'm sure, that was in there at that time. Now, I think, maybe Morton Motor Company was where Goldman's Junk Yard was. You know, after they sold out. That it was in there. And then it was Mill Supply Company. And that's all that I remember along there. And it was on the other side. I don't know Joe whether this is right or not, where the Armstrong Grocery Company was on the opposite side of the street between where that building Papa had and the railroad street. I don't remember what that was, but I know Armstrong Grocery Company was somewhere along in there, and I don't think it was the lower Middle Street.

DR. PATTERSON: What was the waterfront like along the Trent River in that area? Where they a lot of piers and wharfs and businesses down on the water?

MRS. MEWBORN: Joe, I don't remember so much about that, because, see I wasn't down in the, you mean at this time when Papa had his store down there? Well, at that time I think it was just, it was bad times.

I mean, Maxwell was down on Middle Street, you know, right on down that way, and I can't remember who else. And then at the end of Craven

Street, I think Speedy Justice, you know, what was his name, Alec, was his name. We called him Speedy. Alec Justice and Mr. Mark Stevenson

DR. PATTERSON: Excuse me. What did the Justice brothers have, what kind of store?

MRS. MEWBORN: The best that I know, I think it was windows and doors. I think that, I really am not sure about that, but that's what they said they were in. And then on the other side of the street, and I don't know whether they were still there or not because I'm not too familiar with, they, but you know, Mr. Lee Taylor Bottling Company was on the other side of South Front Street down, I believe on Craven Street. But I can't tell you now, you know, what stores were along in there.

DR. PATTERSON: Do you remember Union Point at all in those days?

MRS. MEWBORN: Oh, yeah. I remember Union Point. I didn't go down there too much.

DR. PATTERSON: How do you remember it?

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, I only went a very few times. The, let me see, Shoot Hall lived along there, you know, and then the Davis'. I don't know, Charlotte Davis. It was Tom Davis' father's brother. I believe. I'm not sure of that. But they had one child, Charlotte. And then next door, the house that sat way back from the street was where the, Mr. Davis lived and their children, Tom Davis, you remember Tom Davis, and his sister Elizabeth. She was my age. Then it was another, Lillian. She was my sister Thelma's age. And it was oldest, older one, Clara. I never knew her too well. She was the oldest one.

And then next door to them was the Dill House. Sam and then the older brother. And I, was it any other children in there?

DR. PATTERSON: I'm not sure.

MRS. MEWBORN: I'm not sure about that either. And then, of course, next to that I believe was another ship yard. And then you went through that to go down to Crabby's in that building he, all those children down on South Front Street. I maybe went down there once or twice, but not too many times.

DR. PATTERSON: The point itself was it a junk yard then, was it a dump, a city dump.

MRS. MEWBORN: What, you mean down there?

DR. PATTERSON: Yes, Union Point itself.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, yes that was across the street, you know, but it wasn't where Meadow's Ship Yard is.

DR. PATTERSON: I know that. It was beyond Meadow Ship Yard.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I think it was. I think it was over there. And then, of course, across the street was where the Lucas' lived you know. And, of course, I knew Rowena. She was a friend of mine in school, but of course, I lived out in Ghent and she lived downtown. And then the old Meadows House, two of 'em, you know. I don't remember who lived in who, but one was right side of the Lucas home. And then further on down the street was the one, I think, where Sarah's family lived.

DR. PATTERSON: High up off the ground.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, I don't remember. And then I don't know

who owned the house that sat back.

DR. PATTERSON: The Brinson's.

MRS. MEWBORN: You mean...

DR. PATTERSON: The Willis' and the Brinson's.

MRS. MEWBORN: No, they bought the Meadow's house later. See they lived there, but this house is where the shop is now that, but I don't know who owned that. I really don't.

DR. PATTERSON: Helen, you moved from Pollock Street..

MRS. MEWBORN: In Ghent..

DR. PATTERSON: To Ghent, on Spencer Avenue.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, uh huh.

DR. PATTERSON: Where in Spencer was this? What...

MRS. MEWBORN: It was in the second block. Papa, when they were developing he bought two lots out there. It was 215 and 217 right next to each other, and it was in 1914. Our house was the fifth house that went up on Spencer Avenue.

DR. PATTERSON: Who owned that area that...

MRS. MEWBORN: Mr. Callie McCarthy and I'll tell you this. I, of course, I was nothing but a child, but I remember it just as good. Papa and Mama and all the older people say, well, he was beyond his time. He was, you know, so smart in that developing out there that he thought of the street cars, and the Casino, and how smart he was to do all these things which he did. And I did not know where the street cars were first started, but I think in your book, you said 1914. That's when we moved out there.



DR. PATTERSON: When you moved out then, this was really an undeveloped area except for several houses.

MRS. MEWBORN: He had laid it out. That median was in the middle, see. The street lights were out there.

DR. PATTERSON: Helen, we were talking about Ghent being an undeveloped area and you said the median was placed down there.

MRS. MEWBORN: It was there. The street lights were there on either side, was just the dirt road out there. The first house out there was right there on the school green, about the middle of the block, and it was torn down when they built the Eleanor Marshall School.

The next house was what they called the Wooten house. That's the first one on the second block. The great big house that Lucille Hahn lives in now. Do you know where that is? The third house was right up, not exactly in front of where we built, but it was across the street.

And, Joe Pat, I remember exactly. It was a couple that lived there and a little girl. They must not have lived there very long, and I'm just as sure that name was Fodrie as it can be, Mr. and Mrs. Fodrie.

But I, it's this memory. I don't know. I don't remember seeing the little girl more than once or twice, but they lived there a very short time. Then the fourth one, let's see, one, two, three, was Mr. Bartling's house was on up. Do you know where that is? I think that's in the beginning of the third block on the opposite side. That's a Sears and Roebuck house. It was, you know, ordered. And then Papa's first house at 215, right across from the, that other house. Down in the second block was the fifth house. And we moved out there in

1914.

DR. PATTERSON: Now you mentioned how much ahead of his time Mr. McCarthy was, and you mentioned the trolley system that he put in. What do you remember about that trolley system.

MRS. MEWBORN: Oh, I, it was just wonderful. As I told you, as children and we did not have it when we first moved out there, because I remember the way we would go to school, but it wasn't very long

DR. PATTERSON: You would walk to school?

MRS. MEWBORN: No. Papa had a Ford, a T-Model Ford, and we would all get in the car and go. He would take us to school and then at lunch time.

DR. PATTERSON: That was down at Central School wasn't it?

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, yeah. We had to go down there. Then at lunch time we would go down to his store on Middle Street and have lunch with him. And then when we would get out of school, we go straight down to the store and wait there for him until he would go home at night or either if he had time, he would take us home. But, then, I reckon, maybe the next year, the street cars were running and it would be, I think, one maybe about every, every half-hour, had to, because at dinner time the, they would pick us up there at the corner on New and Metcalf Street. It was a switch that went up that far. And then take us out to Ghent. It would go all the way, and we'd have our lunch, and then we would catch the next one back, and they'd take us back up there. So we didn't have but an hour to get our lunch. So evidently they ran every half-hour.

DR. PATTERSON: How much did they charge you?

MRS. MEWBORN: Twenty five cents a week.

DR. PATTERSON: A week?

