

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

DR. SIMMONS PATTERSON

INTERVIEW 1021

This is Dr. Joseph Patterson representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 1000. I am interviewing my brother, Dr. Simmons Patterson, at his home at 4503 Morgan Lane, Trent Woods, in New Bern, North Carolina. The number of the interview is 1021. The date is November 20, 1992. This is Dr. Patterson's third interview and this information is to supplement the information that the other two interviews conducted earlier by Dr. Francis King.

JOSEPH PATTERSON: Simmons, the tape has started now and I'm going to be talking to you about some things that didn't come up in your last two interviews, and they're very important for your life story.

We have the story of you being in New Bern and what you thought about medicine in New Bern and the sports in New Bern and some of the things about growing up in New Bern. But your story wouldn't be complete unless we take a look at the things that happened to you away from New Bern. So what I'd like to do is start out with your having left Woodberry and now you're going to Carolina. You went to Carolina, The University at Chapel Hill, for four years, and they were good years to you and I know about them, but I'd like for you to tell me about Carolina. What was Carolina like for you, and what happened to you during those four years?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Well, when I went to Carolina, it was a dream that I had had for years and years. I was fortunate enough when I went to Chapel Hill to have already made arrangements to have a roommate, Ralph Gardner of Shelby. Ralph's father at that time was Governor of North Carolina. We were fortunate also to secure a room

in Old East Dormitory and lived there for three years. Ralph and I both were pledged to the DKE Fraternity and enjoyed that tremendously.

We both had a desire to do well in our studies, and we were often kidded by our classmates for being too dedicated along that line. Both Ralph and I were very active not only in our scholastic work but in outside activities. We joined the DKE Fraternity and made many friends that have lasted through the years. I was fortunate enough to make my athletic numeral in basketball/baseball, and Ralph made his in football our freshman year. After that, I decided to more or less give up my athletic career because I wanted to concentrate on scholastics with the idea of going into medicine when I graduated.

Ralph was somewhat similar to that. I was very fortunate at Chapel Hill in being taken into many honorary organizations; such as the Golden Fleece, and both Ralph and I made Phi Beta Kappa. We were classmates throughout the four years. Many of our fraternity brothers and others kidded us because we studied in the evenings very much. It was difficult to study in the dormitory, so we used to go to one of the classroom buildings at Chapel Hill and study in the evenings.       JOE PATTERSON::

Well, Simmons, you also were a member of some other organizations, the Order of the Grail. Were you not an officer in that organization?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yes, I was an officer in the Order of the Grail, I was a member of the Golden Fleece. I obtained Phi Beta Kappa, and I was Vice-President of the senior class. I also was elected the most popular person in our senior class. I had the opportunity of being chosen President of my senior class, but I knew at that time

that I was going off to school up north to go into medicine, and I didn't know whether I would ever come back to North Carolina. So I told them I didn't think it was wise to be President, and so I was elected Vice-president. Several summers while I was a student I went back to summer school to take some of my science courses. I remember one summer when I took chemistry I was the only one taking the course.

JOE PATTERSON:: Now, Simmons, you feel, I imagine, that the four years at Carolina were really good years. You enjoyed them.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: They were the greatest years that I can imagine. I made many friends who have been close to me through the years. Of course, many of them have passed on now, but it was a memorable experience.

JOE PATTERSON:: Now I know that after Carolina you went to the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. How did you choose that school?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: When it came time to go to medical school I was undecided where I should go. I decided to visit the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Harvard Medical School, and Johns Hopkins. My father and I together visited the University of Pennsylvania and visited Johns Hopkins. I was not impressed with Johns Hopkins but was very impressed with Pennsylvania, so much so that I didn't go to Harvard to be interviewed. Interestingly enough, when I chose the University of Pennsylvania and was accepted, I went and told Dr. McNider (Dean of UNC School of Medicine) what my decision was. I remember him saying to me, "Young man, you're out of your mind!

How could you possibly turn down an offer from Harvard!", because I had been accepted both by Harvard and Pennsylvania, and I was without words. I didn't know what to tell him.

JOE PATTERSON:: Dr. McNider was the Dean of the Medical School at Chapel Hill.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: He was the Dean of the Medical School and a Harvard alumnus, and at that time it was an honor and a privilege to be even accepted at Harvard. He just couldn't understand my decision.

JOE PATTERSON:: Simmons, it's interesting, you and I do so many things alike. They are the three schools that I applied to three years later. One reason I elected to go to Harvard was because I'd followed you so much in your career I was tired of following you and trying to keep up with you, so I went to a different place. (laughter) Well what was it like being a student up in Philadelphia? How did you like those four years?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: They were some of the most difficult four years of my life. One reason was, when I was at Chapel Hill I took a liberal arts course and only took a minimum number of science courses.

The freshman class at Pennsylvania that I was a part of was composed mostly of students from schools in the northern part of the country and they had had many science courses, and it was a struggle for me the first year to compete with those people. They were so far advanced in their preparation for medical school and it was a difficult year for me. I was relieved when the year was over. I was so worn out

that year that the summer time I was just at a loss about what to do.

