

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

JANET JOSEPHINE LATHAM

INTERVIEW 1030

This is Dr. Joseph Patterson representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 1000. I am interviewing Janet Latham at her home at 1301 National Avenue in New Bern. The number of the interview is 1030. The date is January 7, 1993.

Dr. Patterson: Janet, I want to tell you I'm very happy to be here talking to you. I appreciate you letting me come and the Memories program appreciates it too and I am looking forward to our chat. Let me start out by asking you just some questions about yourself. What is your full name?

Janet Latham: Janet Josephine Latham.

Dr. Patterson: Where were you born and when?

Janet Latham: I was born June 2, 1926 in New Bern at St. Luke's Hospital. I came home to 39 1/2 National Avenue to a sister and a brother and my parents, who were Dr. and Mrs. Joseph R. Latham.

Dr. Patterson: What are your siblings names?

Janet Latham: Mary Alice Latham.

Dr. Patterson: She is older than you?

Janet Latham: Mary Alice is four years older than I. Then Frederick Morey Latham was born and he is two years older than I. Then I was born in '26. Mom and Dad thought that was going to be all there were, but about six years later we were followed by another little fellow and that was my younger brother Joe Latham.

Dr. Patterson: Joe lives in Wilmington now.

Janet Latham: Yes. And he was named after my father, Joseph Roscoe Latham, Jr.

Dr. Patterson: Where's your sister?

Janet Latham: Mary Alice lives in Oxon Hill, Maryland with her family. She's Mrs. Eugene Hall Kent now.

Dr. Patterson: Janet, your father was Dr. Joseph Latham and he was a general practitioner in New Bern?

Janet Latham: That's right.

Dr. Patterson: Where was he from?

Janet Latham: Daddy was born in Belhaven, North Carolina, which is in Beaufort County.

Dr. Patterson: How about your mother?

Janet Latham: My Mom is named Marjorie Morey Latham. She was born in Racine, Wisconsin. Both of them were born in 1895.

Dr. Patterson: And your mother is sitting right across the room from us listening to this and she's just fine.

Janet Latham: She's ninety-seven and a half years old now.

Dr. Patterson: And just as pretty as she can be. So I'm delighted to be here with both of you.

Janet Latham: It's a joy for us too.

Dr. Patterson: You grew up right out here on National Avenue?

Janet Latham: I certainly did.

Dr. Patterson: How long did you live in this first house you were telling me about?

Janet Latham: I came home from the hospital to 39 1/2 National Avenue. The house that we're living in now was started a year later, and when I was two and a half we moved into this house.

Dr. Patterson: And the address of this house is?

Janet Latham: At that time it was 45 National Avenue. When National Avenue was renumbered, it became 1301 National Avenue.

Dr. Patterson: And this is where you grew up?

Janet Latham: This is where I grew up.

Dr. Patterson: What was it like being a youngster out here in this neighborhood? What was the neighborhood like when you were coming along?

Janet Latham: I was thinking about that this morning. One of the things that I think has most changed Riverside is the street. When I was a little girl, the street was about one and a half car widths wide.

Dr. Patterson: That's National Avenue.

Janet Latham: National Avenue. I guess there are those who remember when it wasn't paved at all. But it was paved very well, in fact, better than some of the other streets in New Bern because it was maintained by the national government. It was called National Avenue because it led straight to the National Cemetery and then it stopped. It was paved beyond that, but this particular portion was maintained by the federal government.

Dr. Patterson: I didn't know that, and it all makes good sense.

Janet Latham: But I have lived here long enough to see that street widened so that it was two car widths wide, and then to have them pave the gutters, and then finally to put in curbing.

Dr. Patterson: Well, that's real progress. What happened at

the National Cemetery level, the old Oaks Road? Was that just a dirt road?

Janet Latham: No. It was about a width and a half car width of brick road. If I'm not mistaken, it was brick from about the National Cemetery all the way out to the end of Oaks Road through Glenburnie then made that left and went out to what was then US 55 where the Berne Restaurant is now. We called it the Belt Road then.

Dr. Patterson: It wasn't Glenburnie then?

Janet Latham: No. The section was Glenburnie but it didn't have a name of Glenburnie on the road.

Dr. Patterson: Were there a lot of houses out here when you grew up?

Janet Latham: Yes there were. There were still some vacant lots. The one across the street from us that you see, it's the end of C Street, you can see it looking straight out that window, was built within my memory. I used to go over to that house while they were building it. Mrs. R. L. Pugh's father, Mr. Davis, built that house. I used to go over there while it was being built as a little girl and ask them if I could use the wood shavings and I'd pin them in my hair like curls. So I remember that. We have pictures that show some vacancies; like, the Turnbull house was built after my mother and father were out here in Riverside. That was built late, probably in my lifetime, but not within my memory. Probably when I was a very small child, or it could have been built even before I was born, maybe a year or two.

Dr. Patterson: Now, that's the house up here on the corner to our left.

Janet Latham: That's right. At the Southeast corner of Avenue C and National Avenue.

Dr. Patterson: That's where Bob Turnbull lived.

Janet Latham: Bob Turnbull's father, Mr. Albert Turnbull, built that house.

Dr. Patterson: Now is that the house that Dale Millns later owned?

Janet Latham: It is. He bought it from the Turnbells.

Dr. Patterson: Who were some of your chums out here when you were a little girl?

Janet Latham: I was thinking about that this morning too. I was one of the youngest out here in Riverside at that time. There were a lot of families about the same age as Mom and Dad. They were young families, and so there were many, many children. Some of my own close friends were Elizabeth Aberly (Betty Aberly), who was the daughter of Hazel and John Aberly. Then up at the other end of our block, Mr. and Mrs. J. O. Grey lived and had six children and Jean Grey was my close friend. So, Betty and Jean and I grew up as kind of a little trio. They were a year and a half older than I. They went to school earlier than I did and I was lonesome.

Dr. Patterson: What sort of mischief did you all get into?

Janet Latham: Well, the boys took care of that. (laughter)

Dr. Patterson: That's your brother Fred you're talking about.

Janet Latham: Yes. The boys, I'm going to put that on them for

a minute because out here in Riverside it was something! I'm sure Frederick may have gone into that in some detail. There were gangs here in Riverside and they fought all the time. It was rough in the way that boys established their turf. Sometimes it was really rough.

It made it kind of hard for us girls who lived on this street. They would tease us unmercifully, and they would, I hate to say it, throw things at us. The Baxter boys lived right down the street here, and if I went up to Betty's they would jump out at me and say, "If you don't get past my house, I'm going to hit you with this stick." And Betty, when she was coming up the street this way to visit me, Bardie Barden would throw things at her and they'd bounce off of her. We had some rough kids out here. (laughter)

Dr. Patterson: But the girls never had any troubles of their own.

Janet Latham: I hate to make it sound like we were just Polly Anna's, but we weren't too bad. Our mischief was minor. We did things if the parents would leave us alone. One time here in our house, Mom and Dad went out, and we had stored pecans up in our attic. There were cousins visiting us. We got all the pillows off the beds and the comforters and we pulled each other up and down the steps, bump, bump, bump. That was the first thing we did. Then we decided to have a pecan war, so we went up and got pecans out of the attic and we threw pecans at each other and they would bounce off the walls, even chipping plaster. (laughter) We did mischievous things like that, but actually for us girls, we weren't so naughty. Betty's mother was very strict

with her. I always had a nurse. We always had people supervising us pretty closely. We did the girl things like play paper dolls. And we did creative things. We made paper doll houses and we drew paper doll clothes and we made doll clothes. So we did the girl things.

The boys took over all the naughtiness.

Dr. Patterson: There was no TV to watch in those days and no radio to listen to.

Janet Latham: That's right.

Dr. Patterson: You had to make your own entertainment.

Janet Latham: We made our own. And in a way, I feel that we were much the richer for it because we used our imaginations. We had a lot, maybe more time on our hands than we needed. We were bored some of the time. But my mother was one of those people if you said, "Mom, what can we do now"?, she thought she had to stop and suggest something.

Dr. Patterson: Who were some of your Mother and Dad's friends then?

Janet Latham: In Riverside at that time, I think the Henry Whitehursts lived out here. Mr. and Mrs. Graham Barden lived across the street. After Mr. and Mrs. Owen G. Dunn moved to the large brick and shingle house on the Northeast corner of National Avenue and Avenue C, I believe the Barden's moved into that house corner of National Avenue and Avenue B. So, Hap and Agnes Barden, and then next door to them was Dad's distant cousin, Hilton and Harriet Hudnell. I'm trying to think of who else. Then a little later on when the Whitehursts

moved downtown, Bill Sandlin and his wife, Catherine, I think they called her "Billie"; anyway, Bill and Billie Sandlin moved into that house. Mr. and Mrs. H. B. Smith lived on this side of the street in the next block.

Dr. Patterson: Down toward New Bern?

Janet Latham: That's right.

Dr. Patterson: I used to come out here and visit them. I knew Henry quite well and Elizabeth.

Janet Latham: They were a wonderful family. The children, Rosalie, Henry, and Elizabeth were enough older than I, that I was not close friends with them. But because Mr. Smith was the superintendent of schools and Mrs. Smith taught in high school, we were very close to them. She was a good friend of Mom's, and also, we rode to school with them at lunch time after we went downtown to high school.

