

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

CAROLINA DUNN ASHFORD

INTERVIEW 429

This is Marea Kafer Foster representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 400. I am interviewing Caroline Dunn Ashford, Mrs. Charles Hall Ashford, Sr., interview number 429. Today is Thursday the 11th of February 1993. We're in Mrs. Ashford's home on the Neuse River at 512 East Front Street in New Bern.

MAREA FOSTER: Now Mrs. Ashford, make yourself comfortable, just relax in the chair, and give me your full name and your birthdate and your place of birth.

MRS. ASHFORD: Caroline Winder Dunn Ashford. Born in New Bern.

MF: Weren't we all. (laughter)

MRS. ASHFORD: August 16, 1912.

MF: Where? At home?

MRS. ASHFORD: Home on Craven Street in an old building that's been demolished.

MF: Where was that on Craven Street?

MRS. ASHFORD: About where the parking lot is now. It was an old house that the Branch Bank has copied down on South Front. It was originally a bank. It had been a lot of things, and then it was a residence.

MF: So that would have been in the block where...

MRS. ASHFORD: Near El Mex.

MF: Near El Mex. So where that parking lot is. Between that and Gusmann's Cleaners. I did not know that there was a house there.

MRS. ASHFORD: Right across from Carrie Duffy Ward's house.

MF: As I remember that block, it was the Ford.

MRS. ASHFORD: My mother sold the property to Ford Motor Company.

MF: Was that to Mr. Hagood?

MRS. ASHFORD: Um huh. I think the Coplon's bought it. I'm not certain, but I think they bought it. I was a child when all this was going on, so I don't know too much. But the Ford Motor Company was built there.

MF: That's what I remember being in that spot. I never knew there was a house.

MRS. ASHFORD: Great big very handsome one so they say, but I was mighty little, I didn't know what was handsome. (laughter)

MF: Didn't know what was going on. Tell me your mother's full name.

MRS. ASHFORD: Octavia Winder Hughes Dunn.

MF: And your father's name.

MRS. ASHFORD: Just William Dunn, Jr.

MF: No middle name?

MRS. ASHFORD: No middle name.

MF: And you have brothers.

MRS. ASHFORD: I had three brothers.

MF: Okay. And their names.

MRS. ASHFORD: William Dunn III, Frank Hughes Dunn, and John Oliver Dunn.

MF: And no sisters.

MRS. ASHFORD: No sisters.

MF: You're the only girl with three brothers?

MRS. ASHFORD: Yes 'um.

MF: Did they pick on you or did they protect you?

MRS. ASHFORD: They didn't protect me much.

MF: You had to fight for everything you wanted to get.

MRS. ASHFORD: When I got out of the house, I wanted to see girls not boys. And girls got boy crazy, I couldn't believe it. (laughter)  
It's a pleasure to get out and see girls you know.

MF: It is. Now in your block, were there many children in that block that you were born in that you had for playmates?

MRS. ASHFORD: I don't know.

MF: Well, after that house, where did your family move?

MRS. ASHFORD: Hughes Apartments up Craven Street.

MF: Now, Caroline, Hughes Apartments were located where on Craven Street?

MRS. ASHFORD: Up where that, gosh, there's a place with a little flat apartments up there now called Bernside or something.

MF: Okay. So that's where the Hughes Apartments were?

MRS. ASHFORD: Um huh.

MF: The house next to the Hughes Apartments, was that the New Bern General Hospital?

MRS. ASHFORD: That's right. It was Mrs. Lizzie Congdon's house. Mrs. Wilson Lee's house first.

MF: I didn't know that.

MRS. ASHFORD: She was Mrs. Congdon, then she married Mr. Wilson Lee, and she was a widow. Then it was made into New Bern General

Hospital, then it was made into an apartment house.

MF: For heaven's sake. When it was New Bern General Hospital, do you know who owned it?

MRS. ASHFORD: I think the doctors did together. Dr. Wadsworth was there, Dr. Primrose, Dr. Richard Duffy. I don't remember what other doctors, but they all practiced there. You see, St. Luke's was just Jones and Patterson's hospital.

MF: Uh huh, they owned that. So St. Luke's was in operation at the same time as New Bern General.

MRS. ASHFORD: Right.

MF: I didn't realize that. Where did Dr. Gibbs practice?

MRS. ASHFORD: You know, I don't remember when he was practicing.

MF: I've just heard Jane talk about her daddy.

MRS. ASHFORD: It seemed to me, I thought he worked for the board of health.

MF: Well, he did from what she said, for a while. And what about Dr. Caton? I've heard of him.

MRS. ASHFORD: His hospital was up at the end of Craven Street. He had a hospital where later the Salvation Army took over that building and they tore it down. That was his hospital. But I think he had stopped practicing by the time I had sense enough to remember or know anything.

MF: If I'm not mistaken, the name of that hospital was Fairview, and Callie Newman, it's Callie that told us this, and I believe Callie Newman was born there. I think he said the name of that hospital was

Fairview.

MRS. ASHFORD: That rings a bell somewhere.

MF: Did you ever hear of or know of Stewart Sanitarium someplace?

MRS. ASHFORD: Just remember as a child, out on George Street.

MF: And where was that located? Do you remember?

MRS. ASHFORD: If my memory serves me right, about where the Cedar Grove Extension is across the street. I just have a memory of an old brick building there, and Stewart Sanitorium I think it was called or something like that. I don't remember anything other than that.

MF: I just have never heard of it until we started these interviews.

MRS. ASHFORD: It seems to me I've seen one little picture of it at some time, somewhere. But where that was, I don't know.

MF: Well, it's nice to know that it was there, and we have it for the record that it was there even though that's all we can remember.

When ya'll moved to the Hughes Apartments, were there children around, girls around that you could play with?

MRS. ASHFORD: Oh yes.

MF: And who were your playmates?

MRS. ASHFORD: The family is not here anymore, the family Woods lived on King Street.

MF: Ernest Woods?

MRS. ASHFORD: No, another family. Mr. Wood worked for Roberts Wholesale Grocery down on Craven Street. They had three girls and I used to love to go over there to play.

MF: Oh, I bet you did.

MRS. ASHFORD: Then I'd go around the corner on East Front. Mildred Biddle was there and Elsie Blaylock, and the Deppe's, Grace and Mary Deppe. I'm trying to think who else lived up there. The Rowe family.

MF: You're naming a lot of names that I've heard of.

MRS. ASHFORD: Then mother moved me to the country and I didn't have any friends. (laughter)

MF: When you say to the country, where was that?

MRS. ASHFORD: Out on Neuse River.

MF: On the Neuse River?

MRS. ASHFORD: Uh huh, down Morehead Road.

MF: Down Morehead Road? I didn't know you'd ever lived over there.

MRS. ASHFORD: She was a pioneer. Oh yeah, I lived in the country when nobody else was living in the country.

MF: Well, that's true. Was that like a farm or just the country?

MRS. ASHFORD: She and another couple bought this property together. She built a house for the summer, and then she decided we'd stay out there in the winter too.

MF: Well, at that time, to get over on that side, across the Trent River bridge, where was the Trent River bridge?

MRS. ASHFORD: Right down George Street where the Palace is now.

MF: Okay. And it was an old wooden bridge wasn't it?

MRS. ASHFORD: Wooden bridge.

MF: I remember that bridge as having a curve in it and there

was a house there that the bridge tender lived in. It's still there.

MRS. ASHFORD: Right.

MF: Well then, how did you get to and from school each day?

MRS. ASHFORD: My father came to town to work, so he brought us.

MF: He brought you to school. When school was over...

MRS. ASHFORD: Somebody had to take us home or we'd have to find  
someway to stay until we got home.

MF: Now, was your daddy a lawyer?

MRS. ASHFORD: Right.

MF: Where was his office?