MRS. MEWBORN: A week!

DR. PATTERSON: For round trips and everything?

MRS. MEWBORN: Round trip to school and back and then home for lunch and back. And, let's see, what else.

DR. PATTERSON: You had mentioned the Ghent Casino. Mr. McCarthy built that.

MRS. MEWBORN: He built it. It was a great big building. And the street cars ran to the end of what was Sixth Street, and then over to the left between Spencer Avenue and Pembroke Road was where this Casino was built, Joe Pat. And, of course, it may not be as big as I think it was, you know, it was big to me at that time.

DR. PATTERSON: Big to me too.

MRS. MEWBORN: And it was, did you ever go out there?

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MRS. MEWBORN: You know how high it was off the ground, well those steps were the seats for the outdoor movie. We had an outdoor movie and we would sit there and see the movie. That's the first time I ever heard of outdoor movie, but they had it. And the Casino was used for dances, and they had boxing matches out there which I didn't never see. Skating rinks. In the winter time we could go out there and skate, and it was used for many things.

DR. PATTERSON: Basketball.

MRS. MEWBORN: The basketball, yeah. All those kinds of things. But the one thing that I've got to tell you, 'cause I, this is the one thing I wanted everybody to know about, that, and I. There's only one other person in New Bern that remembers it, that's living today, and that's Alene Mason. Do you know her?

DR. PATTERSON: A-l-e-n-e

MRS. MEWBORN: Uh huh, and she was Alene Beard. She probably, and she had a brother named John Beard.

DR. PATTERSON: I know John.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, it was John and Alene were in the show. It was a Mr. and Mrs. Strosser. Now that's where all these names come from but I remembered it. It was Mr. and Mrs. Strosser. And I almost know what they looked like. I think he was on the heavy side and she was very tall and slim. And I can't, I don't know what it was, why they did it, but I feel like today it might have been advertisement for an insurance company.

DR. PATTERSON: This was a show that was put on at the Casino?

MRS. MEWBORN: No, it was a movie picture they took, and they used this house, the Garrett House. That is the one on the, the last one on the first block. Its a real pretty home, and it was the prettiest one out there at that time. And the, I, let's see. I think Alene said she was born in 1911. I'll have to get the dates on that for you, 'cause this is really interesting. But it evidently was a beauty contest or something here in New Bern. Zora Styron was the lead lady, and you'd have to get people to vote for her. And the reason I know

this much about it, 'cause when she retired and came back home, I asked her if she remembered and she laughed and she told me this, she said yeah. She said the votes were a penny a vote and when I'd go soliciting for people to vote for me and would pay this, said I'd ask them to vote for David Johnson. He was a street car motorman and everybody was in love with him, because he looked so much like Rudolph Valentino, all the ladies of that age. He was an uncle of Junius and Carl Johnson's, and he ran the street cars. They say he was, she said that time, he was very timid. And said, she said I gave him a fit. And if you ever knew Zora Styron, you'd know she did. But anyway, they won it. And he was the father and she was the mother and Alene and John were the children and they used the Garrett House for the home. And, oh they lived so nicely. They had cars, and they had parties, and they had servants, and they just lived it up. And then he died and they had the funeral procession out of the house and then they, the next scene was the family leaving. Zora draped in black and these children holding 'bout the hand and the luggage sitting by 'em, you know, and a for sale sign on the house where they hadn't taken care of the future. And, of course, we were children and every morning we couldn't get up soon enough to get down there to see them making those pictures. We would sit there on the corner and watch them go, you know, do all this. And that picture was shown at the Athens or the Kehoe Theater after it was developed. And as I say, I don't know what it was for unless it was an insurance advertising. It sounds like

DR. PATTERSON: It's bound to be the first movie ever made in

New Bern.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, I remember now, if you want some more information, Alene remembers it, and I don't know of anybody else here in New Bern that would remember it unless I'm going to ask Johnny if he does the next time I go down there. If he remembers seeing it at the theater. See Johnny would have been about 15 or 16 years old at that time.

DR. PATTERSON: John Beard went on to a distinguished career in the service.

MRS. MEWBORN: In the Navy wasn't it. I believe it was the Navy. I believe he's dead though now, Joe Pat. I believe he has died.

DR. PATTERSON: He moved away from New Bern after that did he, but I remember John Beard.

MRS. MEWBORN: I just can remember it as I say. All of this was when I was about 10 or 11 years old, Joe.

DR. PATTERSON: Well, you, you certainly have a great memory.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, I'll say that really is one of the best things. I mean, 'cause Alene is still living here and was a little girl at the show.

DR. PATTERSON: Where did you go from Spencer Avenue?

MRS. MEWBORN: We lived on, well, in 1917, Papa went next door and built a larger house. We needed more room, because Lemuel was on the way then. So he built a house and we lived there until 1927, and that's when we moved over on the Old Cherry Point Road.

DR. PATTERSON: Where did you move out there?

NM: It was down just about a block from the school, on the right hand side, and the house is still standing there. A great big white house with a porch all the way around it. Sits back off the road.

DR. PATTERSON: Now this was 1927..

MRS. MEWBORN: Uh huh.

DR. PATTERSON: And you stayed out there, the family from...

MRS. MEWBORN: We lived there until 1951, Papa died in 1949, Joe, and there was nobody except Mama and myself there in this great big house. We lived there until 1951. We really couldn't sell it. We, you know, tried, and finally Lemuel came home and he got over there and Mr. Burton and Lemuel together they auctioned it off and sold it and then we built this house here, in 1953, and...

DR. PATTERSON: So you've been living here.

MRS. MEWBORN: Since 1953.

DR. PATTERSON: Well, along the way, now, you got married.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah. Well, I went, after I finished high school, I went to St. Mary's and took a business course. And this was the banking years. I came home and went right to work in the Eastern Bank and Trust Company. And...

DR. PATTERSON: Where was that located?

MRS. MEWBORN: Right there where the Bank of the Arts is.

DR. PATTERSON: The Eastern Bank and Trust Company.

MRS. MEWBORN: That's right. And then in 1929, of course, the National Bank closed. Didn't mean anything to me. I didn't have any money in it. I had my good job over at the Eastern Bank and Trust

Company which was very little money but to me it was a pile of money.

And then in 1931, they made a run, there was lots of talk about the First Citizen not going to open up. So that morning, of course, everybody was gathered out there to make a run on it. So they did not open up. And then they came over on us and we did stay open, I think, that day, but then the next day, we closed at eleven o'clock, but we were not in such a bad condition that the state didn't allow us, or the, I'll say, I don't want to put me in it, because I was just a very minor employee there, but enjoyed it very much. But they allowed them with the depositors, if they would sign up to take 5% of the old accounts, allow them to open up a new bank with 5% of what the depositors had in there. And they agreed. We were closed for two months. And at the end of two months, I did get the job back in there. It was very few of us, and worked with them for two years and it was, I think, it was just Mr. Ross and Mr. Chadwick, me, I can't remember. It was very few of us in there I know. Maybe Fred Nelson was still in there.

I'm not sure. And a stenographer. I think Sis was still in there.