Dr. Patterson: Did you go to beginning school out here in the Riverside School?

Janet Latham: Yes I did.

Dr. Patterson: Where is that located in relation to this house?

Janet Latham: About a half a block toward town on National Avenue, turn left on Avenue B.

Dr. Patterson: That's now a church. Is that correct?

Janet Latham: Yes it is. It's the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Dr. Patterson: How were school days there? Who were your teachers?

Janet Latham: It was wonderful being able to walk to school. I'll tell you this as a little preamble; all my friends went to school a year ahead of me because they were all a year older, so I was lonesome.

There was little traffic on National Avenue, I relate so many things to the street itself, because at that time, there might have been a car going by, maybe every fifteen minutes. So we were allowed to cross the street, looking both ways of course. We were allowed to move around the neighborhood, at least in the area we knew, quite freely. Mom let me walk over to the school. There was a fourth grade teacher there, Miss Lila Taylor who was Betty Aberly's aunt, whom I knew very well.

At five years old I would go and knock on her school room door and look in and she would beckon me in if it was a convenient moment, let me come up and sit on her lap and she would conduct her class until it became a moment when it was not convenient for her and then she'd say, "Janet, it's time for you to go", and she'd help me get on out the door again. So when I went to the first grade, I had a promotion from the fourth to the first grade. (laughter)

Dr. Patterson: She was teaching the fourth grade and you sat in her lap while she conducted her class. (laughter)

Janet Latham: A lovely lady. Mrs. Pritchett was my first grade teacher.

Dr. Patterson: What was her husband's name? Was it Grady?

Janet Latham: No. Grady lived in Chapel Hill. I think it was something like Mrs. C. E. Pritchett. The next grade was Mrs. Claypoole.

Dr. Patterson: Mrs. Jesse Claypoole?

Janet Latham: Mrs. Jesse Claypoole, yes. Bonnie, as we called her later on. Bonnie Claypoole was my second grade teacher. I'm trying to remember the third grade teacher, Mrs. Helen Patten.

Dr. Patterson: Allen Patten's mother?

Janet Latham: That's right. Mrs. Patten was the principal of the school. Then there was Miss Lila who was fourth grade. Then Virginia Person, Miss Virginia Person at that time who later became Mrs. John (Jack) Hollister, was our fifth grade teacher. And I believe Blanche Chadwick was the sixth grade teacher. Sometimes there was a turnover in the sixth grade teachers, while the others would be carried on.

Dr. Patterson: Then you went downtown.

Janet Latham: Then I went downtown to Central.

Dr. Patterson: Well, what a nice bunch of teachers you had.

Janet Latham: I really did.

Dr. Patterson: The Claypoole's were close good friends of mine. I lived right around the corner from them and I knew Bonnie and Stanley and Frances. Those were good years were they?

Janet Latham: Oh, they were wonderful years. Wonderful years. My mother was in the PTA At Riverside all those years she had children over there. Then when Joe came along, see, she had a little space in there where she didn't participate, but then when Joe came along, she took it up again. She said she had twenty-four years of PTA at Riverside School. (laughter) One interesting thing about our school, our time over there, the year that Joe was born 1932 at our school

Christmas play, my sister Mary Alice was Mary, my brother Fred was a shepherd, I was an angel, and Joe was the baby Jesus. It was a snowy night, Joe was three months old, and mama carried him over there to be the baby Jesus. (laughter)

Dr. Patterson: Things haven't been the same since have they? Once you got down to Central School, you started the seventh grade?

Janet Latham: That's right.

Dr. Patterson: Was that a hard thing to do?

Janet Latham: It was very exciting for me. My two best friends, Betty and Jean, had gone the year before. It was torment for me that whole year when they were down there going through brand new experiences and I couldn't be a part of it. So when I got to go down, I got my first permanent wave and went into seventh grade school and was just thrilled to death to be down there. I went into the Bell Building where my classes were held. It was already condemned at that point, but it was held together with big iron straps around it. I had good teachers there, too. I loved it. I loved being able to meet some new people my own age that I knew were in town but I'd never had a chance to be friends with.

Dr. Patterson: Did it seem to you then that Riverside was a separate sort of community from downtown New Bern before you moved down there?

Janet Latham: Yes it did. We were less sophisticated out here. Much less sophisticated. It was almost rural. Also, out here in Riverside, there was great discrepancy between the people who lived

on National Avenue and were from homes who had some comfortable means and the greater portion of Riverside who were less affluent people.

It was the bottom of the Depression. It was hard times. So there was definitely a separate feeling between people who were poor and those of us who had enough to eat and had comfortable homes and had enough clothes to wear. There was no struggle. When we went downtown to school, we were suddenly with people who had the same opportunities we had, so you had the opportunity to expand your friends. But again, because we had been a little more sheltered in our environment, making our own games and doing these simpler things, we were just less sophisticated.

Dr. Patterson: Looking back, I find this was true even in downtown New Bern. I realize now that there was quite a separation between people who grew up on South Front Street and people who lived in the center of town. We each had different futures, went our different ways. Well, when you got to Central School, do you remember your teachers there?

Janet Latham: I think I can remember them. My homeroom teacher was Mary Grey Moore. I had Mrs. Margaret Willis for science. She's still alive and I see her around from time to time at the grocery store. Miss Winslow for math and Miss Louise Anderson for English.

Dr. Patterson: Did that carry you through school then?

Janet Latham: Those were my seventh grade teachers.

Dr. Patterson: Now this was in the Bell Building.

Janet Latham: That was in the Bell Building on second floor.

Dr. Patterson: There were four rooms on both floors in that building at that time.

Janet Latham: That's right.

Dr. Patterson: Was that the seventh and eighth grades in the Bell building?

Janet Latham: I believe so.

Dr. Patterson: Did you spend the eighth grade there too then?

Janet Latham: I think we changed classes and we had some in the Griffin building. Our science classes were certainly in the Griffin building, Science and History.

Dr. Patterson: Who were your teachers after that?

Janet Latham: Let's see. It's funny, she and I did not get along very well, Miss Ola Andrews. You were talking about mischief. My personality began to assert itself a little bit more about this time.

This business of being late, you were talking about being prompt as a pattern of your life, well, the ladies in our family have been notoriously late and that began to manifest itself when we went downtown to school and I'd get lots of black marks for being late to school.

My Dad had a very interesting approach to this. He always signed our report cards. He did not care if we got black marks as long as our grades stayed good; which, good or bad, that was the truth.

Dr. Patterson: How were you punished for this lateness?

Janet Latham: We got black marks.

Dr. Patterson: Was there anything beyond that?

Janet Latham: No. You could get so many black marks and it was

registered on your card and why. If you got thirty black marks, I think then probably something very serious happened to you such as being suspended. I never got quite that many. But in the eighth grade I sassed my teacher and I got some black marks for sassing Miss Ola Andrews. By this time we were joining some of the clubs. There was High School YWCA, HI-Y. Miss Andrews would talk about how she didn't think that the HI-Y was anything because it was nothing but a chance for the girls to get out and meet the boys down at the local drug store or have an excuse to get out and go to the movies. She would talk like this in Latin class. So one day I called her down on it. I said, "Have you ever been to a HI-Y meeting?" She said, "Well, no! But I know some girls that have told me what goes on." I said, "Well, if you've never been there, you don't have any right to discuss what happens there because you don't really know." I would like to explain the outgrowth of that, why I was this kind of a person. What happened between me Miss Andrews made her absolutely furious. She said, "Young lady, how dare you speak to me that way!" I said, "Well, Miss Andrews, how dare you tell things about an organization when you've never been a part of it." Well, with that, I was sent to Mr. MacDonald's office and naturally got black marks. Mr. MacDonald listened to my story, to see what I said. He said, "Well, Janet, You go over there and just sit down 'til you both calm down. Just sit over there." So, he never punished us. He never punished me. He just had me sit there 'til I could cool off, 'til the class was over. The reason for this was, Daddy brought us up to say our mind. With Mary Alice he was still

very strict. He was brought up in the country over in Belhaven where the girls had to wear black stockings and long skirts, and Mary Alice had to kind of go through that break-through period when she started school. By the time Fred came along, he was the son and so he had a lot demanded of him. By the time I came along, I was kind of Daddy's little pet. I never was intimidated by my father at all. He had always taught me to speak up and to think for myself. Somehow I responded to this logic. He spoke logically to me. He never spoke down to me. And so I began to fall in with his pattern of thinking, this logic. He expected me to speak up.

Dr. Patterson: My feeling is that you did a good thing. (laughter)
Well, from there you went on up through higher grades. You recall teachers in those other grades?

Janet Latham: Yes. Mrs. Lila Smallwood was a wonderful teacher. She introduced me to current events. She taught history, but before we did had our lesson, we always had a current events report. I began to get a broader view - history as it relates to current events. There was juxtaposition there that seemed to open up a new world to me. It had a very definite influence on some of my choices later in life. There was another teacher, Mrs. Kehoe, Katherine Kehoe.

Dr. Patterson: Mr. Tom Kehoe's wife?

Janet Latham: That's right. I think Mr. Tom Kehoe with his father, or was it Tom Kehoe himself that ran the Kehoe Theater?

Dr. Patterson: I think it was just Tom Kehoe himself.