MRS. ASHFORD: Elk's building.

MF: Do you remember any of the lawyers in town at that time?

MRS. ASHFORD: Oh yeah. He was in business with Mr. Larry Moore  
for years. And then the two Whitehurst brothers.

MF: That was...

MRS. ASHFORD: Henry Whitehurst and Emmett Whitehurst. Mr. Wilson  
Lee. Oh gosh, I ought to be able to think of a lot more of them.  
There weren't as many as there are now by any means.

MF: You're right. Was Mr. Rodman Guion practicing?

MRS. ASHFORD: Rodman Guion, John Guion.

MF: Was that his brother, John Guion, Rodman's brother?

MRS. ASHFORD: Um huh.

MF: Okay.

MRS. ASHFORD: There were how many Guion boys? Rodman, John,  
Haywood. I believe there's one other one.



MF: Bess was Haywood's wife, is that right?

MRS. ASHFORD: Right.

MF: They were the ones I knew, vaguely knew.

MRS. ASHFORD: Isn't that funny? I thought there was a fourth Guion man. I can't get it now.

MF: There might be. I didn't know that your father was a lawyer. Was the Elk's Temple building, cause I know you probably went up to his office, then similar to what it is today?

MRS. ASHFORD: Right now. Just like it.

MF: There was a soda shop on the corner underneath, right there the first floor.

MRS. ASHFORD: As far as I remember there's always been a soda shop right there.

MF: Do you remember what it was, or was it always Gaskins before Dixon's?

MRS. ASHFORD: I thought it was Gaskins until it was Dixon. Seems to me Gaskins was there forever.

MF: It seems like that to me too, because it was there when I was in school and going to Sunday School.

MRS. ASHFORD: Have I mixed up with the Clark's?

MF: Clark's is on the corner of Broad and...

MRS. ASHFORD: Later. What did Bradford Clark's father do other than being mayor?

MF: Oh, I don't know. I sure don't know.

MRS. ASHFORD: I was in the country too much. I didn't get around

town as much as other people did then.

MF: I think your memory is remarkable cause you're mentioning people I've heard of.

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, of course, I go back a long ways. (laughter)

MF: I know, but it's just brought back a lot of memories for me to hear you talk about them.

MRS. ASHFORD: I wish I knew more for you all.

MF: Well, you probably didn't get downtown much unless you absolutely had to go.

MRS. ASHFORD: You didn't.

MF: Well, with you living in the country, your mother had to come over here and do grocery shopping didn't she?

MRS. ASHFORD: Oh everything, yeah.

MF: Did you have a telephone in the country?

MRS. ASHFORD: Not at first. We didn't even have lights. Mr. Grantham was going to put in lights. We got them in a couple of years. But we had kerosene lanterns.

MF: For heaven sakes.

MRS. ASHFORD: I told you she was pioneering.

MF: She certainly was. Well then there would not have been an indoor furnace.

MRS. ASHFORD: We made fires in stoves.

MF: Indoor plumbing?

MRS. ASHFORD: Yeah, we had indoor.

MF: That's wonderful.

MRS. ASHFORD: But, the pump didn't always work. (laughter) Mr. Walter Brinson was our best friend. She'd have to call him to say the pump isn't working.

MF: Now, I've heard of Mr. Walter Brinson. What did he do in town?

MRS. ASHFORD: Craven Foundry. He's Virginia McSorley's uncle. I think his business was, would Craven Foundry do that kind of business too? I suppose so, motors. Keeping the motor running.

MF: For some reason I have Mr. Walter Brinson connected with the Fuller's. Was he?

MRS. ASHFORD: He was. Whether it was just friendship or not, I'm just like you. The only way I knew Mr. Walter Brinson was coming to fix the pump.

MF: Good neighbors. (laughter) And I know that you've always been an Episcopalian.

MRS. ASHFORD: Yes, til recently. (laughter)

MF: (laughter) Well, we won't go into that. Or maybe we will after this is over. But when you came in on Sunday's, there was Sunday School in the morning.

MRS. ASHFORD: Right.

MF: Did the young people have a little church service?

MRS. ASHFORD: We had a service and then you went to your own class for study.

MF: That's exactly what we had. We did not go into church like they do now.

MRS. ASHFORD: No. Not unless you wanted to or your family wanted you to.

MF: I remember the Easter egg hunts that the church used to have on Easter Sunday. Did they have them when you were young?

MRS. ASHFORD: I can't remember them if they had them.

MF: I also remember on Easter Sunday, in the afternoon at four o'clock...

MRS. ASHFORD: Oh, that's when you went to Sunday School.

MF: Tell me about that.

MRS. ASHFORD: "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "Golden Harps a Sounding."

MF: You're sure right.

MRS. ASHFORD: Same thing. Never changed. And now they won't even sing "Onward Christian Soldiers."

MF: Hardly. And we had mite boxes.

MRS. ASHFORD: Right.

MF: And would take them, as I remember, up to Mr. Williams. Who was the minister then?

MRS. ASHFORD: Mr. Husk was here when I was born. Let me think. Mr. Madara was here in my high school days, cause his daughter was in high school. Oh, I've got to think of his name, cause we all said he wore a girdle. What was his name-lived in the rectory? Had no more idea how to talk to children. Every single Sunday he came in he'd say, "How many of you have seen the Cathedral of Canterbury or the cathedral of some other church?" (laughter) Nobody had seen it.

And he would describe the cathedral for us. That was our talk every Sunday morning. What was his name? I'm sorry, the name's gone. Maybe it'll come back-Dr. McKinnon.

MF: Maybe it will during the talk. I just remember Mr. Williams. He was there forever.

MRS. ASHFORD: He really was, cause he came about four or five years after I was married and was here until Ed Sharp came.

MF: Now, I remember the rectory being where our parking lot is on Craven Street as a victorian house.

MRS. ASHFORD: Right. It was.

MF: Mr. Williams, as I remember it, did not live there, is that right?

MRS. ASHFORD: No. He didn't want it. Didn't need it, wasn't married. So they tore it down.

MF: Yeah, and made the parking lot. Well, that's a shame. It was a beautiful old house.

MRS. ASHFORD: I can see that minister just as clearly, but I can't recall his name. He was the one I really remember as a child.

MF: When you were a child, did the church have picnics?

MRS. ASHFORD: Yes. Went to Camp Glenn one time. I remember that.

MF: Now, where is that?

MRS. ASHFORD: Camp Glenn, right outside of Morehead. It was a World War I camp on the sound.

MF: That's right. At that time, had a bridge been built from

Morehead over to Atlantic Beach?

MRS. ASHFORD: I don't think so.

MF: So you had to go by boat or ferry.

MRS. ASHFORD: When I was grown, the bridge had been built. I remember going over when we took a boat to cross. You'd take a picnic lunch over there and we'd swim and the boat would come back and get us home.

MF: I remember the church picnics and we had a wonderful time.

MRS. ASHFORD: Down at the beach. We used to go by bus.

MF: Um huh. We sure did.

MRS. ASHFORD: Mr. Williams enjoyed those didn't he?

MF: He certainly did. There was fried chicken and deviled eggs.

MRS. ASHFORD: I remember going with our children once or twice to those things.

MF: It was a lot of fun, because that was one time that Uncle Oscar would always join us on Sunday afternoon when we would go for the church picnic.

MRS. ASHFORD: Yes. You would remember that then.

MF: Um huh. Cause we'd all go together. Those mean twins, my cousins. (laughter) Oscar and Helen were something else!

MRS. ASHFORD: They weren't mean. Helen was a bad little girl, and she got so sweet I couldn't believe it.