JOE PATTERSON:: Are you glad you went to Penn?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yes, I think so. I have often wondered what would have happened if I had gone to Harvard. Maybe I would have had a better preparation. But my life since going to Pennsylvania has been a full and happy life, and you have to say, well, if I had gone to Harvard, I wouldn't have had this life if I'd done that.

JOE PATTERSON:: You wouldn't have had your wife, you wouldn't have had your children. It wouldn't have worked out that way. As it was, when you went to Penn, this led you into further training in that vicinity, did it not, after medical school?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: That's right. In fact, at the end of my third year I served a junior internship at the Abington Memorial Hospital.

JOE PATTERSON:: That's near Philadelphia?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Philadelphia. I enjoyed it tremendously. So when the time came after graduation, when I was seeking internship, my first choice was Abington and that's where I went. Speaking scholastically about my work at Philadelphia, I was number one in my class my third year but I wasn't quite eligible for AOA.

JOE PATTERSON:: That's the medical honorary fraternity termed Alpha Omega Alpha.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: I came very close to being accepted, but I wasn't. I improved in medical school when the clinical experience was before me. I did much better dealing with patients than I did with books.

JOE PATTERSON:: And so you went to Abington Memorial Hospital for a years internship.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yes. After my junior year, my junior internship out there was a very happy one. I made some good friends, got a great experience, and decided that I would go there for my internship if accepted the next year.

JOE PATTERSON:: So you spent a year there in a rotating type internship, at Abington, after you graduated from Penn.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: I spent two years in rotating internship.

JOE PATTERSON:: And then what happened?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Well, my aspiration was to be a surgeon. Having known the faculty and so forth, I decided that I would accept a residency at Abington. An interesting fact was, I wanted to also apply for a surgical residency at Tulane. I didn't have the money to fly out so I rode the train all the way down to New Orleans and went to the medical school to have my interview. The dean said, "Young man, I'm sorry to tell you that we have already filled our residency program." Here I was, having gone all the way from Philadelphia to New Orleans for nought. But I never regretted taking my internship and surgical residency at Abington. I took a two year internship and a three year residency.

JOE PATTERSON:: Who were your mentors then?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: The main mentors were Dr. Fletcher Sain and Dr. Wright Hawkins.

JOE PATTERSON:: Now these were your colleagues.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: They were my colleagues.

JOE PATTERSON:: Who were your instructors?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Well, my instructors were some of the finest men I ever knew. The chief surgeon was Dr. Damon B. Pfeiffer, and his associates, were Dr. Montgomery Deaver and Dr. J. Walter Levering.

All three of them seemed to take a special interest in me and made my surgical residency a very enjoyable one. The first year of my residency I think will be interesting. They were really expecting me to be at the hospital all the time. I'll never forget one Sunday when I went to a professional football game in Philadelphia. When I came back and entered the front door, Dr. Pfeiffer was waiting for me and said, "Young man, where have you been?!" Well, I told him that I had gone down to see a professional football game. He said, "Young man, don't you know as long as you're a resident in surgery here you are not supposed to leave this hospital without first contacting me?!"

That shocked me, but that's just an example of how really strict and hard a residency it was. Dr. Montgomery Deaver took a special interest in me and sometimes embarrassed me. I became a junior surgical residency in my second year of the residency program and I'll never forget how he treated me. He would always contact me instead of the chief surgeon and it got me in a lot of embarrassing positions. But they both allowed me to do a tremendous amount of surgery, which was helpful later in life.

JOE PATTERSON:: Now, Simmons, you stayed in Abington for three years after your residency was completed?



SIMMONS PATTERSON: After my two-year internship was completed.

JOE PATTERSON:: When you finished your residency, did you decide to stay at Abington?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: During the second year of my residency I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do. Dr. Pfeiffer told me he was going to send me on a trip and he wanted me to visit some of the best institutions in the country before I made up my mind what my future would be. So I took a trip. I went to the Leahy Clinic in Boston, I went to one of the outstanding hospitals in New York, I went to the Sayre Clinic in Pennsylvania, and I went to the Mayo Clinic. They were very different in every respect from each other. One thing that turned me against the Mayo Clinic was the temperature. It was so cold that I knew I couldn't stand it. I was impressed with all I saw, but I felt that I would just like to complete my residency at Philadelphia.

An interesting thing happened my second year. The war had started and the senior resident had gone off to the service. At that time I was a junior resident and I was promoted to the senior residency in my second year, which meant that I did a greater amount of operative surgery than I would have had if this situation had not occurred. It gave me a lot of operative experience and a lot of responsibility.

When I finished my residency, Dr. Pfeiffer offered me the position of staying there. At that time I married my present wife Ruth Read.

She had been my nurse anesthetist at the hospital. I stayed at Abington one year longer before making a decision. Unfortunately, or fortunately, at that time, I had been working so hard so many continuous

days and nights that I developed a bleeding stomach ulcer. I still had to continue working even though the hemorrhage was a mild one.