Janet Latham: Well, she was an absolutely fabulous Home Economics

teacher and I enjoyed that class. She taught me to sew and to do things perfectly. She liked things done just so. You did not do anything sloppy. You did things just so, and I responded to the level of excellence that she called us out to. Interestingly enough, after our two years of Home Economics with her, she was asked to go and teach in Greensboro at the Woman's College to train teachers in Home Economics.

Dr. Patterson: Did she do that?

Janet Latham: Yes she did. I'm trying to think of some of the others. Blanch Rowe, who taught us English literature. We studied Julius Caesar and some of the classics in her class. She didn't have a great deal of discipline, but we had a wonderful time. We passed notes and drew pictures and whispered and had a marvelous good time in her class.

Dr. Patterson: Laura Roberts?

Janet Latham: I did not have Mrs. Roberts. I had wished I could because everyone spoke of her as being such a wonderful teacher.

Dr. Patterson: You mentioned going downtown to the drug stores and so forth. Where would you all go as young people when you did things like that?

Janet Latham: Very early on we went to Gaskin's Soda Shop. That's where even as a little girl I went because it was close to my father's office on Pollock Street. So we started out at Gaskins. And then as we began to be teenagers we began to find out that there were other places and we'd go over to Jacobs' Drug Store which was on the opposite

corner, catty cornered across from Gaskins'.

Dr. Patterson: Where Mr. Bradham had his pepsi cola place.

Janet Latham: That's right. Mr. Harry Jacobs', it was rather small store and he hovered over us a little bit. Then everybody began to go down to, I don't know what the pharmacy was called originally or if Clark's Drug Store was built as a drug store right then.

Dr. Patterson: Was it Davis Pharmacy?

Janet Latham: I guess it was Davis'.

Dr. Patterson: Robert King Davis' parents.

Janet Latham: That was where the larger kids went. We didn't go there right away. By the time we were sophomores, we were deciding that we could go in there, and we could buy our coca-colas. We could begin to establish our corner where we sat in the booths and looked out the window, and the boys would gather on the corner, and we would look to see who was going up and down the street. We kept our eye on everything there. (laughter)

Dr. Patterson: What other things did you do to have fun when you were going to school downtown when you were with that crowd?

Janet Latham: I'm trying to remember how old I was when the war started, because you see, things changed so dramatically. By the time I was fifteen the war had begun and we began to have so much military coming in. The reason I bring that in is because our whole life changed. Everything changed. Everybody's lifestyle changed.

Dr. Patterson: Would you go into that a little bit Janet?

Janet Latham: All right. All of a sudden everyone was opening

their homes. They said they had to bring in military in order to protect our coast because there were U.S. ships that were being sunk off our coastline. Even as a teenager, very early, I actually saw them bringing jeep loads of shipwrecked sailors into New Bern to buy clothing for them because their ships had been sunk right out from under them by the U-boats.

Dr. Patterson: Right off the coast.

Janet Latham: Right off the North Carolina coast. New Bern would have been the quickest place for them to be brought to get re-outfitted.

So all of a sudden we were on the front line. Congressman Hap Barden went right straight to work with Congress to see how we could protect this coastline. The Atlantic sea-lanes were being threatened up and down the coast. There was so much double coastline here that the subs could hide in the coves and between the Outer Banks. Mr. Barden was able to prevail upon them to put a Marine landing strip, landing field, in this area, in this territory, because they needed to be away from the coast but close enough so they could fly to the coast. So they chose Cherry Point, this great vast undeveloped track of land, and many things happened as a result of that of course as you well know.

Maybe we can go into that a little bit later on. They brought in immediately, to our small airport over here, Army Air Force personnel.

Army Air Force personnel to begin to fly out immediately to get on to this business of spotting subs and trying to sink them. Well, when they began to bring the men, then the wives wanted to come too, so all of a sudden people were knocking on your door three and four times

a day, "Do you have a room you would rent me? I want to be with my husband and there's no place to live. There's no base housing or anything." There wasn't a base at that time. So people were opening their homes and we were no different. By the time I was fifteen, we had one or two rooms rented out to military personnel. This naturally changes your whole way of life. Mom and Dad had a busy life and were very much into their own civic activities, and up to that point, Daddy played bridge nearly every night of his life. He got bit by the bridge fever and he played bridge. Dr. Charles Duffy and Mom and the man who ran the Country Club at one time, Gerald Colvin, would come out and they would play bridge every night. They would play duplicate bridge. Mama wouldn't play on Sunday night. But you see, it was an inexpensive way to entertain themselves. You did not have to have babysitters, you stayed home and you played cards. Daddy was very intense about the way he played. There were arguments and so forth, with his partners shall I say, with the bridge games. Also, about that time Daddy began to get so excited about this business of whether this was played right or that was played, he began to develop hives. He'd get so excited he'd develop hives. (laughter) So he had to back off a little bit from it. His day would start, and all this I say because all this affected my life as a child. Dad would get up late. He would go to work late in the mornings, maybe about ten o'clock. He would come home for lunch. He had a great big breakfast. He expected a full meal with meat and potatoes and two vegetables at lunch. When he came home at five thirty, he expected a six o'clock dinner with

meat and potatoes, vegetables, and desert, and then at seven thirty he went back to the office and he stayed until nine or nine thirty.

So he kept night office hours as well as day office hours. As soon as he came home, the card table was set up and they were playing cards.

We children would retire to the upstairs at that time.

Dr. Patterson: Well, the military came in and changed the way of life in New Bern because of one thing, they occupied people's homes.

Did it affect you in many other ways?

Janet Latham: Yes. Once we girls got old enough, we were invited to go to dances and things. They had the USO's. The USO and some of the churches had dances for the servicemen up at Stanley Hall and they had them at Union Point at the Woman's Club Building. People like Edna Whitehurst, (Mrs. Emmett Whitehurst), and Genevieve Dunn's mother, Florabelle Tolson, (Mrs. Hubert Tolson), were both chaperons down at the Woman's Clubhouse. The fellows that we dated at that time that were in high school with us just hated it! They hated the fact that we would go to these dances that were for the servicemen. Because at this time, there were not as many social events in our particular class. We didn't all get together in big groups. There was not this big crowd that always had fun together, the fellows and the girls.

You had a special beau and you went places with that special beau.

So it was a very kind of "twosy" thing. I recognized early that we didn't have as much fun as some of the other classes that our mamas would tell me about and other people would tell me. It was so much more fun to go and just be there as a group and a crowd.

Dr. Patterson: When you finished school at Central School downtown, what happened next?

Janet Latham: When I finished Central School, by this time we were definitely into the Second World War. Frederick was overseas.

Had he gone overseas at that time? I think so. If not, he had had his boot camp and had now been stationed at Dahlgren, Virginia. After I graduated from high school, I wanted to study art. I had begun to realize early I wanted to be an artist. It went back to when I was five years old. I drew a picture of the Lindbergh baby when it had been kidnapped. I figured as long as I could keep this picture of this little baby on my slate, he was alive. Then when we heard he had died, it made a tremendous impression on me. But I knew very early I wanted to draw. I made little miniature things. I would illustrate little tiny miniature books and make little tiny miniature layouts.

We didn't have any art in the schools. It was during the Depression.

A Marine who had been a commercial artist came to town to one of these USO's, maybe the one at the church, and I said, "What can I do? I can't take any art lessons. There's no one to teach me." He said, "Get photographs. Draw from anything you can see. Even if you can't draw from life, draw. Draw from photographs, draw from anything."

So I began to draw and draw and draw. I knew without question that's what I wanted to do. Daddy had said, "You will not go and just be an artist and a dilettante. If you go to be an artist, you're going to learn how to make a living." Mom said, "Well, she's too young to go to New York to study." So they decided to send me one year to Salem

College in Winston-Salem. The course that had the most art in it was Home Economics, so that's what I majored in for one year at Salem before I went up to New York to art school.

Dr. Patterson: What school did you go to in New York?

Janet Latham: Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.

Dr. Patterson: How long did that last?

Janet Latham: I stayed there for two years. Then I began to be restless. Many of the students we knew had graduated. We associated with many of the older students, and they would tell us about all this wonderful money they were making as commercial artists. Pratt is a commercial art school. So I began to get very eager to go out and make money. I was not the very best student, but I was high average and applied myself. I knew somehow that I would never have an opportunity to do this studying again, Joe Pat, so I made every minute count. If an instructor would teach us something and said, "Now, is there anybody here that doesn't understand?" If I didn't understand, my hand went right up. I didn't care if it delayed the class. I was there to learn and I knew this was going to be my one niche in life and this was going to be my one opportunity to get it. By second summer I had heard about a job that was available and I decided to apply for it. It was for Assistant Art Director at Tussy Cosmetiques which was part of the Lehn and Fink product line that also made Dorothy Gray cosmetics. I went over and applied for the job and got it. My Dad came up that summer to see me. I had not told them that I graduated. I told them that I finished at art school. I said I finished at Pratt.

As far as I was concerned, I was finished. So I bent the truth definitely. So when my Dad came up, and he came to my office to meet my boss and see where I was working, they said to him, we're very fond of Janet, and had nice things to say. He said, "Well, it isn't that I mind her going to work, I expected her to do that, but I was just sorry she never finished her training. Her mother didn't finish college either and it just seems to run in the family!" (laughter) I was kind of chagrined. But anyway, I stayed on in my job.