MF: (laughter) I know it. Well, I'm older than they are, so I can say that. (laughter)

MRS. ASHFORD: You are, but I remember Charlie's nurse. I asked

her once where they'd been and I said, "Why isn't he over there with the Kafer's?" They were closer. "Well, Helen had bit him." She said, "I told him to bite her back." (laughter)

MF: That's right, he should have. (laughter) Oh me. Well, tell me about school in New Bern. Eleven grades, is that what they had then?

MRS. ASHFORD: Right.

MF: And you probably attended the New Bern Academy.

MRS. ASHFORD: But my husband said they had ten grades when he came along.

MF: Ten? Well, Mary Mullineaux told me the same thing, that they had ten grades.

MRS. ASHFORD: Uh huh. That's right. But we had grown to eleven, and I remember when they started the twelve. Saso Jones came along when they put in the twelfth grade. I remember her mother asked the teacher, "What actually were they getting? What extra courses were being taught?" I think it was dramatic make-up and some other something that were supposedly going a whole nother year for.

MF: Yeah. They were working in for twelve grades.

MRS. ASHFORD: But all the schools were right downtown. Except when I started, they did put in four grades in Riverside and four grades out in Ghent.

MF: Oh, that's when they built those schools. Cause I went to Ghent School. It was a big treat.

MRS. ASHFORD: I started the first grade with one friend down

here, and then she went back to Riverside, then she came back and joined us again in the fifth grade because they only had four grades at the time.

MF: That was interesting.

MRS. ASHFORD: But New Bern was growing then, you see, the suburbs.

MF: Oh yes, it was. (laughter) New Bern's always been, I think, a lovely place to live and to raise children.

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, I envied those that came in on the street car from Ghent.

MF: Did you ever ride that street car?

MRS. ASHFORD: Yes, but it was a treat to ride it. And I envied those kids. The few years I was in town I could walk to school, you see. I'd watch them get off the street car and just envy them so I didn't know what to do.

MF: Can you describe what that trolley looked like?

MRS. ASHFORD: It looked like Mr. Tagliari's picture except longer, or somebody's drawing of a picture with a street car in it.

MF: I think it's Willie Tagliari.

MRS. ASHFORD: Or whoever did the station. Who did down at the station? Was that Nancy Rogers?

MF: Nancy Rogers did.

MRS. ASHFORD: The street car was longer than the thing in the picture looks like. It's just a long old box that had some seats on each side.

MF: How much did it cost to ride?



MRS. ASHFORD: I don't know.

MF: Probably a nickel.

MRS. ASHFORD: I didn't have any money, so I don't know.

MF: Not many people did then. With growing up, how did the Depression affect you and your family?

MRS. ASHFORD: Life changed a lot. I don't know how to say. It was a bad time with me because I was just the age where it would have been nice to have had some money to go somewhere and do something, which you didn't. Because when I got married, it was awful.

MF: You were married...

MRS. ASHFORD: In '33, and it was awful.

MF: You were married the year I was born.

MRS. ASHFORD: The people around us gave us a good attitude. You knew people had nothing, but everybody had nothing. You were all in the same boat, so it didn't seem to bother.

MF: Well, tell me about your marriage. You married who?

MRS. ASHFORD: Dr. Charlie Ashford.

MF: Charles Hall Ashford. And he grew up in New Bern.

MRS. ASHFORD: Right. And we didn't have two nickels to rub together, and it's nice because you appreciate everything you had after that. I wouldn't take a million for it. Cause I don't feel like young people appreciate anything now. They have it all.

MF: They start out with absolutely everything. They really and truly do. A whole house full of furniture. Was he a GP or surgeon? Did they specialize then?

MRS. ASHFORD: He had specialized in surgery but he did everything that came to New Bern. Had to for about twenty years, and then he was able to specialize.

MF: In surgery. Where was his office?

MRS. ASHFORD: Originally, the Elk's building. After we were married, bought a house on Pollock Street with an office attached.

MF: You bought the Bryan house.

MRS. ASHFORD: Uh huh. So we lived there and had the office there.

MF: In that nice little side building. Did it work out well having his office right there at home or was that a nuisance?

MRS. ASHFORD: Both. It was convenient at times and a perfect nuisance at times answering the door night and day and that kind of thing. So it worked both ways really.

MF: Yeah. What was it like being a doctor's wife as far as your family life was concerned, your, say quality time as a family?

MRS. ASHFORD: You didn't have much of that cause you were practicing on your own. You were on call twenty-four hours a day.

I answered the phone twenty-four hours a day. You know, you were jack of all trades doing some of everything. And being right by the house, you were jerked in the office to do this or do that at times.

I've gone in to help hold rambunctious children, you know, when they need your extra hands beside the nurses.

MF: And you did not train as a nurse.

MRS. ASHFORD: Oh no.

MF: You went to St. Mary's.

MRS. ASHFORD: Yes.

MF: And after St. Mary's...

MRS. ASHFORD: Home.

MF: You came home. So you had no nurse's training, but you learned in a hurry.

MRS. ASHFORD: I didn't learn much. I didn't want to learn. I knew I'd be in there all the time if I learned it. He taught me to do one or two things and then he said, "I'm gonna teach you how to draw blood", and I said, "No, you aren't. I'm not gonna learn."

(laughter) I don't like needles and I knew that it would be awful if I learned to do anymore. I was already keeping books and doing other things for him, so I just drew the line and stopped.

MF: Who was his first nurse?

MRS. ASHFORD: His sister, Elizabeth Morris.

MF: Was Mrs. Morris always his nurse?

MRS. ASHFORD: No. She was divorced at the time. When she married David Morris, she stopped then. She'd come back and fill in some, but after she got married she really didn't work that much.

MF: She evidently filled in a lot during the time mother worked for Uncle Oscar cause that's when mother got to know Mrs. Morris so well and they became good friends.

MRS. ASHFORD: She would fill in often between nurses just like I'd fill in between secretaries. You know, when you're looking for somebody else. But I don't think she ever worked steadily after that.

She may have. I've forgotten. Cause they got to where they had to

have two in there and that made a difference too.

MF: Caroline, the difference in doctor's salaries...

MRS. ASHFORD: Charges you mean?

MF: Um huh. I should say charges or fees instead of salary, cause you really didn't get a salary. What would an office visit have cost when Dr. Ashford first started out?

MRS. ASHFORD: Two dollars.

MF: Two dollars. And now it's what?

MRS. ASHFORD: Then it got to where if they had to do blood counts and extra things, it was three dollars.

MF: My gracious. You can't leave the doctor's office today for under seventy.

MRS. ASHFORD: I don't go to them, so I don't know.

MF: You stay nice and healthy. (laughter)

MRS. ASHFORD: No. I just don't go to doctors period.

MF: But you do stay nice and healthy. You really do. Besides if you need a doctor, your son's one.

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, I hope he can find one for me.

MF: You have three nice, nice children. Tell me about them.

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, you're nice, nice to say that.

MF: Well, they are. Cause your son operated on me and he was the most compassionate doctor.

MRS. ASHFORD: It's nice to hear it, but I think he wore it out since he retired so early.

MF: Oh no. He'll always be good and kind. He was so good.

MRS. ASHFORD: I didn't know he has operated on you.

MF: Um huh. He sure did. Bless his heart, he sure did. He took care of me. What's his full name?

MRS. ASHFORD: Charles Hall Ashford, Jr.

MF: And his specialty was...

MRS. ASHFORD: Thoracic and vascular surgery.

MF: And then your older daughter.

MRS. ASHFORD: Caroline Smith.

MF: Her full name.

MRS. ASHFORD: She's Caroline Winder Ashford Smith.

MF: And your younger daughter.

MRS. ASHFORD: Octavia Susan Ashford Roberts.

MF: Well, you do have nice children.

MRS. ASHFORD: I think so. I'm glad you agree with me.

MF: I do.

MRS. ASHFORD: I've been very satisfied.

MF: What was it like in New Bern being a doctor's wife socially? How did the town treat you?