Sis Foye at that time, because she, I've heard her say that she helped go around to the different depositors to help them sign up these contracts, you know, to take 5% of their account. And I did the same thing during those few months we were closed and had no idea I'd get any money for it because I, you know, I just didn't have anything to do so I was just as happy to do that, but at the end of it I did get the job and then they paid me for those two months. And that was the most money I ever had, Joe. I was so glad to get it and stayed on



my job.

DR. PATTERSON: Did all the banks close in New Bern?

MRS. MEWBORN: All except the Morris Plan Bank and Savings and Loan. That was the only bank that was opened here. And I know for those two months that was the only ones that closed. I think maybe the Branch Bank came in here pretty soon, but we were closed for two months there that I know we didn't do anything, getting the people to sign up.

DR. PATTERSON: I'm just a little mixed up. The First Citizens Bank at that time was located where?

MRS. MEWBORN: Over there where the Branch Bank was at first, on Pollock Street.

DR. PATTERSON: And where the First Citizens moved to where the Bank of the Arts is now, you were located there.

MRS. MEWBORN: That was Eastern Bank.

DR. PATTERSON: Eastern Bank.

MRS. MEWBORN: And, but then at the end of the two years, they gave them that time to try to collect up some of the mortgages, you know, but times got worse, Joe Pat. Nobody even wanted it for the taxes on it. You couldn't even sell it for tax money. So then they sold the new part to what was the North Carolina Security Bank in Raleigh, and they came down and took over that part and I still had the job there with them. And Mr. Tom Stead was the man that came from Raleigh and came down here. Awfully nice, and Karen Adams's daughter is married to his grandson. And I think his father was just a baby

when they moved here to New Bern and stayed until the moratorium in 1933 when everything was closed. And, of course, that never opened up. So that was another closed one on New Bern. And so from there, I went from, anywhere I could get a job. I know I worked at Belk's.

I know I worked at the court house, marking tickets, you know, for taxes, and it was in that December. I was working at the court house at that time that Miss Metta Whitford asked me if I wanted to work for the WPA in the bookkeeping department, payroll department. I said I sure do. So I went with them and stayed until, I think, in maybe June or July when the First Citizens invited me to come back and go to work for them. They had just come to New Bern. See that was the Branch over there and then this was the First Citizen that came in to here. And see they stayed there, and I worked there until I was married in November of '34. And then I left New Bern and I came back in 1939 and went to...

MRS. MEWBORN: Bill, William Mewborn. He was from Kinston. And I came back in '39 and went to work for Mr. Dunn and Johnny. Bill died in 1941. And stayed there with them until 1970.

DR. PATTERSON: This is the Morris Plan?

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, the Morris Plan and the Savings and Loan, that's what it was then, and then in 1957, they separated. They had both grown as much as they could in one organization. They were both, see, the Morris Plan had gone then to the Bank of New Bern, but we were still in there together. And in 1957, I think, Joe Pat, they, the Dunn's took the Savings and Loan and then the Bank of New Bern

was taken over, you know, by the same crowd, but I mean, I think Hughes, what was his name, I should know, Earl Hughes. Earl Hughes was in there working with them at that time. So he took over the Bank of New Bern.

DR. PATTERSON: And that was relocated on

MRS. MEWBORN: This was right there where they are right now, where the National Bank is. The Bank of New Bern. The Morris Plan, I mean the Building and Loan built the new bank over on Craven Street and we moved over there. Johnny and Mr. Dunn, and a Mrs. Murry, and myself, and Ruth Jenkins.

DR. PATTERSON: But before that move was made, the Morris Plan was in the same building where the bank's...

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, the Morris Plan and Building and Loan bought the National Bank after it failed, and they moved over there off of Craven Street. I don't know exactly where they were there in that time, but then we went over on Craven Street. And I worked with them until 1970 when Mama began to fail and I, she fell one night, and I just couldn't ever leave her again.

DR. PATTERSON: She was living here with you.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, yeah. I was living here with her. This was her house. She said we'd all come live with her, but she didn't ever want to live with us. But, I just couldn't leave her any more. She was beginning to fail. But believe I stayed on until about the last of February then I came on home. My sister Thelma came and I stayed right here with her for the first year and then Johnny suggested

that I come back for the first week in each month and get my sisters to come and stay with her that month. Am I talking too much?

DR. PATTERSON: No, you're fine.

MRS. MEWBORN: You know, so I could go back and work, which I did. And Mama died in March of 72, and so I continued working down there until 1975. And I think Johnny retired in October, and I worked on until the first of January. And then from there, I went to Tryon Palace and had the time of my life. Most delightful time. It really was.

DR. PATTERSON: What did you do at Tryon Palace?

MRS. MEWBORN: I was one of the guides or hostess up there. I wasn't a guide, because I think we were hostesses at that time and then, what did they call us later on, we wasn't a hostess.

DR. PATTERSON: Docent.

MRS. MEWBORN: No, Docents don't get paid. We did get paid the minimum wage. But so many young ones were up there and I just, you know, you learn people when you go, it was a different crowd that I had been with. And so many of them now like Betsy Ward, Mary Warren, Kathryn McDonald. They're just my dear friends now. They're much younger, but I still see 'em and enjoy being down there, but I, when I did stop there, I think about '85, 1985. I stopped working down there, because they had rearranged the guiding program that you went from the first floor to the second, from the second to the basement and then from there over to the east wing, and I couldn't do that much. It was too much for me. So I decided it was time to stop. And then

I maybe was out about a couple of years and they needed baby sitters for the Stanly House and the Stevenson House. The state had decided it was really safe for them.

DR. PATTERSON: You were talking about baby sitting.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, they, the state decided that it wasn't safe to take groups in the Stanly House and the Stevenson House, and the Stevenson House, I think, was three floors, and lock that door with those old locks and keys that maybe something might happen. And, you know, be an emergency in there. And they didn't want those doors locked, but they couldn't leave them unlocked, you know, because the public would come in. So then they got me back down there and Jim Constantine.

We were the two baby sitters. So when they would take a group in those houses, we would go and sit at the front door to keep people from coming in and we could read or knit or do what ever we wanted to.

DR. PATTERSON: You manned the door while the tour was going on.

MRS. MEWBORN: That's right. We were go with the group see, and then I would be over in the auditorium. Let's see. Then I would, you know, in between groups, I'd be over at the auditorium with the people coming in. And you'd meet so many people. Talk with them and enjoy them. And this, don't put this on the record. Cut this off.

Things like that, Joe, that we had, just so many good things and then we'd take our lunch and eat in the back room there, you know.

And, all of it. And then I did go back too several times during the Christmas vacations, but they would let me stay over in the Commission

House with just, play with the children, you know, when they would come in. And, well, you just get so much out of it, all those things.

DR. PATTERSON: Are you still doing that, Helen?

MRS. MEWBORN: No. Joe Pat, it really, see, it would be about just a couple of weeks, just maybe two. I really can't stand up that much. I get tired now. So I don't like to push myself. I'm doing too well. I like to go and visit and play bridge.

DR. PATTERSON: You retired from Tryon Palace.

MRS. MEWBORN: I still would love to go back down there though. I really would, if I had the strength to do it.

DR. PATTERSON: You mentioned some of the ladies who were with you when you started there.

MRS. MEWBORN: At Tryon Palace?

DR. PATTERSON: Yes. At Tryon Palace. Do you remember any others. You mentioned

MRS. MEWBORN: Oh yeah. Rose Carraway, and Rose was just the biggest help in the world.