Dr. Patterson: How long were you there?

Janet Latham: I worked there for a year and a half. Then there was a recession in the general business section. Cosmetics is a luxury area and luxury items are always the first hit, so I was laid off. Then I worked for a couple of months for Nettie Rosenstein Accessories, a very posh jewelry and accessory design place. Then they said they didn't have time to train me, and at that time I decided to come home. So I came home and spent the summer enjoying myself!

Dr. Patterson: What year was that Janet?

Janet Latham: That would have been 1946. I spent that whole summer just having a really good time. There were lots of young people here. Fellows were coming out of service. Just lots of young people around. We dated and had parties and went to Trent Pines every night and just thought about clothes and frivolous everything. It was just one of those times in my life.

Dr. Patterson: Tell me what the Trent Pines Club was like then?

Janet Latham: It was a handsome house. Very different from our

houses here in New Bern. There was nothing reminiscent of the sort of four square houses or the federal type architecture or the Georgian type architecture. Nothing like that. We were mostly, of course, just on the first floor, but you went into a foyer where there was a central stairway that you approached after you got into the hall.

The stairway was wide and elegant and it went up and turned at a landing and went in two directions. The staircase faced a long solarium. At one end the solarium and also the hall opened into a beautiful drawing room with a very big fire place. It had gracious furniture everywhere.

All the windows on the riverside of the house looked out over the Trent River. There was a great slope with trees. There was a beautiful terrace that was just outside the solarium. We danced in the solarium to a juke box or a small combo and we sat out on the terrace anytime it was warm enough, winter or summer. The other end of the solarium opened into a dining room which was an elegant room also. It was paneled and handsome. Trent Pines was a club of course, but it had a prestigious atmosphere. It had ambiance. It had a lot of things that maybe, as they say, Southerners are so aware of-place, this was a place that gave us a setting that we chose to think we belonged.

Dr. Patterson: I remember it that way too. Now, this was the old Sloan estate home, wasn't it?

Janet Latham: That's right.

Dr. Patterson: Sloan Liniment man was the original owner. And then it became owned by Senator Glenn?

Janet Latham: I believe so.

Dr. Patterson: And then became Trent Pines Club. Did you stay in New Bern long at that time or were you here just a short time?

Janet Latham: No. I decided that I would go back to New York and see if I couldn't get a job that fall, so I did. I took my portfolio.

Having by this time "finished" at Pratt, and I had fixed myself a portfolio, and having some actual samples from my job with Tussy Cosmetics, I had a professional offering that I could show to people.

I went to see a friend of mine who was working for International Latex Corporation (Playtex Products). I was sitting out in the reception area waiting for her to come out to go to lunch. She told someone in the advertising department that I was there and that I was looking for a job and had been out on some interviews at Hallmark cards that day. So one of the young salesmen came out and said, "I'd like to see your portfolio." I said, "Well, I don't just show it." He said, "I mean I'm interested in possibly a job offer." So I showed it to him. He said, "I'd like to have you meet our advertising director."

So I met him. He said, "I don't hire anybody; the President of the company hires everybody here. Could you come this evening to an interview?" I said, "Evening?" And he said, "Yes." So I said, "Well, I guess I could but I'd like to bring somebody with me." and he said that would be all right. I left a telephone number and went home.

I got a call from the President of International Latex, Mr. A. N. Spanel. He called and said he was going to be down at one of the big hotels, I guess it was the Plaza on Central Park. He said, "Come on down I want to interview you. If you can be of assistance to Mr. Marino,

I'd like to meet you and hire you if your work is satisfactory. Bring anybody you want to, your grandmother, your mother, your sister, your aunt, anybody." I said, "I'll bring my roommate." So we went down and were ushered up to this hotel room. When he opened the door he said to me, "Why aren't you married?" Now, I had never seen this man in my life and I said, "I've just been freshly jilted." He laughed.

He laughed so hard and he said, "Come in! Come in!" There was never any intimation of anything that was not proper. He never even asked me to have my coat off, the other man was just sitting. It was a bedroom, but he just talked to me. He talked to me about myself as a person.

He looked at my work and hired me. I worked at International Latex for the next few months. Then I got word that my Dad was terminally ill, very suddenly terminally ill. Then I said I think I better go down and be with my Mother in Richmond where Dad was in the hospital.

So Mr. Spanel allowed me to go.

Dr. Patterson: Was that the end of being away from New Bern? Then you came back to New Bern?

Janet Latham: I did after that. I did go back but just to pack up and come home after Dad died.

Dr. Patterson: So you got back to New Bern permanently then about...

Janet Latham: I came back in December of 1947 after Dad came out of the hospital. When he came out of the Richmond hospital, he went from there to Belhaven, and from Belhaven he came into St. Luke's Hospital, and Daddy died there on December 29, 1947.

Dr. Patterson: And you've been in New Bern ever since then.

Janet Latham: No, I stayed about three years. Would you like for me to go on about my career?

Dr. Patterson: Well, let's see. After you stayed in New Bern three years then, you went away and began your career again. Is that correct?

Janet Latham: Yes. I went to Fort Lauderdale, Florida and began my commercial art career again. I worked for George Evans Advertising agency. When I went to Fort Lauderdale I went down there seriously to work. Something happened here in New Bern. The three years I was in New Bern, we were still very much involved with the military here.

The Marines were coming up to date girls. We were in the group that were of dating age. I had too many dates, I'll just put it that way.

It began to be a little unwieldy and I didn't know how to handle it.

I was ready to get back to work. I felt like I had put my career on hold. I had gone down to Fort Lauderdale determined that I was going to work. So I did get into my career, but I also met some young people down there that enjoyed partying. Being the sociable animal that I am, I began to enjoy the party life with them. We partied every single night after work. None of us was being paid beans! I mean hardly enough to live on. But we were having a wonderful time. There were just lots and lots of young folk down there and we had marvelous times! We would pool our food and eat together, or if we went out together, we'd pool our money. You know, everybody went "dutch". I had for the first time, this group with everybody going together,

which was wonderful, had a marvelous time! Then, Joe Pat, it all went sour for me! I could not understand it. I stopped having fun at my parties. The joy went out of my life. I had been working with church groups, with the young people group, as an advisor. I wasn't living much of a quality of life for that, but anyway, I was working with the young people. And all of a sudden my life came to a halt in that I just could not grasp going on in that framework. A group of people came to town called Moral Re-Armament and they brought a play. I didn't see the play, but some of the young people in the cast came and spoke at our church group to my young people. I knew right away that there had been a missing factor in my life; in that, I had been enjoying all the trappings of religion and Christianity, but I had not seen my responsibility as an individual. I hadn't seen the responsibility of the way I lived. If you want to put it in churchy terms, "righteousness", I had not been living a righteous, holy life. The penny had never dropped for me. I'd felt a strong spiritual sense early in my life and I was very active in young people's work as a teenager. Mom had seen to it that we got Sunday School and Mrs. Owen G. Dunn, my godmother, saw to it that I got to Young People's Service League. But in the years after I began to party and everything, it kind of went out the window. So when these MRA people began to talk about a world that worked, that "as I am, so is my nation", and if I go around telling lies and being dishonest and selfish and unloving and living promiscuously, then it is possible, you know, the way everybody else is living, too so what kind of a nation are we building

for the future? This made a lot of sense to me.

Dr. Patterson: Janet, I'm going to bring you back to New Bern pretty quickly now. When did you leave Florida to come home?

Janet Latham: In 1954 I went full time with Moral Re-Armament. I worked with them for a year and then I came down with malaria, which I gotten as a young person. I came back after working with them full time for a year. That was about late 1954.

Dr. Patterson: And you've been here since then?

Janet Latham: No. I kept doing things in three's. I was here for three years recovering from a very bad bout of malaria. I think I had been bitten by a mosquito which carried the jungle type of malaria. After recovering I went back with Moral Re-Armament for two more years. Then I came back to New Bern and I've been here since about 1960.

Dr. Patterson: Let me lead you into a discussion of something that's very important to the story of New Bern and to certainly our Memories program. I'd like to know how you got involved in New Bern in the civil rights problem and the racial relations things and how that all worked out. What role did you play in what developed?

Janet Latham: I'm glad I got a chance to talk about Moral Re-Armament because when I went into MRA, I began to hear black people, and people from Africa, tell about their hurts, the pain of segregation, the pain of being patronized, the pain of the legacy of slavery. I began to hear this in a way I had never heard it, as people I was associating with and who were equally committed to doing God's will.

I began to hear also about what can happen when reconciliation takes place between people who have had deep seated differences. I heard so much from the pain of the black race and I heard so much from the Africans who came to our international conferences, that it got into me in the deepest way I can possibly tell you and I hurt for them.

It was no longer white or black, it was human to human, man's inhumanity to man. So when I came back to New Bern, I could hardly stand it when I walked down the street because I had met so many African Nationals in Moral Re-Armament that I began to know what people looked like if you came from a specific part of Africa. I recognized the traits of people from northern Africa, eastern Africa, western Africa, central Africa, South Africa. I could look at a black coming down the street in New Bern and know where their roots were. Right at the beginning it was so hard for me I almost wanted to run up and say, "Do you realize that you have a heritage? Do you realize that there are people that look like you in another nation?" I felt the responsibility.