It made me feel that I should make some type of a change because I couldn't go on like this. Ruth and I had a young baby boy. At that time when I had the hemorrhage, Dr. Pfeiffer told me he wanted me to take a month off and get some rest, so we went down to the Jersey shore.

About that time I learned that a gentleman from Laurinburg, North Carolina, named Mr. Hervey Evans, had made some contact with Dr. Pfeiffer about the possibility of me returning to North Carolina. It seems that Dr. Reece Berryhill, who was the Dean of the Medical School at Carolina, had told Mr. Evans when Mr. Evans approached him about my situation. It was interesting because the plans at Laurinburg were to build a new hospital. There was an air base hospital present on the outskirts of Laurinburg. Mr. Evans, with Dr. Pfeiffer's permission, contacted me. At the same time Ruth and I and our son were vacationing at the Jersey shore, I went to Laurinburg and visited him. It was a situation where my health was not good, I knew I had been overworked, I was bleeding from an ulcer, and I thought that I should make a change. The challenge at Laurinburg appealed to me very much and after talking it over with my wife, we decided to go to Laurinburg.

JOE PATTERSON:: How long did you stay in Laurinburg?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: I went to Laurinburg in 1946 and stayed there for six years. When I went to Laurinburg I recruited another young surgeon from Philadelphia, Dr. James Richardson, to accompany me when

he completed his residency. I took with me from Abington a nurse anesthetist and two operating room nurses. I went to New York and contacted an anesthetist who had applied to Abington for a job, Miss Lucy Schmidt. I talked to her and she said she would go to Laurinburg also. So a group of us went down to Laurinburg to the old Army Air Base Hospital at Maxton, North Carolina, which was inactive at the time. It was a real big step, and it was a difficult time. We had one anesthetist, and I employed two operating nurses, and after the first year Dr. Richardson came. We did a tremendous amount of surgery there. It is an area where the Indian population was very great. Indians fight among themselves, and we had a great amount of traumatic surgery.

During my period there I was fortunate enough to have several young aspiring surgeons to come work with me, and some medical students also.

We had two anesthetists and three operating room nurses. Some of the young men that came and worked with me went on to successful careers in surgery.

JOE PATTERSON:: Well, Simmons, that was a real pioneering effort on your part, and it worked out very well. Everybody knows that. Let me ask you this question, when things were going so well for you in Laurinburg, what prompted you to move back to New Bern?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: One thing that had bothered me was that I was a young man in my early thirties going to Laurinburg with a lot of responsibility. I did the best I could. The older doctors, for some reason or other, resented me being there. I have always been one that had principles that I adhere to, and in a lot of instances

when I had to make difficult decisions it didn't sit well with the doctors. But I felt like I had to do what I thought was best. In looking back on it I may have been too forward, but I've always had to do what I think is best. When I got Dr. Richardson to come down with me, he was more of an easy-going doctor than I. I'm not criticizing him, but he, in a way agreed, with the physicians where I sometimes had to disagree, and it was an unfortunate situation. As time passed, I just felt that I was fighting a losing battle, although, I was doing a tremendous amount of surgery. While we were in Laurinburg, in addition to young Simmons who came to Maxton-Laurinburg with us, we had two more sons and a daughter born, so we had four children. In my last year there I had something very distressing happen to me. I was doing a thyroid operation and in the middle of the operation a young nurse came to the door and said, "Dr. Patterson, I have a message for you." I was busy but I said, "What is it?" She said, "Your father in New Bern has just committed suicide", which was a distressing thing.

After I finished the operation I, of course, drove to New Bern and after the situation was under control I returned to Laurinburg. I thought to myself, taking everything into consideration about the difficult time at Laurinburg, that I might be interested in returning to New Bern.

JOE PATTERSON:: About that time, you remember Dr. Oscar Kafer died and had left a surgical void in New Bern and I was called, and you were called to come back. I was in Albermarle as a surgeon, and it was possible for me to go back earlier than you, so I came to New

Bern first and got things going and you joined me. Is that the way you remember it?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yes, it was. And that was the reason I made my decision to leave. I have never regretted leaving Laurinburg. I had a tremendous amount of operative experience there. I learned how to deal with people better than I had formerly done. It was a big move forward, because with my brother and I starting in New Bern from scratch, we knew it was going to be a difficult situation, but I have never regretted doing it.

JOE PATTERSON:: Simmons, in another earlier interview you discussed the medical situation in New Bern. So, you have gotten back to New Bern and certain things happened to you in the years you were at Laurinburg and in New Bern as a surgeon that are pretty outstanding things. I wonder if you would comment on the formation of the North Carolina Surgical Association?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yes. I'm sorry I haven't mentioned that. In the early years at Laurinburg, I and some of my very good surgical friends met and discussed the possibility of forming a North Carolina Surgical Association. I was a member of the original group that founded that organization. Those surgical friends have been close associates through the years. It was a great undertaking. We initiated this organization and set criteria for new members. It has been one of the happiest periods of my life to meet with this group. I became President of the organization in my third year. Also when I was at Laurinburg, I became a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons.