MRS. ASHFORD: Very nicely.

MF: Doctors and ministers were sort of looked up to at that time?

MRS. ASHFORD: Very much so.

MF: As pillars of the society.

MRS. ASHFORD: I think times have changed though.

MF: Well, yeah. I agree with you.

MRS. ASHFORD: I remember reading years ago TIME magazine, they

rated bishops the most respected and doctors came next.

MF: How about that.

MRS. ASHFORD: And I hate to think how they'd rate them now.

MF: Much, much lower.

MRS. ASHFORD: All of them. And lawyers too. I don't know where lawyers came in that category, but they had really fallen. (laughter)

MF: (laughter) Yeah, some of them have.

MRS. ASHFORD: Fallen down. I mean the way people think about them.

MF: Uh huh. At the time that you were married I know, and you were growing up, your mother had colored help, and you probably did too. What was the relationship between blacks and whites at that time?

MRS. ASHFORD: Mine was always all right. I didn't know anything about any problems much. I reckon I was just fortunate. MF: Well, we were too.

MRS. ASHFORD: Of course by the time I was getting married, though, you couldn't even afford to have any help.

MF: Um huh. It was pretty bad.

MRS. ASHFORD: You could get help pretty good until Cherry Point came, then so many of them went to work down there where they could get better wages than we could give them.

MF: Yeah. And eventually they could get retirement.

MRS. ASHFORD: Yeah. Because by the time I had a third child, I had trouble getting help instead of being easier. I could get a nurse easier with the first one. Then when I really needed

them...(laughter)

MF: Now, was Charlie born at home or in the hospital?

MRS. ASHFORD: In the hospital.

MF: How long did you stay in the hospital when Charlie was born?

MRS. ASHFORD: Five days. Then stayed upstairs for a month.

MF: In the bed.

MRS. ASHFORD: No, not in the bed, but you weren't suppose to walk up and down steps.

MF: For a month. Did you have nurses with you?

MRS. ASHFORD: I didn't, but a lot of people did.

MF: Well, who looked after Charlie?

MRS. ASHFORD: I did. I was upstairs doing nothing. I might as well do it.

MF: I didn't know if you had a nurse for him or not. (laughter)

MRS. ASHFORD: A lot of people did have them. Felt like they had to. But I felt like I just couldn't sit up there and do nothing. At least you could take care of the baby and let somebody do the cooking in the kitchen.

MF: Yeah. I'd rather somebody cook. When Caroline was born, did you still stay in the hospital five days?

MRS. ASHFORD: I really wanted to stay longer. I think I stayed longer because I had one little young'un to go back to you know. It made a difference.

MF: (laughter) I know it. It certainly does.

MRS. ASHFORD: The first one's easier

MF: (laughter) It sure is. Then when you got home, did you have to stay upstairs a month?

MRS. ASHFORD: Uh huh.

MF: What about whey Tay was born?

MRS. ASHFORD: I stayed across the river in our summer cottage so I wouldn't have to stay upstairs. She was born in September, so I just extended the summer over there.

MF: That was nice.

MRS. ASHFORD: They had stopped doing that, a lot of them. But my husband still thought it was wise to go slowly.

MF: Well, now, you know, people have the babies and they get right up and they go home.

MRS. ASHFORD: Yeah. I remember when Pickett had Mathilde. Mathilde is how much younger than Tay? Two years I think. But she rode over to see me in Bridgeton and brought the baby. My grandmother happened to be over there. I thought she was gonna die. I don't think Mathilde was a week old. (laughter) She could not believe such a thing!

She just thought it was perfectly horrible, you know. She came along when you really did stay in bed ten days and then no steps for a month.

MF: And now we've learned that getting up and moving around is much better.

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, they won't even let you rest now. You don't get any rest. Which I do think you need some of that.

MF: I agree with you. I agree with you. But the young ones get right out and put the babies in these little pouches and put them



on their chest or their backs and they go.

MRS. ASHFORD: I remember seeing Michael Thompson. Do you remember them when they were here at the church?

MF: Uh huh.

MRS. ASHFORD: Came to a party with this little new thing hanging around his neck. I've never forgotten it. That was an education for me.

MF: Well, they say that that's bonding, the bonding process. When you and Dr. Ashford were married, before his death, what was social life like for ya'll.

MRS. ASHFORD: You're asking the wrong person cause we didn't have time for any social life.

MF: Okay. That's what I wanted to know.

MRS. ASHFORD: He loved his work and that came first. I was told that early on. That the wife didn't come first, the work came first.

MF: And then he was on call all the time.

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, they did have a call system at the hospital. Doctors took turns for the emergency room. But of course, if you wanted to take care of your own patients, you were on call really, but not for just everybody. They would take a night at a time. One doctor would be on call for the emergency room.

MF: I didn't know that. Did Dr. Ashford have to go out in the country?

MRS. ASHFORD: Oh, in the early days all the time. Delivered babies all over the county and went on house calls to see everybody.

MF: You know, I think it's real interesting that right there in that little block of Pollock Street was Dr. Ashford, and right next door, Uncle Charles, Dr. Duffy, and across the street Uncle Oscar.

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, the funniest thing is, Marea, when we were gonna get married, as I say, we had no money, I had nothing, not even an education for a job you know, and he had his education but found nobody could pay him for what he could do. He came up one night and said, "They're two houses I can possibly buy." Cause I didn't even have a car and the doctor has to have his car. One of them was the Brinson house on Broad Street. You remember where the J. A. Jones house that was later Kafer Hospital?

MF: Yeah.

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, the Brinson house had been right next to it. Nice, attractive private house. On Pollock Street, he says, "There's an old brick house there with an office next to it." Wanted to know which I'd be interested in. Well, here, I'm twenty-one years old, I don't know that much about it. I said, "Well, I like the one on Pollock Street better if we can get it." He said, "I think Broad Street would be a lot better for business." Of course, now let's see, Dr. Barker was on Broad Street and Dr. Wadsworth was on Broad Street and St. Luke's Hospital was on Broad Street. But anyway, he went along with me and we got the one on Pollock. I said, it wasn't five years before there were three of them right there. Really was. That was another medical street.

MF: It sure was.

MRS. ASHFORD: I don't know why he thought where your office was varied with what your business that you did. (laughter)

MF: Well, I just thought it was interesting that the three of the doctors were right here.

MRS. ASHFORD: Uh huh. It wasn't one when we went there.

MF: It's amazing. As close as you were to St. Luke's, did he drive his car over there?

MRS. ASHFORD: Oh yeah. Well, he always had to go on call, you see. Once in a while he loaned me the car, but he always needed it every time I ever borrowed it for anything. But it was all right.

See, I could walk downtown to Gaskins, the bank, to church, the grocery store, the ten cent store. Everything we needed was only three blocks away from me.

MF: That's right. And they delivered groceries in those days didn't they?

MRS. ASHFORD: Oh yeah.

MF: I remember mother ordering on the telephone and they'd deliver. And daddy paid the grocery bill once a month.

MRS. ASHFORD: That's right.

MF: Sure did.

MRS. ASHFORD: And you didn't buy as much.

MF: No. She bought exactly what she needed.

MRS. ASHFORD: Pickett and I would go down to Gaskins. We'd go pay our building loan. She had to pay building loan just like I did. We put the two Charles' in strollers and would walk down and pay the

bank, go socialize in Gaskins for a few minutes, go to the A&P and buy groceries, and walk home. And it was friendly.

MF: It was nice. And whenever you walked downtown you knew everybody.

MRS. ASHFORD: Oh, you get in Gaskins and see all your friends. It's like a little morning get together. So it was nice.

MF: Yes, you're so right. Very nice. It sure was. Were there any other stores downtown that you remember that stood out in your mind that you enjoyed?