Dr. Patterson: What was it like in New Bern then, Janet, from the standpoint of race relations?

Janet Latham: Shortly after I got back, I believe in 1964, I'm trying to remember which governor it was that started the Good Neighbor Council, but North Carolina had begun the Good Neighbor Council. It was started on the very highest level. They wanted to begin to have dialogue between the black race and the white race. They tried to get the top people in the clergy, professions, and people that were well respected on both sides, and they began to have dialogue and it

was excellent. Then there was the time of Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination. There's been some question about the way that situation was handled in New Bern. But I think people who were more knowledgeable and involved than I was at that time (because that was before I was really involved in the Human Relations Commission) were able to put a plan into action that literally saved our town from being burned. Not everybody realizes that, but they did. It was questioned, but it worked. It worked.

Dr. Patterson: Could you describe that a little bit more?

Janet Latham: I'm going to try, because you see, I'm second hand to this. The Blacks started doing some damage to the Five Points section and there was a march that was made from Five Points through to the City Hall. The mayor got together with the Human Relations Commission and the Human Relations Commission, with the blacks and the whites, said, "You find the people that the black community trust and let us know who they are." They quickly made a list and they said, "These are the people that can control the black community." The blacks talking to the whites, "The thing to do is to cordon off the black community and put in control the people that we say." Because trust had been built through the Good Neighbor Council, the mayor and the other council members said, "We will trust you." Some of the men that were put in positions of control had been in jail, but they were people who were trusted by the black community. They were given weapons to control the people in the black community so that things would not get out of hand. They had to have some way to do that.

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember who any of these individuals were that were trusted with this?

Janet Latham: I'm sorry, I can't name them. I could get it for you. I'm sure James Gavin can give you those names.

Dr. Patterson: Subsequent to that, you became very active in this organization, did you not?

Janet Latham: Yes, I did. After the Martin Luther King assassination and all the confrontation was going on, things went from confrontation to implementation. "How are we going to work things out?" They began to have Affirmative Action and that began to be a way to really get to the heart of the civil rights problem of rights and privileges. The thing that interested me most at that time was we were trying very hard to understand one another. There was some man from Weyerhaeuser that helped us worked through, it wasn't exactly a sensitivity program, but it was a program to help us share things that had happened in our lives so that we could begin to understand one another better. The original group backed off. They got busy. They backed away. They did not feel progress was being made. There was and still is a black ministerial association which has one name, and then the white ministerial association has another name. Blacks feared their autonomy would be usurped if they merged. This was during the time that black people were making an effort to go and sit in white churches. The blacks would come and sit in white churches in the back. Sometimes they were confronted and asked to leave or were not allowed to come in. There would be some ugly scenes like that. Other churches,

they just came in and sat down and nobody said anything, so they didn't keep coming. They came maybe three or four Sundays and then they stopped. We needed a chance to have interaction with each other that was not strictly on a rights basis. I felt that we needed to understand each other and enjoy some of the cultural things together, like going to the same concerts.

Dr. Patterson: As human beings.

Janet Latham: As human beings. But no matter how hard we tried we never got that across. One of the things that I think we do not understand is the culture. We know there's a cultural difference, but also there's a cultural choice. Our choice of music is not their choice of music. Sometimes the educated choice of blacks is the same as ours. They like beautiful classical music. But in a small town like this, there was not a whole lot of that. There was not a very large black cultured and cultivated upper class who were educated. They have rarely participated in some of our activities where they are perfectly welcome.

Dr. Patterson: Now, didn't you become chairperson of this commission?

Janet Latham: I became acting chairperson. It's a strange thing. I never wanted the whole responsibility and I never understood why. Maybe someday somebody psychologically can tell me why, but I was acting chairperson for about five years. During that time, we would schedule meetings but people would not come. People stopped coming to the meetings. An interesting thing was happening in the town.

Many businesses are federally funded in some way or other; the banks, I don't know if insurance companies are or not, some of the industries around had federal grants, contracts on various levels, maybe to supply milk to school, any kind of thing to that system. The government threatened that if they did not comply with the Affirmative Action program and hire blacks and so forth, that they would have those funds withdrawn. So all of a sudden blacks were being hired. Blacks were being hired into the banks. Blacks are being hired into the schools.

You know the schools were integrated, and of course, that's a whole other thing. But things began to happen, kind of under pressure. Things began to happen and we were getting exposure. People were trying very hard to adjust and to make this thing work. They had to. They felt their livelihood was threatened if they didn't. So you began to have a little less standoff, less polarization. If you don't have a paid Human Relations Commission chairperson, I don't know what they call it, secretary or director, you do not have somebody full time who can give it full attention (because I was at a job all this time, I was working at a job, so all this was volunteer) it's hard to set up things like grievance committees in case you're getting racially discriminated against. I tried hard to keep it going because I felt it was important to keep contacts between the two communities. But the people of real influence just withdrew.

Dr. Patterson: That organization has phased out has it not?

Janet Latham: No it hasn't. There is still a "Human Relations Commission" in existence. But as far as I know, the chairman has not

called a meeting in about two years.

Dr. Patterson: Janet, when you were growing up, as you look back, what do the relations between the races look like to you? How do you remember them way back there?

Janet Latham: I thought of blacks as servants because they worked in our home. We always had help in the home. Because we lived in town I didn't have any little friends that I played with that were black. Fred had some, but I didn't have any little friends that were black. We didn't go to school with them. If we were all walking down the street, I saw that they always crossed over on the other side of the street. If you were facing them and they were coming towards you on the sidewalk, they always went across the street and walked on the other side. Apparently, I've learned since then, that this was an unwritten law among the blacks, that that was what they were supposed to do. Either that or get out and walk in the street and not walk on the sidewalk with a white person. It was strange because my Dad did not believe in this. He was very adamant that we should not have this kind of discrimination. It was never encouraged in our home.

He said if a black person ever comes to this home, a negro ever comes to this house, he said, "I expect you to invite them in to sit down in the living room. I don't want any discrimination shown here." When it came to a servant, that was all right, that was different.

I mean it didn't matter if they were white or black, a servant was a servant, and that was a different situation. We loved our servants.

We had a parade of domestics, a veritable parade went through our

house with maids because there were four children and we kept things in a mess and sometimes they'd leave.

Dr. Patterson: When you came back to New Bern after this exposure to this organization, Moral Re-Armament in Florida, how did things look to you then? You walked down the street and you saw these black people, did it seem to you that things were in a pretty bad situation in New Bern from a racial standpoint then?

Janet Latham: Yes. By then I was beginning to see things a whole lot more clearly. Because by this time I had truly had a born again experience. My whole thinking had shifted and I saw people as children of God and not just as black and white and so forth. At that particular point, I worked through prejudice. As far as I knew, I didn't have any prejudice at that particular time. But it's an interesting thing, a little later on I realized that that goes much deeper than you think it does. It goes very deep into your subconscious. There are always little roots and threads coming out. When I came back to New Bern, I wanted immediately to get to this. I thought the church should get right to this business of the separation of the races and do something about it. I got no encouragement from the church. They said, well, this is going to take time. I said, "It does not have to take a whole lot of time. It takes care." I was gung ho. I was cause oriented. I had been taught how you could move quickly into these situations. But because I was alone and I was trying to move as I felt the Lord showed me, I knew I was not meant to be a crusader, rabbit type and go in and make big waves. I was not a Joan of Arc.

Dr. Patterson: Have you been supported in this by the black community?

Janet Latham: Yes. Immediately. They immediately understood where I was coming from.

Dr. Patterson: How does it look to you these days?

Janet Latham: I feel the polarization again. In about the last six to seven years things have polarized again. I think there are many reasons for that. I think we had a culture clash that any of us in the South could have predicted because integration was legislated. Things happened and were happening that are just kind of like what is happening in eastern Europe right now.

Dr. Patterson: Now there's power on both sides. Janet, how did New Bern handle school integration?

Janet Latham: Well, at first, many of the white teachers decided that this was something that they would try to work with. They didn't understand what it was going to mean as far as discipline was concerned.

There were children to teach. And when they integrated the schools, you know, they were going to teach them. But they did not understand that there was going to be such an extraordinary discipline problem.

There was a hanging on of the segregation situation I think. Then busing came along. They tried to deal with it by busing. And here, Mr. MacDonald if I'm not mistaken, tried to keep the neighborhood school idea alive so that the blacks could go to the black neighborhood schools and so forth and the whites could continue to go to the white neighborhood schools, because that's the way our town was laid out.

Then when the busing situation came along, that was difficult for everybody. It was insisted upon you know. There was no, "You can choose this or not." They insisted upon this relocation, which became dislocation.

Dr. Patterson: Have the schools gotten to the point that they're fairly well integrated now?

Janet Latham: There may be some of the schools that don't have as many black students as white students or white students as black students. There are some. Like out here at Oaks Road. That has become seventy percent black. Maybe even more than that. Maybe even eighty percent black and twenty percent white. It again has become associated with geography.

Dr. Patterson: Janet, this is a subject that is very close to you and me I understand that now. I admire you for it. Before we leave this, is there anything else you would like to say in regard to what we've been talking about in race relations?

Janet Latham: I think I would, and that is that a healing has to take place. If it doesn't, I really believe that our country is headed for trouble that they have never dreamed of. Never dreamed of! I feel that our nation has come to a point that we are of an age to be able to be mature about this and that we can't turn our back on it any longer.