DR. PATTERSON: Were talking about the people who worked with you at Tryon Palace when you started, and you were talking Rose Carraway.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, see the first hostess down there, they went to school and stayed for a year, and had tests. They really had lots of training. Well, when I went in about '75, we got the information that had how we were suppose to present it to the guests as they came in, you know, but, oh, Joe, you just don't know what an inventory it

was in that thing. We had to learn every bit of it, and it was all made up. In fact, I got my books back there, and I just really enjoy looking back. But they had made the inventory in each room, but you could go around it, you know, identify them, you know. But Rose Carraway, and I'm sure all the others that come in, she was so good and sweet. She would go with us and help identify them, helping out with some of the words that maybe we didn't pronounce right, and tell us about some of it. And she was one. Another one was Vera Ipock, lived out here at Spring Garden, was just one of the dearest, sweetest people, and a good cook, and she just brought many good things to eat. Another one was, what was her name, Ruth George. She was a Hardison. I don't know, she lived down the Old Cherry Point Road. And Mary Monte. Elizabeth Midgett. Marea Foster. I wish I could think of all of 'em. I'm sort of tongue tied. And as I say, Betsy Ward, Mary Warren.

DR. PATTERSON: Jane Constantine.

MRS. MEWBORN: Jane Constantine, but Jane was more over on the other side of the street. Now, later, she was, I enjoyed being with her when I was working over there, you know, as the baby sitter, you know, over there. But, Joe, I wish I could think of, you know, right now you just can't remember all of 'em. One of them was Lois Sampson. She was a new comer, lived over here in Speed Bunting's home, and her husband was a CIA man. And maybe you remember, but two or three years ago when he and some other fellows got stranded out in the ocean on a boat trip, you know, and two or three nights they were looking for

'em. Do you remember that?

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MRS. MEWBORN: They live down at Beaufort now. They moved down there on Ann Street, but she was a delightful person, and was very knowledgeable, because all the time when he would be away on trips, she would be maybe in Washington or some place that she could go to these schools and study. And she did, and she just knew lots of good stories that she would tell us. And another one was Jean Schultz. Do you know them?

DR. PATTERSON: How do you spell that?

MRS. MEWBORN: S-c-h, oh well, it's in the phone book. I really am not sure, but he came here, I think, with, after he got out of the service with the chamber of commerce. And she was, oh, just a lovely lady. I enjoyed her so much. And it was people like that. Margaret Conderman was down there. Maude Dillehunt. Sylvia Gwaltney. It was just, just so many people.

DR. PATTERSON: Helen, let's, we've gotten you here in this house sort of away from all of these activities. Now, let's look back again and pick up some of the things that we didn't go into. You told me earlier that your parents lived on New Street at one time.

MRS. MEWBORN: They did.

DR. PATTERSON: Tell me about that.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, I'll tell you what I knew about it. They were first married. They were married in, let's see, Papa was born in 1875. Mama was born in 1879. and they were married 1898. My older



sister was born in 1900 on New Street, and it was just a little cottage there.

DR. PATTERSON: Where was it?

MRS. MEWBORN: Right where Reba Ferebee lived, where she was living when she died. Mamie Hibbard built that house. You know where I'm talking. That old Ferebee house.

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MRS. MEWBORN: Mamie, when she was working down at the Morris Plan, I think it was just a vacant lot at that time, and she bought it and Mr. Mack Wayne built that to her. They drew it on piece of paper, how she wanted it. And she moved off of Pollock Street down there and lived until she died.

DR. PATTERSON: Who else was in that neighborhood then?

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, Johnny was done there, and Miss Hatcher Harrison's, well the Ferebee house was next to Mamie's.

DR. PATTERSON: That hadn't been built though when your parents moved there had it?

MRS. MEWBORN: Who, the Ferebee house? I don't think so. No. Miss Hatcher Harrison was Mama's neighbor at that time, because she enjoyed her very much, because I've heard say she was a Christian Science, and she would bring Mama her Christian Science Monitors. And Mama said that was one of the best papers, magazines, she ever read. It had everything, everything in it. Now, Joe, I don't want this on the record.

DR. PATTERSON: All right. Helen, in the neighborhood on New

Street, you mentioned Hatcher Harrison. Who was down the street from her, toward the river?

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, I couldn't tell you, 'cause, see I just remember, see, I wasn't even born and that was my first sister. And...

DR. PATTERSON: You did mention the fact that your, you think that the Black family who lived there, Lucy...

MRS. MEWBORN: Yes, yeah, Honey, and well, now Lucy and Harvey worked for Mama and Granny.

DR. PATTERSON: They lived in that shack down there where Johnny Dunn's house is now.

MRS. MEWBORN: Is that right? I don't know. But, I know Lucy and Harvey worked for Mama and Granny. And they even were working for her when we were lived on Pollock Street. I don't remember 'em, but I mean, I remember Harvey, but I remember Mama saying that they still worked for her.

DR. PATTERSON: You remember Lucy?

MRS. MEWBORN: No, uh huh, uh huh.

DR. PATTERSON: I don't know that I saw her very often. When I lived on New Street, we were right up on, almost across the street from they lived and they lived there then.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, is that right? No, I don't even remember their house there, Joe.

DR. PATTERSON: And the Ferebee's house wasn't there, at that time.

MRS. MEWBORN: I don't think so, but see, I don't know. All I

just know is the story that Mama thought so much of Miss Hatcher Harrison and enjoyed the magazine so much. Mrs. Ola Ferebee and her sister were across the street I believe. And, then, I think, there was another colored family, and I believe it was Fetic Casttet. Wasn't that her name?

DR. PATTERSON: What is the name?

MRS. MEWBORN: I thought it was Fetic Casttet, but somebody said no. I think Johnny said it wasn't that, but she went to our church.

DR. PATTERSON: There was a Honey Williams, Honey Baron Williams.

MRS. MEWBORN: And she, bound to live right across the street, but it was another one, and...

DR. PATTERSON: Next to Ola Ferebee...

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, and I can remember when she went to our church and sat on the back row there in the Episcopal Church when I was a little girl, but I don't know that. I mean that...

DR. PATTERSON: That's the first time I've heard her name.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, now I could be wrong about that name. Johnny says I am.

DR. PATTERSON: On the corner of East Front and Craven Street right up from this little house, you told me that Emmett Whitehurst's parents lived there.

MRS. MEWBORN: Oh, yes sir. I'm sure they did, because they were friends of Mama's and Papa's, and Mr. Emmett Whitehurst, he took my sister to Sunday school on Sunday mornings, and as long as he lived. He said she was the prettiest little girl he ever saw in his life.

You know Mr. Emmett?

DR. PATTERSON: Uh huh. You mention Dunn's Field.

MRS. MEWBORN: Oh yeah. Well, now Mr. Billy Dunn owned, his farm was out there, that was National Avenue and all out in that area. I don't know how much it was, but he developed that into lots.

DR. PATTERSON: Mr. Billy Dunn?

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, Johnny's uncle. And, Papa bought, that was his first house. He bought a house, a lot out there on Avenue A and built this bungalow out there. And I believe, from what they said, it is the house that Miss Mamie Sadler owned and lived in until she died.

DR. PATTERSON: Had her store there?