MRS. ASHFORD: I never was much of a shopper. Everything up and down that block of Middle Street; Lipman's, Coplon's, the Vogue, Smart Shop.

MF: I'd forgotten about the Vogue.

MRS. ASHFORD: Belk's. I'm trying to think when Belk's came. It was later on in life. It was here when I was married. Montgomery Wards was down there.

MF: I remember that.

MRS. ASHFORD: Kress store. I loved that.

MF: I loved Kress's. I just loved it!

MRS. ASHFORD: Yeah. I wish we had a store like that again.

MF: I just loved Kress's.

MRS. ASHFORD: Kress, and the A&P was right there across from the Parish house.

MF: Sure was.

MRS. ASHFORD: Kafer's Bakery, I'm sorry, had moved to Broad Street

by then.

MF: Yes, and you know I don't know why. When daddy was alive and I could have asked him all these questions.

MRS. ASHFORD: I know. You wonder.

MF: And I don't know why they moved.

MRS. ASHFORD: But they were around on Broad. There was a meat market around on Broad. So we weren't far from anything.

MF: Yeah. And the shoe repair shop was right near the church.

MRS. ASHFORD: Right. Barber shop used to be there and one at the Elk's building.

MF: And there was a meat market too near the shoe repair. Everhart's Meat Market near the shoe repair place, Mr. Hobby's shoe place. Or as I remember the shoe place, it was Mr. Hobby.

MRS. ASHFORD: Then when I was real small, they had a Chinese laundry there on that street.

MF: I've heard daddy talk about that.

MRS. ASHFORD: They did all the men's shirts.

MF: What about movies? Did you get to go to the movies very often?

MRS. ASHFORD: Not much. My mother didn't approve of them. Wouldn't she die over television now if she didn't approve of movies?

MF: She sure would. (laughter)

MRS. ASHFORD: We'd go some. Teenage and that years, before you were strapped down with a family, were the best movies. That's when they had lots of the good musical comedies. To me, that was really

the time of the movies. Greta Garbo and all those old actresses.

MF: Oh, she was beautiful. Just beautiful.

MRS. ASHFORD: I just loved the movies then.

MF: If you and Dr. Ashford were able to go to the movies, and he was needed for an emergency, did they have a paging system in the movie to get him out do you know?

MRS. ASHFORD: Somehow he always got called. I don't know how.

MF: But they knew where he was.

MRS. ASHFORD: I remember we were there one night in the summer when we were across the river. He got called and he got me in the car quick to take me home cause I had a babysitter over there with the children. A patrolman picked him up. This is how fast he was driving. He followed us right into the drive-way over there. Charlie just got out and he said, "I'm sorry, but I've got to get to the hospital. You can follow me up there and then I can talk to you if you want to."

MF: (laughter) Oh, I love that.

MRS. ASHFORD: Dumped me quick. He never got out of the car. The patrolman was very nice about it. I reckon they worked it all right. (laughter) So, somehow they'd get to him. I supposed they'd call. Everything was informal and most people knew who you were in that day you know.

MF: And they knew exactly where you were going to be. They certainly did. Let me ask you for your activities. I know you were very involved with the library. When was the Library Association

founded?

MRS. ASHFORD: Dates were always a problem with me through school. April 1912.

MF: And the first place was on Pollock Street.

MRS. ASHFORD: No. This one was on Middle. Sultan property. That's where that house next to the Christian Science church was.

MF: Oh, okay.

MRS. ASHFORD: I don't think that was the real library association that we read about on Pollock Street.

MF: But you remember the library...

MRS. ASHFORD: Next to the Christian Science church.

MF: For some reason I had it in my mind that the library was in the Christian Science reading room. Was it at one time?

MRS. ASHFORD: They bought it for a reading room.

MF: Oh, I see. I see.

MRS. ASHFORD: After the library moved to the John Wright Stanly House.

MF: I see. Oh, okay.

MRS. ASHFORD: Then it became the reading room for the Christian Science church.

MF: Do you remember the first librarian?

MRS. ASHFORD: The first one I knew anything about was Miss Fannie Howerton.

MF: What can you tell me about her?

MRS. ASHFORD: She was a third grade school teacher, but she

didn't' teach me. I had Miss Ruth Berry. She was a nice person. I didn't go to the library very much. You know, I was out in the country.

I'd go there with other people. She was very strict with what books she would let you read. We had, what do you call it, censorship with Miss Fannie. Miss Fannie was our censor. (laughter) Cause I remember somebody saying they wanted to get a Bobbsey Twin book. Did you ever hear of those?

MF: I sure did. I read those books.

MRS. ASHFORD: She had those in the drawer you weren't suppose to read. (laughter)

MF: Well, I don't know what was wrong with them. (laughter)

MRS. ASHFORD: I don't either. But that used to be the joke, that she wouldn't let them read Bobbsey Twin. I don't know.

MF: She must have been a character. But she was protecting the morals of the young people of town.

MRS. ASHFORD: It would be nice if we had a little more of it now.

MF: Yes it would. A lot more of it. (laughter)

MRS. ASHFORD: That's right.

MF: Well, after Miss Fannie was librarian, do you remember the next one? Or was she librarian when they moved from Middle Street around on to...

MRS. ASHFORD: I don't think so. I wasn't connected with the library then.

MF: When you became connected with the library association, where



was the library?

MRS. ASHFORD: At John Wright Stanly House on New Street.

MF: And this association was comprised of ladies.

MRS. ASHFORD: Yes.

MF: And you all administered...

MRS. ASHFORD: Took care of the house and library. I read something Francis King gave me of someone's memories of town. He said they rented rooms up there, they rented apartments not rooms, and they had a house in the back, and that helped pay for library. They had two apartments upstairs and a house in the back.

MF: That's the way I remember it.

MRS. ASHFORD: We were sort of land owners you know. Our business mostly was discussing whether to paint this or repair that instead of take care of the library.

MF: Did the city charge you taxes? Were ya'll on the tax rolls?

MRS. ASHFORD: I wouldn't think so, but I really don't know.

MF: How did you raise money other than through the apartments?

MRS. ASHFORD: Donations or fines from the books. That's it.

I don't remember when they got the city and the county into helping them. Seemed to me by the time I got on the board, they were having some of that. Then after Elinor Hawkins came, we were always going down begging for money from them so we could enlarge and expand the services.

MF: Elinor came in the late fifties, didn't she?

MRS. ASHFORD: I think so.

MF: Before Elinor was the librarian, there were several others. I've got some questions here I want to ask you.

MRS. ASHFORD: I don't know about those others though.

MF: You may when I ask you these questions. These are some questions concerning the library. School children used the library. I know I did in high school. Do the schools pay the library association a fee for letting the students use it?

MRS. ASHFORD: I don't think so.

MF: We know that the second floor you had two apartments cause you just told me that. Do you remember anything about the WPA helping ya'll with book menders?

MRS. ASHFORD: I think they did, but I wasn't too familiar with it. But they did a lot of things around town like that, you know, putting people to work.

MF: What about the library for black people that was on West Street?

MRS. ASHFORD: I don't know who ran that. After Elinor came, it seemed to me they got more into that, but I didn't know a thing about it.

MF: It was a separate fund. It really was. And as I understand it, the WPA built a building for the black library on West Street. But we haven't been able to find out a lot of information about that. We know that Frances Jones Howerton was librarian, and then there was a Margaret Chapman. Did you remember her?

MRS. ASHFORD: Margaret Chapman used to be a neighbor when I was

a little child, but I didn't know she was ever librarian. They must have been my busy days with young children.

MF: They must have been. She was appointed the first of March in 1940 as librarian.

MRS. ASHFORD: Isn't that funny. I don't know whether it's the same Margaret Chapman or not. Her family used to live right up on Middle Street just before it ran into Craven.