Dr. Patterson: Let me get back to your father for a moment. He was a general practitioner. You've told me something about his life, how he worked late at night. He made house calls I suppose.

Janet Latham: Oh yes.

Dr. Patterson: Did all of the doctors in those days make house calls?

Janet Latham: As far as I know. I didn't think of Daddy as being different from anybody else.

Dr. Patterson: Who were some of his colleagues?

Janet Latham: His contemporaries?

Dr. Patterson: Yes.

Janet Latham: Dr. Wadsworth; your own father earlier, when Dad first came to town; and Dr. Jones of course earlier; and then Dr. Oscar Kafer; Dr. Charles Duffy. I'm trying to think. There were only about eight of them during most of daddy's years there. Let me see; Kafer, Duffy, Wadsworth and Dr. Richard Duffy.

Dr. Patterson: Dr. Bender?

Janet Latham: Dr. Bender was here for a short time, then went to Morehead, and then went to Pollocksville. So he was in the area, but he did not practice here very long. I'm trying to think of who else. Oh, Dr. William Hollister when he came back from Korea having been doing medical missionary work.

Dr. Patterson: Dr. Daniels?

Janet Latham: Dr. Daniels. Didn't he die early?

Dr. Patterson: I'm not sure. But there weren't many doctors in those days.

Janet Latham: There certainly were not. Dr. Ashford. Did I say Dr. Charles Ashford? Dr. Ashford was definitely one of the leading

surgeons.

Dr. Patterson: The relations between doctors and patients is an interesting thing that I like to talk about. What were the relations like in those days between doctor and patient compared to these days? How did folks view your father?

Janet Latham: My Dad was very outspoken. You liked him very much or you didn't like him at all. He was an absolutely superb diagnostician. When his knowledge stopped, he acknowledged it and said, "We will get you to a specialist," and he would put them in a car, he'd make an appointment for them at either Johns Hopkins or Duke or Chapel Hill and he would take his patient where there was somebody that knew more than he did.

Dr. Patterson: Now did he take them?

Janet Latham: Yes! Took them in his car! Sometimes he would take me out of school to go along if it was a woman patient. I'd ride in the back seat. It was a lark for me and I was the chaperon I guess.

It was just a bit of an education. His patients certainly did respect him. I have so many people coming up to me even today, it's so many, many years later and when they find out who I am, and they tell me how he saved the life of this member of their family or that member of their family or that their grandmother still talks about Dr. Latham and what he did for their family. Dad was one of the early doctors to treat people psychosomatically. He started reading on that very early. As early as my teenage years, he was already saying that seventy-five percent of the people that came to him were not organically

ill, it was psychosomatic.

Dr. Patterson: He was accepted as a very important person in the lives of his patients I gather.

Janet Latham: Yes. And Daddy always had a firm ego structure. (laughter) My Daddy never had a doubt about his ability, his intellect. I'm sure that it could have been considered conceit. But as far as human wisdom was concerned, he thought he had a good hold on that. (laughter)

Dr. Patterson: Janet, looking back over the years, do you think that churches in New Bern have meant a great deal to this town?

Janet Latham: I certainly do in the social life of the town and the social fabric of the town. I feel that for my ownself that I didn't find the strength of character training that I would have liked to have had from the church. There was and is a much more permissive attitude in the churches. There didn't seem to be any particular effort to take stands, moral stands. The church people acted just like those that didn't go to church most of the time. I can't imagine the town without the churches because it was so much a part of what we did.

But as far as deep spirituality, I can only speak for my own church really truthfully, but I don't think there was a great spiritual depth there. But the continuity and the importance of it in the fabric of the life of the town, well, I can't imagine the town without it.

Dr. Patterson: I'm going to shift to another topic now. You're an artist and highly regarded. We have had very few people talk to us about arts in New Bern and how things have developed. This town

has become pretty involved in arts in many ways. I wonder if you would look back and comment on how this has developed, how it looks to you.

Janet Latham: I may not be just the right person to comment on that because I haven't been involved in the later years of the Bank of the Arts and the Arts Council. But I can tell you about earlier on. By the time I went to school, it was 1932 when I started, they took art out of the school that year. There was one art teacher who came around for about three months. Her name was Mrs. Owens. She would go from class to class and you would have a little art period.

Of course that was the brightest spot in my life at that moment. Then, no more because they couldn't afford to pay them. Of course at that time, they actually couldn't even afford to pay the teachers.

They gave them IOU's or script to spend. I think that today's children couldn't possibly comprehend what the Depression was like. But there were always people in New Bern to me that were very creative.

Dr. Patterson: It was a tough time.

Janet Latham: So the only art we got in school was very perfunctory. They might pass out little printed sheets and say color in this, so we just didn't get art in school. Miss Lila Taylor was a very artistic person, so the fourth grade she did arts and crafts.

The students that were a little more apt, we did our lessons during the morning and then in the afternoon she taught us arts and crafts.

We got into all kinds of wonderful things. So I was beginning to get an exposure to art through this. Then also, I began to realize that there were people out there that could express themselves in drama

and plays. I realized that somehow New Bern seemed to have a flair for dramatic production. There was one big event that came every year. The fire department had a minstrel every year.

Dr. Patterson: This isn't the Yule Tide review?

Janet Latham: No, this was the fire department. They brought in a minstrel every year. When I was about five, they rehearsed over at Riverside School, so I would go over every afternoon and watch them rehearse, practice all the dances and the songs and everything. They gave me a small part. I got quite interested in the dramatic, things on the stage, from that standpoint, quite early. I think in the second grade they had a big historical pageant here in New Bern and we learned dances and things and we wore colonial costumes. I began to see art as something more than just drawing. We had music appreciation in the schools. That we did have. I think Mrs. Bonnie Claypoole was the one that began with. At least it began in the second grade. We had music appreciation and she would play records. We had little charts and we were told which instrument sounded like what. Then she would play the record and we were to pick out what instrument was playing at this time. We were taught how to count time. We were shown metronomes, to keep time that way. So that was enriching. I loved that. I learned to appreciate some very good music at that time. I think probably the performing arts dominated at that time, where as the expression of art through painting in town during that period, there were very few practicing artists. I really don't know anybody who was painting. If I've forgotten them, then I'm sorry.

Dr. Patterson: When you came back to New Bern, had things progressed quite a bit in that area?

Janet Latham: No. Minette Duffy had gone off to study I think. She was beginning to paint. I think she came back. Even when I was in high school, she was painting. I was very much intrigued with this very glamorous young woman who was not too much older than I, but she kind of scared me off she was so dramatic.

Dr. Patterson: Now this is Dr. Richard Duffy's daughter.

Janet Latham: Yes. She was Minette. She painted very well. She was already painting portraits and getting commissions. I heard about her. I don't know how to describe it. I didn't see how I could ever meet her, and I didn't have the courage to just call up and say I'm interested in art, I want to meet and talk to you. I didn't have that kind of confidence at that age. But she was painting. She didn't stay in New Bern. But most everything was performing arts; music in the schools, choral groups in the schools, the high school marching bands.

Dr. Patterson: When you came back, you noted earlier that you became involved with the Little Theater.

Janet Latham: Yes. There were two things that I became involved in; the Little Theater, and also with Inez Laube, Inez Barbour, she was the daughter of Mr. Barbour who had Barbour Boats. Inez started a ballet school. She wanted to start a ballet class and then she wanted to make it into a school. I had always wanted to take ballet and this seemed my opportunity. Betty Aberly and I began to take ballet lessons

from Inez down at the local Recreation Center on George Street. Then Inez figured out something that was very unique, I thought was original at that time. Instead of having to have music with a record player here and somebody manning that when you were putting on your show, she thought through how to tape segments of songs and music that would blend in one to the other and she would write little ballets that would make a story. It might be based on a famous ballet, but she would adapt it so that we could do it. So we put on these little ballets.

We put on a "Magic Toy Shop" which was one that was fascinating and included a great many people, I mean a number of people in town. I did the sets for this. I did the back drops. I would trade out my lessons for doing the back drops. We worked out a good arrangement there. It was wonderful exercise. Now, everybody would think of it as either aerobics or other kind of dancing. It was marvelous exercise.

It meant a great deal to me and I learned so much about dance. I began to realize, if you study a subject you can appreciate the professional presentation of the arts so much better, and I appreciated that. I liked that. Then we also worked with Little Theater. When I got into Little Theater, the first thing they asked, "Will you do the sets?" So I said "Yes, I will do the sets." Whenever I said I would do the sets, automatically my mind thought Betty Aberly will help me because Betty and I worked together well and she is very artistic. I design the sets and she could help carry them out in a very good way, so together we did most of the sets for the Little Theater. At that time, Mrs. Parkhill Jarvis, Eva Jarvis, was the

president. I cannot remember who was secretary at that time. But then there were those of us who decided they were a little stodgy.

We put on "Life with Father" with Eva Jarvis as the director. If you would like to know who some of the people that were in the cast, Gerald Colvin was Father; Theresa Shipp was Mother; two of the Duffy boys, one that was a red head and another one, Breck, maybe it was just Breck; and I took the ingenue role in this; and Betty was a maid.