Also I became certified by the American Board of Surgery in 1946. Another thing about Laurinburg that has meant much to me through the years, is my joy in scientific writings. Even at Laurinburg, when we were so busy, I began writing and publishing articles. Through the years I have now had thirty-five articles published in the medical journals. I had published several articles before I left Philadelphia, and through the years I have enjoyed this very much.

JOE PATTERSON:: Now the North Carolina Surgical Association, of which you were a charter member, has grown into a mighty organization, and it is highly thought of throughout the state and nation.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yes, it has.

JOE PATTERSON:: Simmons, in later years (we're going ahead of ourselves a little bit) did you not write a history of this organization?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: I wrote a history of this organization and had it published in 1980. Later on, five or six or seven years, I wrote an up-dated history of the North Carolina Surgical Association in 1987.

JOE PATTERSON:: They're fine documents. I've read them. Now, you were instrumental also, as I recall, in establishing the North Carolina Chapter of the American College of Surgeons.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yes. There was a lot of discussion of establishing a North Carolina Chapter of American College of Surgeons because there was some feeling that it might conflict with the North

Carolina Surgical Association. I personally saw that it was inevitable that it would happen, and so we got together and formed the North Carolina Chapter of the American College of Surgeons. I'm maybe bragging a bit, but I'm happy to say that I have been President of both of these organizations.

JOE PATTERSON:: That's quite a distinction. Getting away from medicine for a moment, during these years you also became a trustee of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Is that correct?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: That's right, yes. I was a member of the Board of Trustees for six years. But that was after I had moved to Chapel Hill.

JOE PATTERSON:: It was after you had left New Bern. I wasn't quite sure. Well, in your career in New Bern, and of course I'm very familiar with that since you and I worked together in partnership for so many years. You had a fine career in New Bern too. One of the things that we both are proud of is the clinic that we built. I wonder if you would speak to that?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Well, my brother, Joe, and I practiced surgery down in the heart of New Bern for several years and the quarters were limited and so forth. Although we were not well off financially, we decided we would build us a clinic, and we borrowed the money from a friend.

JOE PATTERSON:: Tony Libbus.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yes, Tony Libbus, at a remarkably low rate of interest, and built this building in the outskirts of New Bern.

JOE PATTERSON:: It's a fine building, and it's still there. Simmons, along the way you made another great decision, important decision, for you and your future, you decided to leave New Bern. Why did you make that decision and when was it?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: It was in 1966 or '67. I don't know why in New Bern I wasn't extremely happy for a bit. I never felt, and this may be wrong, but I never felt that I actually appealed to the physicians in New Bern like I should. I don't know whether it was my personality or whether I was egotistical or what. I personally thought I was a good surgeon. But many times it just looked like surgical cases were going elsewhere, and I just became unhappy.

JOE PATTERSON:: So what did you do?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Well, about that time a friend of mine, Dr. David Sabiston, who is the head of the Department of Surgery at Duke University, contacted me because he knew I was restless in New Bern, and he told me that he thought there was an opportunity available that I might be interested in. He said there was going to be a North Carolina Regional Medical Program which is going to be a part of a program throughout the United States and was searching for someone to be head of their cancer division. At the time it was appealing to me, and I made a trip up there, and was offered the job. It was a difficult decision to make because it meant a great financial let-down. But I was restless in New Bern, and not as happy as I should be, and I accepted the offer. The offices of this program were in the Teer House in Durham.



JOE PATTERSON:: This was the Regional Medical Program that we're talking about?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yes.

JOE PATTERSON:: Did you go as the vice-chairman?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: I went as the Chief of the Division of Cancer. I was named the Director of the Cancer Division of the North Carolina Regional Medical Program. The Executive Director of the Program was Dr. Marc Musser.

JOE PATTERSON:: And this gave you a position at Duke also?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yes. I received an appointment in the Department of Surgery at Duke University granted to me by Dr. Sabiston.

JOE PATTERSON:: What was your position in that department?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: In that department I was to be consultant to the teachers, to the residents down in the out-patient department, particularly in the field of cancer. It was a very interesting and memorable experience. A month after I left New Bern to go up to the Durham area, I stayed at the University Motel in Chapel Hill. The first night I was there was the night that Martin Luther King was killed.

JOE PATTERSON:: How long were you with the Regional Medical Program?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: I started there in 1967. After being Director of the Cancer Division for two years, Dr. Musser was chosen to head the Veterans Administration division in the United States, and he was going to leave Durham.

JOE PATTERSON:: He was the head of the Regional Medical Program.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: He was the head of the Regional Medical Program and I worked under him. When he decided to leave, the Board of Directors of the program interviewed many people to take over Dr. Musser's job, and fortunately, I was chosen to be the head of the program. I stayed with them in that position until 1967. During those years, from the time I went to Durham til 1967, were very interesting ones for me because I made many contacts throughout North Carolina, not only in the cancer field but in other aspects. I had a great relationship with the Department of Surgery at Duke. Dr. Sabiston was wonderful to me, and I got along quite well with the residents, and I've kept up with them through the years, and I have never regretted my years there.