MRS. MEWBORN: No, her store was down on Craven Street, lower Craven Street. This house is just a door or two from Eloise Maultsby's. Miss Mamie was Eloise's aunt. And I believe that's the house, Joe. See, I can't tell you from that. And then from there he went back and he built a house on Change Street. It's one of those little houses along there now where Mrs... I just don't know who lives along there, but I believe it's the house that Mrs. Cook lived in for awhile. And Miss Clark, and Miss Fannie Howerton. Miss Fannie Howerton, this is going way back, was Mama's kindergarten teacher out at Foscue's Private School. That's the first school she ever went to.

DR. PATTERSON: Where was Foscue's School?

MRS. MEWBORN: You know where the ten mile house is down on, what they call the ten mile house, that road going down that way, this great

big beautiful house over to the left. That was the Foscue Private School.

DR. PATTERSON: Is that where the plantation is?

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, now it's two of them. See, that's one of 'em, and the other one is on Pollock's Road, the brick house over there, but this is the one that Mama went to, because that road was know as the Mallard Town. See all the Mallards lived down there, her grandparents and uncles, and so forth. But she went with the Foscues' to this private school, and Miss Fanny Howerton was her first teacher.

DR. PATTERSON: A lot of people speak about Fanny Howerton. When you were in school in New Bern, was it a good time? Did you enjoy school?

MRS. MEWBORN: Maybe too much. Maybe I, I don't remember too much about it. I think I was timid and shy and scared. Up until, I reckon, I think it was the, maybe the seventh grade, Joe, and the teachers were Miss Brock, Miss Hope, and Miss Mary Ezzelle. And they were all three good teachers, but very, very strict. And Miss Hope, Miss Brock, she was the red headed one. And if she caught you doing anything in school, she made you get up there and do it for the whole class. She never caught me but one time, and I really didn't like raw peanuts. But somebody had give me some and I put one of them in my mouth and eat it. And she made me get up there and eat the whole bag in front of the class. And different things that they would do, but that was the beginning, really, that, I think, was the most fun. You know, I was getting older and knew more people downtown, you know,

that had more friends downtown, I'll say, than I did out in the Ghent area.

DR. PATTERSON: What did you all do to have fun when you were going through school and high school?

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, most of it would be on Friday nights. You might have a party, and after you got up a little bit, you'd have little dances, you know, your friends there, and...

DR. PATTERSON: At their houses?

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, most of the houses. It wasn't anywhere to really go, you know. I think later on when we were grown, around Christmas time, they would have dances at the warehouses, but, of course, we were never allowed to, you know, go to those until we were out of school, you know, in high school, maybe. Something like that. And then they used to 'em up at the Stanley Hall, you know, occasionally. But, I don't remember too many of them, Joe. I really don't.

DR. PATTERSON: We'll take these things as we go down the list and let me ask you to look way back to World War I. Do you remember those days?

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah. I sure do. I remember that my daddy would have been in the next draft, and I remember how he was that morning to see that old whistle out there on the, on the water works, you know, when it blowed twelve o'clock. It began to blow about four o'clock in the morning. Did you ever hear that thing blow?

DR. PATTERSON: Yes, I had forgotten about that.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, well, you know, it blew every day at twelve o'clock and most of the little children, I can see Lemuel right now, when it started, he would run for Mama so fast. It would scare him to death.

DR. PATTERSON: Where was the water works located?

MRS. MEWBORN: Right where the one is now, you know. I don't think it's the same building, but it was a building in there, but it wasn't the car barn, see. The car barn was sort of in that point there, Joe Pat, and then adjoining it was the water works, and the great big water tank was up there, you know. And then the other part, I just don't know what was in there. But that's where the water works was. That's all I know.

DR. PATTERSON: And this four o'clock sounding of the whistle indicated that the...

MRS. MEWBORN: That the war was over. And I know, I didn't go, 'cause I was too young, but Papa did, he was downtown by, he said they were rolling the first barrel of tar out of the Sun Journal to light 'em, you know. They had barrels of tar on all the corners downtown.

DR. PATTERSON: I don't know about that.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, I didn't see it, but that's what they said. They would light these barrel of tars, you know, on Middle Street there on the corner there, and down on Craven, I reckon that's it, Now, I don't, I never did see that.

DR. PATTERSON: What was the purpose of 'em?

MRS. MEWBORN: Because it was dark, you know, and I reckon lighting

up and the war was over. I guess that was it. That's all I know.

DR. PATTERSON: And they burned the tar?

MRS. MEWBORN: They would burn the tar. It was a light down there. But, that's all I know. I mean, I can't tell you, 'cause I didn't go, but I know that Papa, maybe took my two older sisters and maybe some other neighbors that wanted to go down there. Anyway, he said he was down there by the first time they rolled out a barrel of tar.

DR. PATTERSON: You remember the flu epidemic?

MRS. MEWBORN: Yes I do. I wasn't allowed out of the house. I think my whole family had it. I didn't have it, but we were all quarantined, you know. I can just remember a little bit, and remember so many people dying, you know, and it was just all...

DR. PATTERSON: Were there friends of your families who died?

MRS. MEWBORN: I can't remember, Joe. I just know we, you know, we were told to do things and we had to do it, Joe. And, we were kept right there at home.

DR. PATTERSON: I guess with the large family you had, you were lucky.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, we really were. I think Mama had it the second time it went around, but I don't think any of us really had it that first year when it was so bad.

DR. PATTERSON: What was New Bern like during World War II?

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, see, we were living over on the highway, and at the beginning of it, Joe, I think it was very comfortable. I mean, you didn't, wasn't afraid of the men. You did what you could.



You'd pick 'em up, you know, if they needed a ride. And, as I told you, Papa went to work down at Cherry Point for a little while, found him some work down there, but then went to Holly Ridge and worked and when that job was up, he went straight to Wilmington in the ship yard.

And that's the first I ever remember my father being away from home at night. And that left Mama and myself, you know, over there by ourselves. And he would come home on weekends and he was just as lucky as he could be. All during his business years, all his supplies he bought from Gordon Metal Company in Richmond. It was a big metal company there. And when he went down to the ship yard to go in there to get a job, one of the boys was a Gordon from Richmond, and Papa knew the people and he was so good to Papa. He said, he gave Papa a job. He said, Mr. Cannon, you won't have to leave this shop. Said you stay right here in the shop. So he never went out for bad weather or anything.

DR. PATTERSON: Were Lemuel and Jack involved in the war?

MRS. MEWBORN: Lemuel was, Joe Pat. He, let's see, he was at State and almost graduated. I just wish they hadn't of bothered him, but they did, and he had to go. It was right at the Bulge, you know.

They took all of 'em. And he went straight to France and right on up to the front line, and he said they were the longest in battle of anybody. They stayed right there. Really not fighting. He said he didn't know whether the Germans would kill them or the Americans would kill them. They were right in between there. And then he was taken back up out of the war zone after the war was over and he said it was just, they were one of the last bunch going over so they were one of

the last coming out. And he said you'd be sitting aside of a fellow and he'd go all to pieces. And said then they began to move 'em, put 'em on a train, and take 'em. He said he went all over Europe, after the war was over just to keep 'em from sitting there doing nothing.