There were probably two more parts. We performed it over at Brinson Memorial School. We also put it on over here at George Street Recreation Center. It went very well. Gerald was a splendid actor and so was Theresa. We had a good time. Eva Jarvis outfitted us out of her attic.

The Jarvis home had trunk after trunk of things left over from the P. O. Jarvis store. We had gloves in every size. We had hats in every size. We had clothes in every size of that period. We had anything we wanted. She could outfit us for that entire "Life with Father" play. So we had a wonderful show and it was very well costumed as you can imagine.

Dr. Patterson: I wonder what's happened to all of those things.

Janet Latham: I asked at the time, because I wanted it to be known that later when something happened to Parkhill and Eva, I certainly would like to have a chance for the Little Theater to get to those clothes. When that time came I believe Mr. Harry MacDonald was one of the executors and he said the bugs had gotten into the clothes and had eaten everything. They picked things up and they just went to powder. So that was too bad. Speaking of the earlier years some

of us decided after a year or two, Betty Aberly and Frank Fagan, the banker's son, well, we all decided we were going to take over the Little Theater. We were tired of having these older people tell us how to run it and we wanted some new blood in there and we were going to get things turned over and started differently, as young people want to do. I think I'm a politician somewhere back in there. Kay Turner was one of those, Mrs. Charles Turner. So we politiced and campaigned til we got all of them out and us in. We began to put on more plays and to run the Little Theater just the way we wanted to run it. We put on some more contemporary plays. We put on "Claudia" and some one act plays. Emily Pollock Crawford was one of our actresses and Virginia McSorley was one of us. I don't know if you remember the Barber's that lived out here in Riverside. There was Jack Barber. He had a younger sister who was our age and she was taking part. Her name was Betty Lou. We did everything down at the Little Theater at the Recreation Center. The stage was very small. We never had proper props. We needed some french doors, so I talked Mama (by this time my father had died), I talked Mama into letting us take the french doors from our house that were always in the way, anyway, down to the recreation center and we used those in our play sets. When we would have a play, we would take things right out of our living rooms. Hazel Aberly said, "I always feel at home when I come to plays because my furniture is on stage and my pictures are hanging on the wall. (laughter) My Mother's little loveseat was in more plays than you can imagine. We enjoyed it. It was a lot of fun. There was one couple

that came out of that. Mr. and Mrs. Claude Allen used to live in New Bern and then they moved to Pollocksville. They taught in the Jones County school system, and they had a daughter named Dottie. She was living up here the summer that we did "Claudia" I believe. She and Frank Fagan were both in that play and they fell in love during the performance and were later married. He went on with his career which was then in broadcasting and then he became an Episcopal clergyman culminating in a distinguished pastorate in St. James, Richmond, the second largest church in Richmond Virginia. He has since retired and they are now living down in Swansboro.

Dr. Patterson: What was year was this?

Janet Latham: This period?

Dr. Patterson: Yes.

Janet Latham: This would have been probably about 1948 to '50.

Dr. Patterson: What happened to the Little Theater in New Bern?

Janet Latham: It kept on going for a number of years. I believe another group came in. Movies and television. We had a lot of movies anyway. But the television, television became the thing that you did.

Everybody stayed home and watched TV. The interest dropped off in live drama I guess. I may be wrong about that, but I think that had a lot to do with it. Then people began to move into town that were interested in theater and they started the New Bern Civic Theater.

I don't know just who those people were. Sara Baxter Bradbury's daughter, Sara Alex Bradbury, was a professional actress and I think she kind of helped. She came back to town for a short while, maybe

a year, year and a half, and she helped them re-establish a theater group and I think they call that the New Bern Civic Theater.

Dr. Patterson: The building is the Bradbury Theater. The Athens Theater is called the Bradbury Theater.

Janet Latham: Do you know why it's called the Bradbury Theater?

Dr. Patterson: It's in her honor isn't it?

Janet Latham: Yes. Do you know why it's in her honor?

Dr. Patterson: No.

Janet Latham: Well, Sara Alex had gone on with her professional career and she became a very fine drama coach. There was a play on Broadway called "Turning Point" and she was asked to be the coach to the performer who was a Russian defector. I believe he was the one who took the lead role in "Turning Point." She was drama coach for this young defector, ballet person, and also the young ingenue lead.

It was a very successful play and was asked to come to Hollywood to make a movie. Well, at first they weren't going to ask Sara Alex to come. Then the two young people involved said they wouldn't go unless she came too, so she was invited to go out as a drama coach. She got out there and found it very hard to translate from the stage to the movies. That was very difficult for her and she was always at odds.

She was having a hard time maintaining her professional integrity.

She knew what the man who wrote the play was trying to convey and she felt it was being twisted and turned in Hollywood and she came up against the writers and directors and powers that be. While she was out there she had some unhappy experiences. Maybe she got into

some relationships that were not absolutely what she had hoped for.

She began to get very sour on Hollywood. She was getting paid well, but decided she was going to come back East and go on back to Broadway.

A man had starting showing interest in her and she had decided he was not for her, so she told him she wasn't going to see him anymore.

It was about Thanksgiving. She and her mother had been on the phone and she was planning to come back to New Bern for Thanksgiving. This man called her about three days ahead of time and said, "Please, I want to see you one more time before you go back." He said, "I just thought maybe we could do something very exciting." He said, "I'd like to fly you over the Grand Canyon. I know you've wanted to see the Grand Canyon." She said, "Do you fly?" He said, "Oh yes." So she decided since she was going to be leaving the area it wouldn't do any harm. Come to find out he did not have a true pilot's license, but he was able to hire a plane. They landed somewhere in the Grand Canyon to get gas. When they took off that time, they hardly cleared the ground and it either malfunctioned or they hit something and the plane crashed. The man walked away and Sara Alex was dead. Of course it was so devastating to Sara, her mother, and to all of us who knew her. Her's was such a promising young career because she was maybe in her mid-thirties. Her mother was just devastated. After several years, the New Bern Civic theater, whom Sara Alex had helped to establish, wanted to buy the old Kehoe Theater (or Tryon Theater) and they didn't have the money. So Sara Bradbury had the idea that they would do a memorial. Perhaps she could get some people to raise a

memorial for Sara Alex. Some of the people whom Sara Alex had coached, including Dustin Hoffman and some other quite outstanding stars in New York, went to bat for us and they canvassed their community and sent money down here. With that money, Sara said, "I will give \$1,000 toward your purchase, (which is what they needed for a down payment at that time) if you will name the theater after my daughter Sara."

So, it's the Saax Bradbury Theater." Her name was Sara Alex and her stage name was Saax, so it's the Saax Bradbury Theater.

Dr. Patterson: Janet, in your own career here in New Bern, what has happened? Your career as an artist.

Janet Latham: When I first came back to New Bern, I had been in television in field production work up in Mackinaw Island with Moral Rbearmament. I had gotten my taste of TV and I thought, boy, I want to get into this! I worked down at Tryon Palace just as a hostess for a while. Then a TV station opened up out here at Channel 12. Well, wouldn't you know that I was out of town for three weeks that summer when they started hiring people. When I came back, they had hired someone else as the art director. I was just heartsick. I went out there to see this young man after about three weeks, and I said, "I really wish I could have been here and gotten this job because I love TV work and this is what I wanted to do. I wish you well though."

He said, "Would you really like this job?!" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I've been offered another one up at High Point and that's real close to my hometown, and this your hometown, this should be your job!" My jaw fell open as you can well imagine. He said,

"If you'll come out here every evening and help me get caught up, I'll train you in everything I'm doing and you can take over when I leave, because the manager has told me he's not going to accept my resignation." He said, "But I'm leaving." And so two weeks later, he went in and told the manager and the manager said, "I'll blackball you if you walk out of this station!" He said, "It won't matter because I already have a job and I've got you somebody to step right in the job!" The manager couldn't believe it. (laughter) He came back and met me and he said, "You think you can do this job?" I said, "Yes, and I'll show you my portfolio." He decided, well, maybe I could do it. And that's how I started working at Channel 12. I was there for three years. My relationship with my employer out there was not the very best and I decided that I needed to find a job another place.

So I prayed about it and I said, "Lord, if there's anyway I can make a living in this town and still live at home, please show it to me."

The very next morning I got a telephone call from Bob Monte saying, "Your name has been given to me as a possible person that might help me make models of historic houses and building." I said, "It sounds wonderful!"

Dr. Patterson: Excuse me. What's the name again, Monte?

Janet Latham: Robert Monte is the man. He had established a little business called Monte Models making models of historic houses and buildings.

Dr. Patterson: Okay. I just didn't understand that.

Janet Latham: He said, "When can you come for an interview?"

I said, "How about this Saturday?" He said, "All right." So when I walked in, he said, "I don't know if I need an architectural student or a commercial artist." I said, "You need me." I said, "YOU NEED ME!" I said, "I love history, I love miniatures and I love detail work." I said, "YOU NEED ME!" (laughter) He said, "Well, when can you start?" I said, "I'll give my two weeks notice", and I worked for him the next three years. In the meantime, this television station changed hands right about that time. Bob Monte felt that he didn't have the money to continue his little art project. He had another business as well, but he couldn't continue with the little model business. So he called me up and he said, "Would you like to work back in television again?" I said, "I'm not sure." So he decided he'd call them up and tell them that I was an experienced art director and if they had a position for me, that I might be available. So they called me and went back out for another time. I worked at the TV station two years that time. Bob called me again and said, "I'm gonna start up drawings again on the buildings, can you come back?" So I went back to work for him. All total, I worked for Bob for nine years in making models of historic houses and buildings. While I was out at the television station, I was on the air. I had a children's program every day and drew for the children. I did a drawing segment. Actually, it was not my program, it was the children's show for the day and they had somebody, Happy Hank. It was live TV. We gave them hot dogs and potato chips and pepsi colas and a chance to draw their pictures and be introduced on the air. We drew and I gave every child a picture.