JOE PATTERSON:: You went to Durham in '67.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: And left in '74.

JOE PATTERSON:: You left the Regional Medical Program in '74.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: That's right.

JOE PATTERSON:: The program folded at that time, did it not?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: No, it did not. While I was at Duke, I also was Director of the Comprehensive Cancer Center. We had a program of early detection of cancer of the breast. When I left the Regional Medical Program, I went full time with Duke Medical School in the capacity of Associate Professor of Surgery and Director of the Comprehensive Cancer Center. We examined women from all over North Carolina using the new methods to detect early cancer of the breast: mammography, thermography, and physical examination. I served in this

capacity for a year, and it was a great experience. About that time a friend of mine, Dr. Edwin Monroe, who was associated with East Carolina University, contacted me about returning to eastern North Carolina to become Executive Director of the Eastern Area Health Education Program.

JOE PATTERSON:: That's the AHEC .

SIMMONS PATTERSON: That's the AHEC Program. I'd only been with the Comprehensive Cancer Center for a year and was relatively happy . I wasn't sure about the future, what the course would be, because there was always the possibility that that program would not be lasting indefinitely. So at his request I was interviewed for a position at East Carolina University. I was very impressed with the possibilities of a future medical school. I was told that, if I would come down and direct the Eastern Area Health Education Center, which was really supervised by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, that when the proposed Medical School at East Carolina University became reality, that I would be offered a Professorship in Surgery. All this was most appealing. Interestingly enough, during the interview, I had to contact the Officials in the seven different towns in eastern North Carolina that were going to be a part of the Eastern Area Health Education Center. I would fly on a plane from the University of North Carolina to these individual cities and be interviewed by all these people. When they put their approval on me and I had time to think of the future, I decided it was a wise move. I wanted to return to eastern North Carolina. Another change, but I had a love for eastern

North Carolina. The essentials involved, the remuneration and so forth, I felt were important also. So we decided to make that move.

I forgot to mention, Joe Pat, when we were at Chapel Hill we built a home up there.

JOE PATTERSON:: Yeah, you had a nice home in Chapel Hill.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: We had built a beautiful home in Chapel Hill and enjoyed living there, and we had no difficulty selling when we decided to go to Greenville.

JOE PATTERSON:: Now, in the years at East Carolina, and with the medical school, you also became Director of Continuing Education in the Medical School.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: That's true. But in the early days when I went to Greenville, I still was asked by the staff of the Pitt Memorial Hospital to handle its education processes. I arranged, in cooperation with the officials at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, to get approval for the Continuing Education Program down in Greenville, which was a great boost. In other words, we could bring in speakers from outside and the doctors would get credit for the Continuing Medical Education activities which was essential for the doctors and for a budding medical school.

JOE PATTERSON:: And in these two capacities as Director of the Continuing Medical Education Program and head of AHEC, you had contacts with people all throughout eastern North Carolina.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: We certainly did. In fact, we traveled throughout Eastern North Carolina and examined all of the cities that

were participating in the Education Center Program. I and another gentleman from Chapel Hill decided what each place needed, based on our visits. We had the funds to build education center buildings in these seven cities in Eastern North Carolina.

JOE PATTERSON:: One of these cities was New Bern. Simmons, one of the honors that came to you during this time was that the building, which was built in New Bern next to the hospital, was named for you.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: That's correct, and it was a great honor. I was totally surprised by it.

JOE PATTERSON:: Well, you stayed at East Carolina until when?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: I stayed from '74 until my retirement in '85.

I became Associate Dean of Continuing Medical Education for the Medical School and Professor of Surgery. We had a wonderful office complex in the new Pitt Memorial Hospital that was built. I had a great experience. It's interesting, Pat, that when we obtained approval of our educational activities from the American Medical Association that would give doctors official credit, that the University of North Carolina through Dr. Sapp cooperated with me and helped us get approval so that we could offer this information. I've always appreciated the cooperation that he gave us for that instance.

JOE PATTERSON:: Well, Simmons, you retired from East Carolina and you stayed in Greenville for a few years after that?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Pat, I forgot to say that the year that I departed from New Bern, I was unexpectedly, for me, elected as a member of the Southern Surgical Association, which was a great honor. In

fact, I think I was the only surgeon in eastern North Carolina in that association at that time. In 1981, just prior to my going to a meeting of this organization out of state, I was operated on in an emergency situation for abdominal distress. I had perforated a diverticulum of my large intestine and had to have an intestinal resection and a colostomy. I think that brought to me the fact that it was time to retire. Soon after I recovered, I decided that I'd reached the age that it was time to think of taking an easier course of life and so I resigned. I finally had a second operation to close my colostomy and decided to return to New Bern in 1985.

JOE PATTERSON:: And you have lived out near the Country Club since that time. Now, Simmons, this has been a great story about a very successful person. Let's put that aside for a minute now and get you back to New Bern as a young person growing up in this town.

You lived through some happy years here. What was New Bern like when you were a youngster?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: What age do you mean Pat?