MF: It might have been. Then, evidently, Miss Rosamund Meadows and Miss Lula Broadstreet worked at the library.

MRS. ASHFORD: They probably did, but I think they were probably WPA helpers. I don't believe they were librarians.

MF: You're right, they weren't. Then Betty Flowers came.

MRS. ASHFORD: Was she the principal's wife?

MF: Um huh. She was the librarian in the high school when I graduated.

MRS. ASHFORD: Um huh. I remember Mr. Flowers down at Central School when Tay was in one of those younger grades.

MF: And then after her, Elinor came.

MRS. ASHFORD: Uh huh. That's when we got going. Gosh, she did a good job for New Bern.

MF: How long was the library association in existence?

MRS. ASHFORD: I think they always had some women doing it. Mrs. Blades, way back, was in charge of it. I think it must have been self-propitiating. When one of them got off, they must have voted on somebody else to join. I don't know how many years that's been

going. Ever since they started the library I think.

MF: Do you remember when the city really took over funding the library so you ladies didn't have to do it?

MRS. ASHFORD: I was just gonna try and see if I could see anything here. Wait a minute, this is 1935, this is when it's still in the John Wright, "During the library's thirty years at this location (that's on New Street) the development of the Craven/Pamlico/Carteret.

It's also during this time that Craven County first began to give annual funding to the library. That's 1935. Well, while it was in the John Wright Stanly House. "The New Bern colored library was started with help from federal Depression work." I know they've got all this anyway cause this has been available to everybody.

MF: Yeah, that information would be in the library. I was just interested in what you could remember.

MRS. ASHFORD: I know. I remember very little for you.

MF: Well, Caroline, did you ever hear of the Mary Hendren Vance Memorial Fund for book purchase? Hilda could give me a little bit. Hilda said there was a bookshelf that had a brass plate on it. Evidently they were books about the Confederacy or UDC and she thought the money from this fund bought books for that shelf.

MRS. ASHFORD: May have been. I just do remember Miss May Vance, but I have never heard of this when Caroline asked me about it. I didn't know a thing about it.

MF: Well, not many people have and there's just not much information about it. Sara Meadows remembers this lady.

MRS. ASHFORD: Oh very well. I told Caroline, ya'll go ask Sara Meadows if she knows anything about it.

MF: Yeah. She remembers her.

MRS. ASHFORD: She was a friend of Sara's, and I think she got Sara going to Duke.

MF: She did, and Sara would come home with her on the weekend. She could give me some information, but not a whole lot. Well, when you were on the library association and ya'll purchased new books, did ya have a committee?

MRS. ASHFORD: They had a committee. I wasn't on the book committee. You had different things. Some of them took care of the properties, some of them were on the book committee. I didn't have enough reading time to be bothered with that.

MF: But, your maybe particular field was taking care of...

MRS. ASHFORD: I've forgotten what it was, but it wasn't selecting books. I know that.

MF: Well, it was a wonderful thing. Absolutely wonderful.

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, I was glad to be associated with it, but I felt very incapable because, really, I had no reading time then.

MF: Yeah, but you could take care of the building. And without the apartments producing the income...

MRS. ASHFORD: Yeah, they would have had a struggle for a while.

MF: They certainly would have.

MRS. ASHFORD: We probably saved that house, you know, really.

MF: Yes. It would have been torn down. What about when the

library was building the new location on Johnson Street and you sold the Stanly House? Or did you give the Stanly House to the Tryon Palace commission?

MRS. ASHFORD: I think they gave it to them.

MF: I think they did.

MRS. ASHFORD: I remember going once. The commission was meeting in town and I was to go down. Oh, the gentleman, I thought I'd never forget his name.

MF: Mr. Kellenberger?

MRS. ASHFORD: Uh uh. It was some man to see if they would take it, if the Tryon Palace commission would take the house, and he declined it then very strongly.

MF: Was that Mr. Douglas?

MRS. ASHFORD: No. I tell you, these names come to me in the middle of the night. I don't know. He was one of the early commission members or something. I remember going down there at night to the hotel down there and he wasn't interested a bit in taking it then, but they were interested later on when they got it.

MF: It would be interesting to know why he first turned you down.

MRS. ASHFORD: Probably money had something to do with.

MF: Tryon Palace commission wasn't interested in the Stanly House then. They finally bought it. It enhanced the historic complex. Were you ever interested in being a guide at Tryon Palace, or a hostess? They used to be called a hostesses when they first opened.

MRS. ASHFORD: Not really. But living next to it and watching

it grow from the time they put the first spade in the ground, I was very interested. I didn't have the time to be a guide, but Miss Gertrude gave classes for a couple of years and she said you could come. You didn't have to promise to be a guide. So I went to her classes and enjoyed getting the history.

MF: Where did she have these classes?

MRS. ASHFORD: I was trying to think if there was a room in the Stevenson house.

MF: Yeah. It's right next to Dr. Duffy's house. Dixon Stevenson house?

MRS. ASHFORD: I believe they had already bought that. I believe she had the classes right in there. I enjoyed it thoroughly. Because then when the curator came, we heard about all the purchases.

MF: The curator was Mr...

MRS. ASHFORD: Norman Wilcox. Then we had the opportunity to go in the Palace when they brought all these things from England. So it really was quite an education for me cause I was not educated on such things as that.

MF: And Miss Gertrude taught these classes?

MRS. ASHFORD: Uh huh.

MF: These were weekly classes?

MRS. ASHFORD: Uh huh. For two years I think it was. It seemed like two years. I couldn't believe it when guides would come in now and I heard they were just giving them a little book to read or something.

MF: That's about it. That's about it.

MRS. ASHFORD: But they were really well educated to it. And those first guides were really interested.

MF: Yes they were. I remember that.

MRS. ASHFORD: One of our newcomers to town got into it, and I never saw anybody enjoy anything as much. She read everything that she could find out.

MF: Well, it's very interesting. It's a nice place to work. But they don't get the training today that they got when you were there.

MRS. ASHFORD: That's right. They were really getting the training then.

MF: They got in-depth training. With the Palace being so close to your home, how did you feel about Tryon Palace being restored?

MRS. ASHFORD: I thought it was wonderful. I really did.

MF: Good.

MRS. ASHFORD: Then I got to where I wished they had bought my house so I wouldn't have to take care of the yard. Like they used to do at Williamsburg you know?

MF: Yeah.

MRS. ASHFORD: Let you live in it for your lifetime.

MF: You're right.

MRS. ASHFORD: But if they couldn't get Charles Duffy's, so then they didn't want us.

MF: No. He wouldn't sell.



MRS. ASHFORD: I know Kellenberger tried to get him once.

MF: Yeah, and he wouldn't sell. He still won't, and it's a shame. It really is.

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, they probably got all they can manage now, don't you think, to take care of?

MF: Um huh. I would imagine so with the New Bern Academy. Cause they do have that. But Tryon Palace I think has been an asset to New Bern. But there was opposition to the Palace being restored.

MRS. ASHFORD: Oh yes. I've heard somebody say why don't they build a swimming pool or sewage disposable places.

MF: But it benefits somebody.

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, I think a lot of people did not realize that it was a gift to us, that it hadn't cost New Bern a dime.

MF: That's right. The state paid for the land.

MRS. ASHFORD: That's right.

MF: And that's all. The rest was private money. But I think it's a great attraction.

MRS. ASHFORD: It really is.

MF: I'm very proud of it.

MRS. ASHFORD: You couldn't get anything that would mean more for the town for a little town like this.

MF: No. Well, Caroline, how has New Bern changed over the years for you?

MRS. ASHFORD: For me? It's too big.

MF: Too big. I agree with you.

MRS. ASHFORD: Too much traffic. Even where I live, I've got to go five miles.

MF: You can't walk anymore.