And he got home. He was in exactly three years to the day. He left Fort Bragg and came back to Fort Bragg and the first person he saw in New Jersey was the Barker boy. He was on the train, you know, was...

DR. PATTERSON: Was it Claus Barker?

MRS. MEWBORN: Wasn't Claus Barker. The father, Myrtle Barker and, you know, I think he married one of the Horner girls. He lives right over with, I don't know what his name is, but anyway his father was on the railroad, and this boy, evidently was too, and Lemuel said when he started to get on the train, said this boy was there. Said it was the person he saw when he got back from over seas.

DR. PATTERSON: That's great. Well, it's good that he got back.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, we're thankful that he did.

DR. PATTERSON: Helen, you mentioned earlier something that really fascinates me and that's Dr. Jones and his early years before St. Luke's Hospital was built. I wonder if you would tell me about Dr. Jones and other medical people you knew during that time.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, now this I don't want on there. This is just for you. Dr. Jones was so funny as you know...

DR. PATTERSON: You don't want me to...

MRS. MEWBORN: No...

DR. PATTERSON: Where was Dr. Jones' office located?

MRS. MEWBORN: Right along there in the Bangert Building somewhere in the early days. I don't know which one of 'em, but Papa said it was...

DR. PATTERSON: Did he practice alone?

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, see that was way back in the early days, along, I reckon, before I was born. I don't even remember any of that, Joe Pat.

DR. PATTERSON: Do you remember any other stories about doctors in those days?

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, I'll tell you. I know that the first time I met your father, or knew him, was the last time that Dr. Jones ever came to us. He was on his way over seas, and some of us were sick. I don't know where. They were the days when they came to the house. So when Dr. Jones came, he brought your father, a young man, and said that he would, you know, take over the practice. So he did, and from then on, you know, when Dr. Jones came back, he went on back up the hospital, but it was always Dr. Jones and Dr. Patterson. Whoever was there, it was never any disagreement or anything. We just wanted either one of 'em that would come to us, and whoever was there would always come. And so we just loved 'em both, dearly, until they retired.

DR. PATTERSON: The hospital had been built by the time Dr. Jones went over seas. The hospital was built in 1914.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, evidently, yeah, evidently it had, uh huh.

DR. PATTERSON: And he went over seas, I believe with the Navy, and assumed command of a major general hospital somewhere in France.

MRS. MEWBORN: I don't know. When did yo' daddy come back to New Bern, Joe?

DR. PATTERSON: I'm not quite sure.

MRS. MEWBORN: I'm not either, but that's what I remember of your father. That when he was leaving, he brought your father with him and said that he was going to be the one to take over for us. And I remember Dr. Jones, I mean, Dr. Patterson. And I think Jack was specially fond of your daddy. I knew he, Jack was operated on by your father. Maybe when he broke his leg, you know, playing football as a little boy out in Ghent. And, of course, Simmons meant a great deal to Jack. Simmons was his age and I think he played football and Jack Dunn was another one Jack was devoted to. And...

DR. PATTERSON: Helen, do you remember the fire of 1922?

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, I remember that.

DR. PATTERSON: What do you remember?

MRS. MEWBORN: But I don't remember any part of it except that I wasn't allowed to go near it. I know Papa was going to Raleigh to a football game and take my two oldest sisters. And when he got up that morning, Mama said I don't want you to go. Said I just feel like something terrible is going to happen, and, of course, I'm sure my sisters were disappointed, but my Papa didn't go. But, he never even opened his store that day. Before he could get down to his store, the whole of that street they said was on fire. And I think he hauled people's furniture and home out of that, you know. And I do remember, don't know whose furniture it was, but lots of the furniture was brought

out there and put on our lawn, out there in Ghent.

DR. PATTERSON: Why did your mother not want him to go?

MRS. MEWBORN: Just, she had that feeling that something was going to happen. She didn't want him to go, and he didn't go.

DR. PATTERSON: That's a very interesting thing.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, I thought it was too, but, you know, lots of time Mama would just say, well, I just don't want you to do this and he wouldn't do it.

DR. PATTERSON: So you were not allowed out of the house?

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, I was out of the house, but, I mean, I wasn't allowed to get down in that part. Any thing like that, we just, we had to stay home, Joe.

DR. PATTERSON: Your area was not in danger?

MRS. MEWBORN: No, no. As I say, some of the furniture, people's furniture he brought out there because the fire was going that way.

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MRS. MEWBORN: And they thought it was safe out there.

DR. PATTERSON: You lived through some hurricanes in this New Bern area too, didn't you?

MRS. MEWBORN: Yes, I did. Uh huh. I know I got caught in town in one of 'em. We were living over on the highway and I was asked to have dinner that night with Lucy and Braxton Pugh, and when I went home and told Mama, I said Lucy wants me to come have supper with them tonight. She said I don't want you to. Said this storm is brewing and I don't you to be away from...

DR. PATTERSON: This was '33?

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, I reckon it was. Said I don't want you, Helen, to stay. Said come on home tonight. So I did. I mean, we didn't ever argue with Mama. I mean, what she told us to do, we did, Joe. And sometimes, I'll tell you this, I think it's cute. If she said, no, you can't do this, we'd go to Papa and say Papa can we do so and so. He'd say whatever your mother says.

DR. PATTERSON: He was a very wise man.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, she had the, she told us what we could do and what we couldn't do. And, of course, I know he backed her up in it, but...

DR. PATTERSON: But that storm came.

MRS. MEWBORN: It came, but that afternoon, she called me down at the bank. I was working at the Eastern Bank. She said, Helen, I think the worse of it's over and said if you want to, said go on out there and have supper, but come on home early. And Honey, I got caught in it. I didn't get home all night long, and I was out at Lucy and Braxton's on Park Avenue and after supper, she said, come on, let's ride down East Front Street and see what it did. So I did. I went with her. And we went in Mrs. Hurst's, there was a driveway there between she and the Carraways, and when we came out, the water was half way up the hub caps. And I said, Lucy, you take me home. I want to go home. Well, Lucy was a dare devil. We got as far as Pollock Street and the light poles were falling and she pulled over on the side where Mrs. Bradley lives. You know, where Bobby Bell lives now.

That was the old Bradley house. And she got out on her side and she said, Helen, hold on to me and we clung to each other. And the wind almost blew us down and we got in Mrs. Bradley's house and stayed until they got the lights cut off. The fire was everywhere out there on that street. And...

DR. PATTERSON: The fire?

MRS. MEWBORN: From the, lightening had, you know, the lightening had struck those poles and they were falling, the wires, you know. And we stayed there until they had cut the wires and it was safe. I said, you take me home. And we went on out to her house and I stayed there the rest of the night. I don't know where Lucy went but she was downtown in all of that going on, but I didn't. I was scared. I'll say it's right up there.

DR. PATTERSON: The bridge across the Trent River was not damaged in that storm then?

MRS. MEWBORN: No. When did that wash away? What year was that?

DR. PATTERSON: That was the summer...

MRS. MEWBORN: Was that '33?

DR. PATTERSON: The '33 storm washed away the Neuse River bridge.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah.

DR. PATTERSON: But you were going to go...

MRS. MEWBORN: Across the Trent River...

DR. PATTERSON: Trent River bridge and that was still intact.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, that was still intact. But I wasn't going

to cross it after that storm came. I would have gone from work home.