JOE PATTERSON:: When you were a young boy and when you were a young man.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: After going to school a few years?

JOE PATTERSON:: Well, what about when you were just a youngster playing in New Bern? Do you remember those days? What I mean is, do you remember New Bern as a small town, a southern town. In older days, was it a quiet town?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: In the high school days I was very athletically

inclined and played basketball and baseball and have fond memories of those days. I played on the baseball team and the basketball team.

Interestingly enough, back in those days when we took trips away from New Bern there were no buses. Parents would drive you in automobiles.

We had some great athletic teams. I'll never forget one day that we played the Morehead City team who had a pitcher by the name of Jake Wade who later became a member of the Detroit Tigers. He had never lost a game, and in the state tournament we eliminated him. We beat him and eliminated him! I'll never forget that. And I'll never forget the time also when we reached the finals of eastern North Carolina and went to Raeford to play them. There was a Scotsman by the name of Duncan McNeil that had a fast ball that we just couldn't hit. We were defeated at that game and eliminated.

JOE PATTERSON:: Simmons, do you remember the way South Front Street used to be? Do you remember the piers and the wharves and the river activity down there?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Pat, the thing I remember most about the river down there were the baptisms that occurred among the colored people down at what is now the base of the Neuse River bridge. They were interesting.

JOE PATTERSON:: What were they like?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Well, mostly the black people were involved and they would all wear white garments and be emerged in the water. I was always afraid they were going to drown.

JOE PATTERSON:: I remember they used to come by our house on

New Street parading down the street going to the river. Do you remember much about the Depression?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: I do remember the Depression. I remember an incident. I was visiting my aunt, Mrs. Graham Andrews, and her family at Virginia Beach, Virginia, when the banks closed in New Bern and elsewhere. My father was there and we got in the car and drove faster than ever to try to get back to New Bern before the banks closed, but they had closed by the time we got there.

JOE PATTERSON:: Do you remember, Simmons, in those years whether life was hard for our family or for people that you knew?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: No, Pat, I don't remember it that way. I remember New Bern being a quiet, peaceful place. I loved to play golf and spent much time playing golf out at the Country Club and I don't remember those days being hard.

JOE PATTERSON:: I think you and I were fortunate. I have no bad memories of the Depression either; yet, so many of our friends had such a terrible time. So we were lucky and our parents made it easy for us. Simmons, do you remember much about the hurricanes that took place in New Bern?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: I sure do. I remember the hurricanes after I moved back to New Bern from Laurinburg. We had a home out in DeGraffenreid Park and I will never forget those hurricanes. One instance I'll always remember was I was supposed to present a paper at the North Carolina Surgical meeting to be held down in Georgia. We had made arrangements to go, and Ruth's mother was coming from



Philadelphia to stay with the children. This hurricane came when she was here. I was to present this paper, and I said, "Ruth, I just got to go", and so we headed out of town. As I got down to Pollocksville the water was so deep we couldn't get across the bridge. This old man with a tractor came up and hitched the car and towed us across there. As I started going down the road I tried to stop but didn't have any breaks. I'll never forget that as long as I live. We drove very carefully!!

JOE PATTERSON:: This was in the 1950's.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yes. That instance when the hurricane occurred, Ruth's mother, Mrs. Read, came down from Philadelphia to stay with our children while we were away. I remember we left a tub full of water. That was all they were going to have when we left.

Dr. Ben Warren came by to see us just before we left and he couldn't believe that we were going to leave her in that situation. But I had prepared this paper and I selfishly just said I had to go down and deliver it.

JOE PATTERSON:: And you got there.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yep.

JOE PATTERSON:: Simmons, you and I both spent a lot of time at the Country Club when we were growing up. What was the club like way back then? What was the clubhouse like, what was golf course like, what were the tennis courts like? What are your memories of the old Country Club?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: I remember the Country Club very well. In

fact when I returned to New Bern in 1952, I became a member of a foursome; Dr. Sherman Lewis, Mr. Bill Ferebee and Mr. Hadley Marsh. We used to play golf every Wednesday. It was great but it couldn't compare to the present day Country Club.

JOE PATTERSON:: What was the old clubhouse like?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Well, I have fond memories of the old clubhouse, but it didn't have all of the amenities of the present one. I remember when we would play golf we would always have lunch before we played.

JOE PATTERSON:: It was a shingle building as I remember it.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yeah, it was a shingle building. As we talk I want to tell you one incident that's most interesting. I was fortunate and elected President one year and they were going to have the annual induction on a Saturday night. I dressed at home to head out to the club and I got an emergency call to go to the hospital. I went to the hospital. I was called because there was a patient on whom I had done a gastric resection because of a ruptured stomach ulcer, and I wanted to see how he was getting along. When I went up there to see him, as I went in the door he vomited a tremendous amount of fluid and I said, "What in the world has happened to you?!" He said, "Well, I didn't do anything wrong. I just ate a pint of ice cream." Well, I couldn't believe that, but I had to take him back to the operating room and re-operate on him, and I was about an hour and a half late getting out to the club for the presentation.