MRS. ASHFORD: No. It's awful. I think a lot of the growth has been great and we've got an awful lot of nice people here, but I think it can go too far.

MF: I agree with you.

MRS. ASHFORD: And, of course, I was too old at the time. I can't remember names that well you know. If I'd been younger, I think I'd have been more interested in it growing.

MF: Well, I'm interested in it growing, but yet I don't want it to grow so much that it loses it's charm, and that's what I'm afraid is going to happen.

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, it's already done that. Some of the people that moved in fifteen years ago don't like what's happening now at all.

MF: I know, and I think that's really interesting and funny.

MRS. ASHFORD: One of them told me, said, "No, I don't like it. What I came here for has gone."

MF: It's a shame. But we do have, thanks to this program and thanks to you and all our other participants, these wonderful memories of New Bern of the way it used to be with the trees. I almost forgot to ask you. When you were little, were all the streets paved?

MRS. ASHFORD: No. Some of them were oyster shell streets. When we moved down the river, it was paved for about two miles and then

we went on a dirt road.

MF: Did you really?

MRS. ASHFORD: Right. But Mr. Grantham was interested out there and he was sort of a go getter. He put in the lights going down that way. What worries me is they call that road the Old Cherry Point Road. It ought to be the Old Morehead City Road.

MF: You're right, it should be. Exactly where, or maybe not exactly where, but what general location was your home?

MRS. ASHFORD: Do you know where Pattswood is, a place called Pattswood now?

MF: I don't know if I do or not. Who lived there?

MRS. ASHFORD: I don't know cause it's all grown up. You know, there's houses all over the place.

MF: I know. Now, I remember where Mr. Hagood's farm was.

MRS. ASHFORD: John Patterson's mother and father, when he retired from the Navy, bought our old place. I think somebody else had had it, and they were the ones I think when it got the name Pattswood.

MF: Okay. Now I know.

MRS. ASHFORD: But there are houses all in and out.

MF: Well, I know where the Seiferts lived.

MRS. ASHFORD: Yeah, we were further down the road than the Seiferts.

MF: Were you as far down as Mr. Hagood's farm?

MRS. ASHFORD: We were on the other side of Mr. Hagood's. When we bought that, there was a dairy on each side of us. You're too young

to remember Mr. Patten. He had a dairy on the New Bern side and Pember-Smith dairy was on the other side of us. We were between dairies.

Mr. Hagood bought the Patten place.

MF: Oh, I see. Okay. And you were on the other side. Well, that gives me an idea.

MRS. ASHFORD: It was about five miles by the road I think.

MF: Well, you sure were in the country.

MRS. ASHFORD: I mean in that day we were. Nobody else was. A few years later, Helen Cannon's father bought a place down that road.

MF: I remember their house.

MRS. ASHFORD: They were closer to New Bern than we were a little bit.

MF: Um huh. But you were on the water. The Cannon's weren't.

MRS. ASHFORD: Uh huh. On the other side of the highway. He had a big farm there I think.

MF: I remember going to their house as a youngster. Did you have horses? Did you ride horseback?

MRS. ASHFORD: My brother did. I didn't. I never even had a bicycle. Isn't that something!

MF: Oh! Yes!

MRS. ASHFORD: I realize it now. We were out in the country and we didn't have anywhere to ride a bicycle. But my brothers each had a horse. I remember the Christmas they got a pony. They were tied up out in the yard, you know, with notes to go look. I wasn't interested in riding though. I think I was scared of them or something.

MF: What a perfect place to grow up, except no playmates.

MRS. ASHFORD: That's right. You could have them, but poor mother. They all had to come out and spend the night with you, you know, which made more trouble for her. But that's the only way you ever had anybody.

MF: What were Christmas' like?

MRS. ASHFORD: House, family.

MF: Full.

MRS. ASHFORD: See, I had a lot of family in town. My grandmother lived until '55. My mother, two aunts, my two uncles on her side were in Wilmington, close enough to come, so Christmas was a big family gathering really.

MF: Did you have a big Christmas tree?

MRS. ASHFORD: Not particularly. My mother wasn't in for them. She was not an occasionist really. We'd go out in the woods and cut whatever we could down. (laughter)

MF: Was the house decorated?

MRS. ASHFORD: Not much.

MF: But you used the natural things; holly and pine, whatever you could get.

MRS. ASHFORD: Uh huh. She was not, and she couldn't. She always would be a frantic wreck by Christmas Eve. (laughter)

MF: Well, let me ask you, did Santa Clause come visit ya'll or did you get your gifts in a stocking or were there presents?

MRS. ASHFORD: No. Under the tree. We always had a stocking too, but that was on the bed so you didn't get up so early in the morning.

MF: Oh, that was to keep you quiet so the adults could sleep a little longer.

MRS. ASHFORD: And I used the same system. I like it.

MF: I think it's a wonderful idea. I'd never thought about that.

MRS. ASHFORD: We used to say you cannot get up before such and such an hour and try to have something there that would entertain them in the stocking so they'd be happy.

MF: Yeah. I remember in our stocking we always had oranges. An orange, a tangerine, and we'd have nuts and a couple of little dime store toys. I now know they were dime store toys.

MRS. ASHFORD: We used to have firecrackers, sparklers, things like that, and fruit. But just something to keep you a little bit happy if you could until a reasonable hour.

MF: Daddy would always take us out in the afternoon and have sparklers. We weren't allowed to touch them, but he would. Well, just about everybody on Rhem Avenue had sparklers.

MRS. ASHFORD: I had a Roman candle there one year that went off in my face. It was defective. So I didn't care about them anymore after that.

MF: No, I wouldn't either.

MRS. ASHFORD: Christmas was very simple, but nice gathering and a happy time.

MF: Nice family time. Now tell me about this house we're in. This was not always here.

MRS. ASHFORD: It was on Pollock Street. You know where the

Foodland used to be on Pollock Street?

MF: Yeah.

MRS. ASHFORD: It was across the street from there.

MF: Oh, okay.

MRS. ASHFORD: Mrs. O'Hara...

MF: Um huh. Her husband was the black lawyer.

MRS. ASHFORD: Um huh. They had just let the house go. She was building a new concrete block house and was gonna tear this down. Mr. John Taylor kept twisting my husband's arm to save the house until he did.

MF: And you moved it to this location.

MRS. ASHFORD: It was a wreck.

MF: And it is so pretty.

MRS. ASHFORD: It's a pretty spot.

MF: It's beautiful. And your house is built up.

MRS. ASHFORD: Try to avoid hurricanes.

MF: Have you had any flooding right here?

MRS. ASHFORD: Oh, I get water in the yard a lot of times.

MF: But not in your house.

MRS. ASHFORD: In the basement.

MF: Do you? But you're up pretty high.

MRS. ASHFORD: I think we could avoid most hurricanes, but something like Ione in '55 might really get us.

MF: Well, that came at high tide time.

MRS. ASHFORD: And we'd had two others already.

MF: Uh huh. But this is just one beautiful spot where you can look down the Neuse River and then across to Bridgeton.

MRS. ASHFORD: But if anybody had seen the view before that bridge was built. My husband came and took a picture of it once before they built the thing. It was an absolutely beautiful spot before that.

MF: Who's in this house next to you?

MRS. ASHFORD: It's my house but I rent it to Betsy and Frank Dunn.

MF: And the house next to you, which is right on East Front Street, that house is called "Gull Harbor."

MRS. ASHFORD: Uh huh.

MF: Does this house we're in now have a name?

MRS. ASHFORD: No. I haven't named it anything.

MF: Oh, you haven't?

MRS. ASHFORD: Uh uh. It was called the Oliver house up on Pollock Street. I started to say Charlotte Williams. Charlotte put a knocker on the door that said Oliver House I think, but I took the door down and put the glass one up. But she had put Oliver House on there I think.