It was a fun time. I also started a correspondence course on the television program. One day I did a teaching segment on the show and I showed them line, and shape, how to shade. I did a whole series of this once a week. One time I did a French class on the air. I tried to have some variety. I never had a French lesson in my life.

Emily Jane Miles was working in the traffic department and I'd go in and ask her how to pronounce the words before I went on. (laughter)

Then I'd go on the air and I'd draw a picture, say of a little girl, and call it, this is jean filla. To this day, I'm probably not pronouncing it right. The kids would all pronounce the word. I would draw a little girl's picture and write it out. I said, "If you'll stay with me for ten weeks you'll learn a hundred French words." See, our outreach was seventy miles all the way around. I said, "If you'll write in to me, I'll send you a sheet with all these pictures I've drawn and you can learn with me and you can keep up with what we're learning." I had kids writing me from the boondocks, out at Buxton, out at Avon, all around everywhere for these little lessons that they would send in for. So that was kind of fun. Then, I say, I went on back with Bob and that was a lot of fun doing the models of historic houses and buildings. All during that time I was painting portraits off and on. Didn't have much time to do that, but I would do one for a favor for somebody, tucked in between all my other activities.

Dr. Patterson: And what is contingent?

Janet Latham: I stopped working for Bob Monte. He said after he got 52 or 53 models he wasn't going to print anymore, so he stopped

and suddenly I'm out of a job again. I looked around and there wasn't anything going, so I went out to the employment security and they found me a job doing drafting out at the forestry service. I also needed another job. It was just part-time at that particular time. That was with the job training program. They still feel that it was a good program back then; like CETA. It was a federally funded program. I worked for them three days a week. Then there was an art gallery, one of the very first in New Bern. It was a commercial venture. They had what I call decorator art in it, and a frame shop. It was really to sell the frames. I call it kind of art by the yard. Not very wonderful art, but anyway, it was art. So I worked at this frame shop two days a week and I worked three days a week at the forestry service. Then the frame shop decided to close down and go back to Jacksonville, and so I was just working at the forestry service. It began to be a bit boring. It was pretty much repetitive work. So I decided if I was ever going to do anymore with my art work I'd better get to it. I found out there was an art gallery downtown on the second floor of Henderson house who needed someone to run the shop while the owner taught school. She had bought it in the summer time and she was going to come back and take it over after school hours. So she asked me if I would run it for her during the school hours. That suited me.

It was just a few hours a day and I got exposure to something new again. This was all learning. Everywhere I went, every job I took, it was a learning thing, which made it worthwhile. I wasn't paid very much, believe me, Joe Pat. (laughter) After I worked there for a year,

she decided to get married. I had a lot of time on my hand while I was at that gallery. It was over the restaurant downstairs and people would come up and mill around and buy things and go through the other shops in the house. I did water colors for people and started getting back into pastel portraits and begin to do those with some regularity.

I had a lot of orders for those. Well, the owner decided to get married, and she decided to sell the gallery. When she sold it, she sold it to her sister-in-law. Her sister-in-law was working at Cherry Point and thought it was a glamorous little business and that she would like to eventually leave Cherry Point and get into it. Well, she said, "I will buy if Janet will run it for me." I said, "That suits me.

I'll be glad to stay on." As it was, it's a one person business, and it really didn't pan out well for two. So she decided she was losing money and she would sell it. Everybody thought I should buy it. I didn't feel I could afford it. Someone made a very good suggestion to me. They said make her an offer. It was for about one quarter of what she was asking. I said I still can't afford that, and this person said tell her you'll pay her so much a month. So, within a year I had it paid for and owned my own business and the clientele and all the trappings that went with the art gallery. I represented thirty-five artist! I just loved it! Never dreamed that I would enjoy being a shopkeeper! Enjoyed it tremendously! I was doing portraits, doing framing, selling, being representative of the artist!

Dr. Patterson: Is that continuing now?

Janet Latham: No. At that time we had invited a cousin of mine

who was in her seventies to come and make her home with us, Helen McCleery. Mom was less well at that time. In '76 she had a cancer surgery, and a year or two later she fell and broke her hip. My cousin at that time was still able. We were all a family. She liked to cook, so she was able to do a lot of cooking. Mom was on her walker. She could still do cooking. I came home to a dinner prepared for me. That's why I could do all this work. I had to leave my office to come and do things for them. Little emergencies arose and there were many demands. So that began to take place. Then at the same time, the Henderson house was sold about two years before that and Mr. Weaver had told me, he said, "I eventually I am going to want your space for an art gallery of my own because I am a professional artist." So I knew that was coming, but just didn't know when. It all kind of dove tailed, and so I gave up my gallery and came home and I've been here ever since. I pursued portraits rather assiduously, but things got very thick by looking after my senior people. My cousin Helen eventually died. I had to see her through the rest home and all that period. Then Mom's care has been increasingly involved. So, My art work sort of tapered off then.

Dr. Patterson: Are you doing anything now?

Janet Latham: Yes. Some. I haven't done any since Christmas. But I have so many commissions, that I'm embarrassed to sit here and tell you. I probably have about twenty-five portrait commissions that I'm sitting on upstairs that people have just been willing, "whenever you can get to them."

Dr. Patterson: These are personal portraits?

Janet Latham: Um huh.

Dr. Patterson: That's wonderful Janet. This has been a long interview for you. I've made you do a lot of talking, and I think it's been a wonderful interview. You have had a great career, and you've done great things. It's a pleasure to talk to you. I think we've talked enough though, and I think we ought to stop. But I do want to thank you for spending all this time with me and with the Memories program.

Janet Latham: Thank you Joe Pat. One thing, I had hoped that I might somehow get in some funny things. If I can remember some of those, is it all right if I jot some of those things down and turn those into you?

Dr. Patterson: You can tell them right now.

Janet Latham: I can't recall them right now. When the minstrel show came, they gave me a part in this minstrel show that I was talking about earlier, as a cupid. I was to go on the stage first and sing a little song and open the show. So when I came home and told my Daddy that I had a part in the minstrel, he didn't look very pleased, he said, "What part is that?" I said, "I'm going to be a cupid!" He laughed and threw up his hands and slapped his knee and said, "Thank God. I won't have to buy a costume for that one!" (laughter) I was so horrified. I said, "You will too!" "Oh no! Cupids don't wear costumes. They just go around with no clothes on." I was just so shocked. So Daddy loved that. He loved to tease. One of the things

I wanted to tell you about if we have a little more minute. Dad was very much the head of the household. Mom was the most relaxed mother in the world. For all our life, she let us play from attic to basement.

Nothing was off limits. Children could run in and out, yell, holler, shout. Mama was just as if it was just perfectly normal. She did her thing, we did ours. We weren't bad, we were just lively. Sometimes there would be twenty-five children climbing around in the trees out there. Her friends would come to see her and say, "Marjorie, aren't you terrified that they're gonna fall?" "Fall? I never gave it a thought." (laughter) So Mom has always been a person of no nerves, just gracious. She was a perfect balance for Dad. So when he would come home, we would be sitting around very relaxed in the afternoon not doing anything. Even the animals in the house picked up on this.

The dog would be lying in the yard just sleeping away. The cats just sleeping away, and we were all just relaxed. All of a sudden Daddy would come home. It was five o'clock. "Here comes Daddy." Zip! Everybody was on their feet. Mom said, "Quick, go out! Put a pot on the stove with some water boiling on it! Look busy everybody!"

So the dog would jump right up out of the yard and start treeing squirrels. It was the funniest thing. Daddy would come in. We were all busy around, setting the table. He could not abide the fact that we were not being productive and just wasting time. He thought that was just terrible.

Dr. Patterson: Your dad was a very unusual person, and a very great person I thought.

Janet Latham: He was. I am thankful that I had a very good rapport with him. He never intimidated me. Fred had some problems to work out there and so did my sister. But he was a joy to me. I would speak right up to him and he liked that. I'd follow him around downtown in his office. His office help and laboratory technician, Elizabeth Scales Marsh, told me this later, she said, "I'd get so tickled Janet. You'd want a nickel and your daddy would never say yes right away", and she said, "Doc Latham, why don't you just give her that nickel." He said, "I'm just going to wait to see how she talks me out of it." (laughter) So he would just pretend to ignore me and I'm walking behind him, saying, "Now, daddy I need a nickel. I need to go over and I need to buy this. I need a 'snowball" over at Gaskins. It costs one nickel." "Why can't they give it to you for less than that?" "Well, they put ice in it and they put..." He would make me explain everything for about ten minutes. Finally, he'd give me this nickel! He was never a push over for me. He frequently said no.

Dr. Patterson: Janet, this has been fun. If you have other things that you want to talk about, write them down and we'll get them in.

I thank you again.

END OF INTERVIEW