JOE PATTERSON:: During your tenure as President of the club there

were some major changes made, were there not? You built a swimming pool?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yeah, we built the swimming pool, that's right.

JOE PATTERSON:: That was your year. Was the course enlarged then to eighteen holes or had that already taken place?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: That had already taken place. Back when you and I were playing, you know the greens were sand greens.

JOE PATTERSON:: And there were just nine holes when you and I were youngsters.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yeah, but when I came back there were eighteen holes.

JOE PATTERSON:: Simmons, who were some of the great tennis players at Country Club when you were a young man?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: I remember Gip Lucas, Sherman Lewis, and Dan Roberts particularly.

JOE PATTERSON:: And the tennis courts were located not far from the clubhouse.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: They were directly in front of the clubhouse away from the water, yes.

JOE PATTERSON:: Simmons, when you were growing up, did you go to many dances?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yes. I remember at the pavilion at Atlantic Beach there were often "name bands" that came there, Paul Whiteman.

JOE PATTERSON:: I can't remember the others. I just know that

there were a lot of them.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Many big name bands and they were a lot of fun.

JOE PATTERSON:: This was at the old casino at Atlantic Beach.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yeah, that's right.

JOE PATTERSON:: Looking back at our younger days in New Bern and our days together as surgeons, and while you were here after I left, are there any particular people who impressed you more than others that you might like to say something about?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: One man I particularly remember, Pat, is Tony Libbus. He owned a drug store in New Bern and was a great friend of both you and me. When it came time for us to think about building our office we had to borrow some money, and I'll never forget he lent us some money at four percent interest and that's the way we built that clinic. He was a great person in many ways.

JOE PATTERSON:: And Billy Ferebee was important.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yeah. My best friend in boyhood was Billy Ferebee. He and I were inseparable through the years. We used to walk out to the Country Club and play golf. The Ferebee's lived right down the street from where our house was on New Street. I remember my mother calling them the "darling Ferebee's." She said, "Simmons, they mean more to you than anything in the world." I was close to that family through the years and I was distressed when young Billy died. I think if Billy had been more ambitious he could have done great things in life, but he seemed to be content with New Bern and

living here.

JOE PATTERSON:: Simmons, these memories are great. Let's shift from that type situation to some general questions I'd like to ask you. You have had a long career in medicine and you've been retired now and you watch how things are going. How does medicine, the way you remember it, the way we used to practice it, compare with medicine these days?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: It's a different world, Pat. Different in every aspect. When you and I came here, we were both well trained surgeons and we had many difficulties in our practice, anesthesia particularly. The atmosphere was different from anything we knew.

I'm amazed at what you and I in particular were able to do under trying circumstances. I can recall operations that were done for the first time in New Bern by you and me, and how we did them, you know, sometimes it's impossible. I can remember one time on a holiday when there was terrible accident. Fortunately, Miss Lucy Schmidt, the anesthetist I'd known in Laurinburg, was visiting us. We had an open chest case, and I remember you operating on that. We could never have done that if she hadn't been here to give the anesthetic.

JOE PATTERSON:: There's another operation that you and I did that neither of us has mentioned in these interviews. One day we did a repair of an esophageal hiatal hernia through the chest, and that may have been the first elective chest procedure ever done in New Bern.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: I'm sure it was. I really am sure it was. And you know you did a total gastrectomy out at Good Shepherd Hospital

and I assisted you with it. That had never been done before. Really, when we came back, we did a lot of operations on fractured hips using what we call an instrument known as the Engel- May direction finder that was a great step forward. I'm not sure about this, but I think probably we were the first that would operate on children born with what's called a pyloric stenosis (junction of the stomach and intestine). So we did that type of surgery.

JOE PATTERSON:: We also did intra-medullary nailing of fractures putting metal rods inside bones to bring the fractured parts together.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Right.

JOE PATTERSON:: What do you think, Simmons, of patient-physician relationships then compared to now?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Pat, I think it's a whole new ballgame, medicine today and what we knew. I think the relationship between patient and physician was much, much closer back in those days. I mean, an individual patient was really something. I don't mean in any way to criticize the situation today, but it's just a different world. It's more informal. Personal relationship is just not as it was then.

JOE PATTERSON:: The charges that are made for care also differ.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yeah. Here again, I'm not criticizing the situation today because this is the way the world is. But I'll never forget one time I did an emergency appendectomy on a young boy in the middle of the night. The family wanted a private room and private nurses, and I did it. When I sent the bill on discharge for a hundred

dollars, I was told that was the most outrageous charge they'd ever heard. Just think of what goes on now.

JOE PATTERSON:: Yes. I don't think we made much money in those days and we really didn't worry a lot about it.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: That's right, we didn't.

JOE PATTERSON:: Are you glad you went into medicine?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yes, I am. Yes, I am. Sometimes I've had thoughts that maybe I could have done well in other fields, not only because I've done surgery and medicine, but I've learned to know so many good people. I mean, through the years the doctors and their families I've known have just brought me together with people all over the country.