MF: Which Oliver owned the house? Do you happen to know Caroline?

MRS. ASHFORD: No. We've had the house searched and we can't find any statistics on how old it is or anything. Elizabeth Moore tried to help us. My father said his grandmother used to lived in this house. But the interesting thing to me is that he called it "going to grandmother's farm." But all those old houses up Pollock Street,



unless they ran all the way to the river, a little child would think it was a farm. You know, the big yard.

MF: I bet they did run to the river.

MRS. ASHFORD: But he had told me once with this house, of course I didn't pay much attention because I never dreamed it would belong to me, it was just sitting up there on Pollock Street, he said that was his grandmother's farm, they would go up there. I do know Oliver is in his family somewhere, but I don't know the particulars there.

MF: That's really interesting. I bet the property did go to the river.

MRS. ASHFORD: It might have because a child would think it was tremendous you know, if it went from Pollock Street down.

MF: Sure.

MRS. ASHFORD: But there were enough houses you wouldn't think it was in the country. Cause you look at all of Pollock Street down there, they're old houses.

MF: They're old houses, you're right.

MRS. ASHFORD: So I don't understand, unless, as I say, it was a big piece of property. Maybe they had gardens and orchards or something.

MF: They may have. And it's not that far from the Trent River.

MRS. ASHFORD: That's right. But a long block is all.

MF: Well, isn't it interesting that it was in your family and now back in your family.

MRS. ASHFORD: Someday I may try to see if we can find out what

Oliver it was.

MF: Well, I think that's interesting. Well, Mrs. Ashford, is there anything else you would like to tell us for our Memories program?

MRS. ASHFORD: I wish I had something interesting to tell you.

MF: You've told me lots of interesting things. I've enjoyed every minute of it.

MRS. ASHFORD: No, but I didn't tell you anything you didn't already know.

MF: Yeah, you have too. I didn't know about this house and I didn't know about you living down on the farm. I didn't know that part was settled over there on the Neuse River.

MRS. ASHFORD: It wasn't much. There weren't many people, but it began growing. Of course some of mother's friends thought she was purely crazy.

MF: But she enjoyed living over there.

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, I used to wonder why they didn't live out on Trent River. They said the mosquitoes would kill you. Everybody thought it was beautiful, but you couldn't go there to live.

MF: Were you not bothered with mosquitoes on the Neuse River?

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, we were higher down there. It's not marshy. You know, a lot of Trent River here is low and marshy.

MF: But it is higher there.

MRS. ASHFORD: After the Marines came and could spray the place, then it began to get better around here. But I just always thought Trent River was beautiful too.

MF: Both of them are pretty. Before we end, did you have window screens?

MRS. ASHFORD: When I was a child? Oh yeah. I don't know when they came in, but I've always had them. Cause once when I went to Europe and we didn't have any screens, I didn't like it very much. We felt funny. I felt like birds were gonna fly in.

MF: I wouldn't like that at all.

MRS. ASHFORD: It just made me feel very strange, so I realized I've always had screens.

MF: In colonial times they had an extremely fine mesh for a screen, but they were terribly expensive and so not many people had them. Plus, you couldn't get much air through them.

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, I remember mosquito netting around beds.

MF: Yeah. Did you have mosquito netting on your beds?

MRS. ASHFORD: No, but I knew somebody that had one. I remember seeing it and using it.

MF: Did ya'll have feather beds?

MRS. ASHFORD: I didn't, but my friend had one. I loved to spend the night with her in the winter!

MF: You'd get right in the middle of that feather bed.

MRS. ASHFORD: Oh, they felt so good in the winter time.

MF: Oh yeah, they sure did. Is there anything you think we have missed? I've enjoyed this. It's been wonderful.

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, I've enjoyed talking to you.

MF: Well, you've told me so many things.

MRS. ASHFORD: I don't know of anything.

MF: Well, for me, this has really been a great pleasure and I do thank you for letting me come talk with you and visit in your lovely home.

MRS. ASHFORD: Well, I'm glad for you to be visiting. But I want you sometime when you're...

MF: When I'm not working for Memories of New Bern.

MRS. ASHFORD: You're good to do this, really. I think you all are remarkably good to do it.

MF: It's a wonderful program. It really is and I hope people will benefit from it. They'll be interested to know that in the early 1900's the streets weren't paved.

MRS. ASHFORD: Oh no. Those old brick streets and then the shell. But oyster shells were awfully good streets. They were nice.

MF: Yeah. It will be nice for young people to realize that people didn't always have television. They didn't always have a radio or cars.

MRS. ASHFORD: You made your own entertainment.

MF: Exactly. It would be hard for them to realize it.

MRS. ASHFORD: I don't think children are as happy now because, you might say they have bought entertainment so to speak.

MF: They do. They don't use their imagination. They have to be entertained. They can't entertain themselves.

MRS. ASHFORD: And they're bored very easily.

MF: Uh huh. They sure are. Well, Mrs. Ashford, on behalf of

Memories of New Bern, thank you very much for this delightful interview.

I've loved every minute of it.

MRS. ASHFORD: Thank you. You're very kind.

MF: One other thing. I forgot to ask you about fires in New Bern and the fire trucks.

MRS. ASHFORD: When I was little, they were horse drawn. The firehouse was down at the foot of Craven Street. They would come flying up Craven Street and have to swing around the corner to north Craven, and we just adored it and we ran out. We had our favorite, we were always racing the Buttons or the Atlantics.

MF: Right.

MRS. ASHFORD: Half of us in our house were Buttons and half of us Atlantics. (laughter) It was just the fun of the day, hear them coming and run out there and watch those trucks swing around that corner from Craven to North Craven, because they had a lot of fires at the lumber mills up there.

MF: And they had a terrible fire in 1922.

MRS. ASHFORD: 1922, which burned right to Craven Street.

MF: Where were you living in 1922?

MRS. ASHFORD: I was living in the country and I didn't get in to see the fire until late that afternoon. I was deprived. I saw all the smoke going down the river and heard all the whistles but...

MF: Didn't see the fire. What was it like when you did see it that afternoon?

MRS. ASHFORD: A Sinclair oil dealer was right on the other side

of Queen Street. My grandmother was living this side of Queen in the Hughes Apartments. They were squirting water on her house, squirting water on all those oil tanks. They had about contained the fire but they were still doing that for sparks because it had burned practically all the way to there. They saved the depot. It did not get that. But that was about all I saw.

MF: And you had a comment that I just absolutely love about when your father told you about the fire.

MRS. ASHFORD: Oh, they were putting dynamite under these houses to blow them up to save the school, and I couldn't understand why anybody would want to save schools. My idea of a delight would be to hear the school would burn down and we didn't have to go. (laughter) He said, "You're not a taxpayer. You don't know what you're talking about." So, that's when I quickly learned what a taxpayer was. But that was an interesting time and a scary time too.

MF: Yeah. People rallied together at that time, didn't they, to help one another?

MRS. ASHFORD: Anytime anybody wants to complain about the Red Cross, I can remember that fire, and I thought they did an awful lot for the people. So I've been a backer of the Red Cross always.

MF: The Red Cross did, the townspeople did.

MRS. ASHFORD: And other towns came to help.

MF: They certainly did. They really did. And I hope we never have another catastrophe like that.

MRS. ASHFORD: It's just wrong place at the wrong time. The wind

with the firemen gone, the whole combination.

MF: That's right. But it did bring the town together.

MRS. ASHFORD: It certainly did.

MF: And it's nice to know that people in times of need pitch in and help.

MRS. ASHFORD: I think they do.

MF: I think they always do.

MRS. ASHFORD: We can fuss a lot, but when the chips are down, we take care of it.

MF: We sure do. Well, thank you Mrs. Ashford. I appreciate it.

MRS. ASHFORD: You're getting mighty formal with me.

END OF INTERVIEW