DR. PATTERSON: When you grew up what were the relations like between the whites and the blacks?

MRS. MEWBORN: A nice relation, Joe. We, just, you know, I helped, now, see Papa owned the farm out on Trent Road, and it was two tenant houses out there. Well, it was really three. One of 'em was this colored woman. She lived by herself and she bought this little two acre tract in there off of Papa's farm, and her house was in there.

I don't know whether she ever paid him or what, but anyway, when she died, she left it to Jack. But it was all good. Mama's help came from off the farm. When she needed help, they would come in. Do the washing, and ironing, and cleaning, and then when we were over on the highway, it was a family of Pickets over there. Had lots of children.

And they always helped Mama. And we, they had the greatest respect for us. And I can remember that when Jack and Lemuel would come home from school, they always shook hands with the colored men that worked over there. And they respected them.

DR. PATTERSON: There was a mutual trust.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yes, yes, yes. It was never any...

DR. PATTERSON: And respect.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah. Just thought the world of all of 'em. That's true. And this old Jurdan, you got some where in the paper. I read about him recently. Somebody was telling me about it. I remember him coming down Spencer Avenue. The peg leg. The wooden leg, you know.



DR. PATTERSON: I don't remember that, Helen. What is that story?

MRS. MEWBORN: Where did I see that, just recently in something. Maybe I read it, but his name was Jurdan or Jordan or something like that and he had a wooden peg on his leg. And in this article, maybe it was in the newspaper recently, said that he, he fed lots of children and all. And he had a farm out somewhere and he would bring his vegetables in. And they said homeless children and all, he would help feed, give food to. Now isn't that, I can't even remember where I saw that.

DR. PATTERSON: In those days, folks in town pretty much knew each other.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, surely did.

DR. PATTERSON: When you'd go downtown, did it seem natural to see everybody that you knew.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, because a, lots of 'em, now I know as a little girl, I remember Mama taking me with her when we'd go to Mitchell's Store, and Baxter's Store. Mitchell's Store was along there by Kress' and that's where you bought the material to make clothes for your children. And Baxter's was over on Pollock Street, I mean on Pollock Street somewhere. And his was a dry goods store. I don't remember Mr. Dunn's. She said he had one over there too, in the early days. But I don't ever remember his. But I can remember as a little girl, Mama, we would walk from Pollock, you know, down there. And I would sit on a stool. Miss Emmie Gaskill worked in Mitchell's. I remember that. You remember Miss Emmie?

DR. PATTERSON: Oh, I remember Miss Emmie, yes.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, she worked, I remember, she worked in there.

DR. PATTERSON: Now this is Mitchell's...

MRS. MEWBORN: Dry Goods Store.

DR. PATTERSON: Which Mitchell is that?

MRS. MEWBORN: Leon Scott's mother was a Mitchell and I think he was her father. I believe that's right. I'm not sure. See, Joe, all of this was I was just a child.

DR. PATTERSON: Sure. Sure. But, the town was pretty small in those days.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, yeah. Mr. Bartling, see, he lived out in Ghent. He was down on the corner. I remember him back in those days. And the Kafer's Bakery. See Shorty, and Gertie, and Sallie...

DR. PATTERSON: That was on Middle Street.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, right across the street from Papa's store.

DR. PATTERSON: And there was an A & P Store eventually in there too, wasn't it.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, yeah. The first one I know. Jack and Lemuel both worked in there. In later years, I think Mr. Blanchard was the manager then, but I think it was somebody else earlier in there.

DR. PATTERSON: Kafer's Bakery burned up.

MRS. MEWBORN: Two or three times.

DR. PATTERSON: I remember one of those times. When you were growing up, did you swim in the river, either river?

MRS. MEWBORN: Not if Mama knew it. I did. That's where I learned

to swim, down there at Union Point. But when we, well, we did go in the river, when we went down the river, you know, like Camp Kiro, over, they had the camp down there. And we would go down there in the summer time. And I remember, as a young girl, in the summer time, Joe, I would go to Wrightsville with the girl scouts. And Mrs., let me see, Mrs. Airlie, am I wondering around too much?

DR. PATTERSON: No, that's fine.

MRS. MEWBORN: Mrs. Airlie and, oh, what is her name, Miss Betty Windley were the leaders. And Miss Rosa Dale and Mrs. Guion, Billy Guion's mother. They had a "Girl's Friendly" house down at the end of Wrightsville Beach, and Miss Rosa and Mrs. Guion took care of it in the summertime. And they would let us go down there for two weeks and I was always a good girl scout those two weeks. And I would go down there with 'em at the time, every summer.

DR. PATTERSON: Did you have a scout meeting place in New Bern?

MRS. MEWBORN: The only one that I remembered was Dr. Hughes' office.

DR. PATTERSON: That was on Craven Street.

MRS. MEWBORN: On Craven Street, yeah. The one that Mary Warren pulled out. I mean, Mary Warren pulled out there. It's a home now. But I remember going in there once or twice, but I didn't do very much in the girl scouts except when the vacation came along. I would go to the beach with 'em.

DR. PATTERSON: Then you were a very good girl scout.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, I was a good girl scout at that time.

DR. PATTERSON: Did you do any sailing?

MRS. MEWBORN: No, I never was much of a boater. After, later years, you know, over that way, Frank Warren, Amy Williams's cousin, I believe. He lived over there with them, and he had a sail boat. And he was in love with a girl friend of mine from Kinston, Della Jefferies. And when she would come to visit me, why, then Frank, he would take us, you know, sailing down the river. And...

DR. PATTERSON: Did you have, were the circuses out in your area?

MRS. MEWBORN: Oh, yeah. That's the main thing I forgot to tell you about, Joe. They were wonderful.

DR. PATTERSON: Tell me about them.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, see, the train would come in right there at the water works, and they would unload. And Papa would always get us up, oh, about four or five o'clock in the morning, and here we would go over there and watch them unload. And they would pitch their tents right there from the car barn on up on Spencer Avenue. See that was all back in there nothing but fields. Wasn't anything built on those. Later, before the school was built, I remember when they had it over there on the school green. And then it went further on back up on that side, on Rhem Avenue, because it wasn't built up there. But, they would have their performance in the afternoon and that's when we would usually go.

DR. PATTERSON: Would the whole town turn out for these circuses?

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, yeah. They really did. They come out on the street cars, you know. They had those then, but we were right

there. We could see 'em unload and then load up, but then at night I was ready to get in. I was scared of 'em. I didn't want them to steal me and take me away. I don't know whether somebody told me that to get me in or not, but I was ready to hide then at night.

DR. PATTERSON: I would think that in those days something like this would really be a major attraction. You had no radio.

MRS. MEWBORN: That's right.

DR. PATTERSON: What, when the circuses weren't here, when there wasn't something big going on in town, what did folks do for entertainment. What did they do at night time?

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, now, I don't know what the grown people did, but I know this, as children, as I told you it was dirt streets, and we would all play out there in the streets, you know. Play Wee Hawkie and...

DR. PATTERSON: What is Wee Hawkie?

MRS. MEWBORN: You would blindfold somebody and then the rest of them would go hide and then when he could look and see where, you'd holler Wee Hawkie and he was supposed to go find you, you know. Then you run somewhere else and hide and say Wee Hawkie. And things like that is what we would play.