JOE PATTERSON:: I've often thought that you would have done very well in politics, that you would have followed our grandfather's footsteps very well and would have been quite a success. Do you regret not having done that?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: No, cause I doubt if I'd have made it. I'm too outspoken. I don't think I'd have been a politician. I think I'd have been crucified because I can't sway with the wind. And I'm not criticizing politicians, but they are much more open-minded if that's a good word, than I would have been.

JOE PATTERSON:: Two of your sons have gone into medicine and they have been great successes. At this point in time, if some young person came to you for advice and said, "Dr. Patterson, would you advise me to go into medicine"?, what would you say to him?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: I'd say yes. This is a great time because advances are coming along. When you and I were practicing, we didn't dream medicine would ever reach the stage it is today. Things are being done that I would have said would have been impossible. I think it's a great field, but I think you need to be very specialized to practice today. I think the day of the general practitioners is about gone. It's a different ballgame.

JOE PATTERSON:: Since you have been back to New Bern and have been living out here in woods near the Country Club you have led a much quieter life. As we sit here in your den, in your office, talking, I'm looking up at a shelf where you have notebooks set next to each other. This must be five or six feet long and there must be twenty black notebooks up there. What's in those notebooks?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: That's an interesting question, Pat, because through the years I've saved things. I mean, my good wife Ruth said she doesn't know how I do it. But as things have happened, for some reason or other, I have saved them and have now collected them in different volumes. I don't know what I'm gonna do with what I have.

JOE PATTERSON:: This is the story of your life?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Yes, it is. Yes, it is. I don't know why, I'm no different from anybody else, but so many great things have happened to me. I mean, I think I've been a very fortunate person. Things have broken fine, I have a wonderful family, I've done well in surgery, and it's been a joy for me to go step by step through the years. Now I don't know what I'm gonna do with these scrap books but



they're here.

JOE PATTERSON:: This tells the story of your life and your career from the beginning until now with newspaper clippings that you've kept through the years, letters, all the things that have happened to you. That's a wonderful things to do.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: I feel like if somebody would say, "Well, who do you think you are? What are doing that for?" It's not for glory. It's just because I've enjoyed doing it.

JOE PATTERSON:: Simmons, we're coming to the end of what's been a very good talk and interview. Let me ask you if there are any other things that you would like to speak to before we turn this off.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Well, Pat, you asked me a little while ago did I enjoy doing this and I said yes, I did.

JOE PATTERSON:: This is your notebook history.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Notebooks. I've had a philosophy of life and I think it came from Shakespeare, it says, "To thine own self be true and then it will follow as night to day, thou cans't be false to any man." I think that's the kind of philosophy I've tried to follow. I've tried to be what I am, to say what I am, and let the chips fall where they may. I mean, I've made mistakes, but I don't regret anything.

JOE PATTERSON:: Well, Simmons, you truly have had a wonderful career and it's been fun sitting here remembering all of this with you and adding this to the other interviews that you've had. So this rounds out then your story for the Memories of New Bern, and it's been great. I thank you for talking to me and the Memories group thanks

you.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: Well, Pat, it's been a privilege. I'm sorry that we don't see more of each other, but we each have things we're trying to do. But it's been great and I've enjoyed it.

JOE PATTERSON:: Simmons, I just remembered there are some other things that we need to talk about before we stop, some things that you have done and some awards that you have received, and I wish that you would tell me about them now.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: In 1947 when I arrived in Laurinburg, North Carolina, I originated the Crippled Children's Clinic utilizing orthopedic surgeons from Charlotte, North Carolina. In 1982 I was awarded the Distinguished Service Award at the University of North Carolina for my contributions to medicine and surgery. In 1992 the first F. M. Simmons Patterson Annual Lecture was originated by the Department of Surgery at East Carolina University. I was a member of the Morehead Scholarship Committee of the University of North Carolina, from 1952 to 1974. When I joined the faculty at Greenville in 1974, I was appointed Professor of Surgery and maintained that appointment from 1974 to 1982. In 1982 I was made the first Emeritus Professor of Surgery at the East Carolina University School of Medicine.

JOE PATTERSON:: Well, Simmons, that's a remarkable story. In all of these achievements of yours there's one that you didn't mention and let me mention it, in 1974 I remember that you were made "Tarheel of Week" by the News and Observer for one Sunday and that was a distinct

honor. Now, do you think there are any other things that we could talk about? I think there is one other thing we need to talk about.

You received an award from the dentists of eastern North Carolina for the help you had given them when you were in charge of the AHEC program

SIMMONS PATTERSON: I have a plaque.

JOE PATTERSON:: That was presented to you by the New Bern Chapter, was it?

SIMMONS PATTERSON: It was presented to me by Dr. Kenneth Gibbs who was president of the 5th District Dental Society in 1980.

JOE PATTERSON:: And that was in reward for all the help you had given the eastern North Carolina dentists with continuing education.

SIMMONS PATTERSON: That's right.

JOE PATTERSON:: Well, Simmons, again let me thank you for telling me all these things. This has been a remarkable story and I'm glad it's on tape and preserved for the future.

END OF INTERVIEW