DR. PATTERSON: There were no cars coming along.

MRS. MEWBORN: No, no, and then too, that was, by that time, it was right many houses, Joe, in two years time I believe, oh, it was just many, many houses that were going up fast out in Ghent. It didn't take it long to develop out there. But, people were sitting on the

porches at that time, you know. And then, people would come down, and the main one that I remember was Mrs. Bartling, Jack Tolson's grandmother. His mother and Jack, they lived about the middle of the block where we lived, about three or four doors up, and you knew where Mrs. Bartling lived. Well after she had fed her family, she would dress. She would cross over and come down our side of the street.

And you could hear her coming. She'd visit everybody on their porches coming down. Then she'd go to Miss Lillian's and visit with her awhile.

Then she would cross over and then she'd visit everybody going back up that side of the street. But you could hear Mrs. Bartling talking to everybody.

DR. PATTERSON: What about movies, you mentioned the out door movie at the Ghent Casino, there were movies downtown too.

MRS. MEWBORN: Very few times that I went to the movies. They were mystery movies, horror movies, you know, and Mama wouldn't, didn't approve of us going.

DR. PATTERSON: You went to the Masonic?

MRS. MEWBORN: I don't remember. The Masonic was the Athens at that time that they had 'em. But my oldest sister would, every Saturday afternoon to entertain us, she would make a big pan of sea foam candy.

And so, when she would finish, while it was getting hard, we would scrape the pans, lick the spoons, and you know, have a good time. Well, it wasn't long before the neighborhood found out what we were doing. So they didn't want to go to the show either. So they would join us over at our house. So most of 'em were over there. So that's

what we did. Most of the time was something at home for us that we, that I didn't know, I didn't know whether we didn't have the money for seven of us to go or whether that she really, I think it was that she didn't want us to see those kinds of movies.

DR. PATTERSON: Helen, was there much business traffic on the river in those days?

MRS. MEWBORN: Joe, I remember when the barges would pull the lumber, the logs, on that, Bunting's Mill, you know, was down there in James City and, I don't know, you know. It was some over in Bridgeton.

You know, Munger and Bennett was over there, wasn't it, or Blades or some of them over there, over in James City had a mill over there.

I believe Blades and Munger was the first. When they came down to New Bern, they located over in James City, I believe there's building.

DR. PATTERSON: Had a lumber mill over there.

MRS. MEWBORN: I believe so, but see all, Joe, this is just hearing them talk. I really...

DR. PATTERSON: Mr. Blades later had a lumber mill, I think.

MRS. MEWBORN: Over in Bridgeton Park, yeah. But I believe their first mill was over in James City.

DR. PATTERSON: So you remember the barges hauling the logs.

MRS. MEWBORN: I can remember the barges on the river.

DR. PATTERSON: Taking them to these various...

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, un huh, the logs and everything.

DR. PATTERSON: There were no steamships.

MRS. MEWBORN: Not as I remember it. I'm sure it was. They did

have the Howard, you know, that it...

DR. PATTERSON: You remember the Howard?

MRS. MEWBORN: I remember hearing about it. I don't... go between New Bern and Pollocksville way.

DR. PATTERSON: Yes.

MRS. MEWBORN: I don't where else it went, but I think it would take cargo from New Bern to Pollocksville, but if it went further or not, I don't know.

DR. PATTERSON: Helen, everybody that I've talked to pretty much has certain things that they want to mention that I forget to bring up. Do you have other things that are important to you to talk about.

MRS. MEWBORN: You know, no, I really don't. I just think back over all the nice time, 'cause you know we had a real good time in our family.

We just really, from the time I can remember, Joe, one of the sweetest things I think was when we lived on Pollock Street as children. I can remember the moving pictures that we saw there that my mother and father did. Their room was on the front of the house and our room was in the middle and then a big one on the back. And we had these little chairs, and there was a double door between our room, and they would hang this sheet up between us, and maybe, it was a light on in that room. It wasn't a light on us, but they'd line our little chairs in front of this sheet, and they would dance and carry on a show back of that sheet. Now that was before I was seven years old. I can remember that. And that so sweet, and those things, I just don't forget, we did together.



DR. PATTERSON: That was a great family time wasn't it.

MRS. MEWBORN: Yes it was. All of our life, it was a great family time.

DR. PATTERSON: I think that was probably true in, throughout the whole area.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, that was all that we could do, you know, and to me, even to today, it is just as sweet and nice as it can be that Mama and Papa took up so much time with us. And telling stories. They were great story tellers, both of them.

DR. PATTERSON: Have you been happy growing up and living in New Bern?

MRS. MEWBORN: Yeah, all of my life.

DR. PATTERSON: What does this town mean to you?

MRS. MEWBORN: It means that I don't ever want to leave here and I'm afraid I'm going to have to, old age, but as long as I can stay here and take care of myself, I want to stay right here.

DR. PATTERSON: It's been a great place to live for you.

MRS. MEWBORN: Oh yeah, yeah. And, as I say, it's so many good people here in New Bern, Joe. They don't have to be your next door neighbor, but this is the grandest neighborhood you can imagine. They're all new people that, you know, but, they're just as good to me as they can be. I'm the oldest one, but we're all very close out here.

DR. PATTERSON: How has the influx of retirees from all over the country changed this town?

MRS. MEWBORN: A great deal.

DR. PATTERSON: For the better or for the worse?

MRS. MEWBORN: Joe, we can't ever go back. And I cannot say that we've got too many newcomers in here, because we've got lots of new ones out at Riverbend, down at Fairfield Harbor, all, Country Club, all around, but those people have helped New Bern a whole lot up at the historical society. Poor Mr. John Taylor, I know, wore many a pair of shoes out, walking, trying to get people to join for \$5 a month to try to buy that Oliver house, and Mr. Taylor, Johnny Dunn, many, I don't know of how many more young people got the money together to buy that Atmore Oliver house. Well, if it hadn't of been for the newcomers to come in to New Bern and keep it going, I don't think we would have had it today. I don't know them. I have the greatest respect for them. All those that I knew, I like so much, like I met up at the palace, you know, and so, I can't say anything but something good.

Some of them are bad, but we had some bad ones before they came, didn't we, and we have so many good ones. Now, several years ago, what time is it Joe Pat?

DR. PATTERSON: It's twelve o'clock.

MRS. MEWBORN: I got to go to the doctor.

DR. PATTERSON: Yes, we will stop this.

MRS. MEWBORN: I'm sorry.

DR. PATTERSON: The time has come Helen, I think, to call an end to this interview. It's gone very well and you've said some wonderful things and I appreciate it for myself and for the Memories Program. So it's meant a lot to us to be able to talk to you like this and this has helped our story a great deal.

MRS. MEWBORN: Well, I'm going to go back through the pictures and see what I can find then. I didn't know that was what you wanted.

DR. PATTERSON: Well, thank you, Helen, for letting me come out.

MRS. MEWBORN: I thoroughly enjoyed it. I really have, and I know all this wild stuff I've told you is the truth. I remember it.

DR. PATTERSON: Well, I believe you.

MRS. MEWBORN: I can tell you a lots more stories.

DR. PATTERSON: Well, I'll cut this off now.

END OF INTERVIEW