

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

ERNEST C. RICHARDSON JR., M. D.

INTERVIEW 1005

This is Dr. Joseph Patterson representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 1000. I am interviewing Ernest C. Richardson Jr., MD, and the interview number is 1005. This interview is being conducted on Friday, August 14, 1992. We are at Dr. Richardson's residence at 4001 Trent Pines Drive in New Bern.

Dr. Patterson: Let me go ahead Ernest and ask you a few questions and you respond to them any way you want to. First of all, what is your full name?

Dr. Richardson: I was named after my father, it's Ernest Christopher Richardson, Jr. I've never been known except by two names and that was Ernest and some of the salesmen at my father's store nicknamed me "Hambone" and that stuck with me right on through high school.

JP: Ernest, I remember the "Hambone" throughout school years but that name has passed now. Now, where was your father from?

Dr. Richardson: My father was born here in a place called Jasper. His mother was a Wetherington and his father came from Edenton, and they started a boarding house, rooming house located at what is known as the Depot on the corner of Queen and Hancock Street. My grandmother, my father's mother, died in childbirth, she was a Wetherington. There are so many Wetherington's in that area it was known as the Wetherington community. The family farms extended from Tuscarora to Swansboro.

As usual in this area, they broke up and married, and I would say that the family ties were there, but they never met and held family reunions like most of those people did when I was born and up until

World War II.

JP: When your father came to New Bern, did he start your store right away?

Dr. Richardson: Yes. When his mother died, he went to live with an uncle in Florida, he (my farther) and his sister. His grandfather remarried again, and in fact, his grandfather married four times. Most of them died in childbirth. In those days death at childbirth was not unusual . The family was really quite extensive and he went to live with his uncle who was a lawyer in Florida and he came back when he was a young man and he married my mother when he was about twenty-two years old and my mother was about twenty-one.

JP: When were you born?

Dr. Richardson: July 6, 1917. He was ready to join the Army and was turned down because my mother was pregnant when the first World War began.

JP: The store that your father ran was where?

Dr. Richardson: My father lived in the big boarding house right next to the corner building of Queen and Hancock Streets, and when he married he got this building and opened a general store and meat market. I was born in the boarding house.

JP: The boarding house was where in relation to the train station?

Dr. Richardson: Not more than 500 yards.

JP: On Queen Street?

Dr. Richardson: No, it was on Hancock Street and the railroad station was on what they call Pasteur Street and Queen Street. The

these streets met to form a triangle.

JP: Was the boarding house on the same side as Pinnix Drug Store?

Dr. Richardson: No, it was diagonally across the street and in front of what was known then as the Terminal Hotel run by Mr. Charles Taylor.

JP: That was the brick building across the way that has just been torn down?

Dr. Richardson: Yes, just torn down now in the late eighties. In the beginning the hotel was a wooden structure which they moved back and put up one of the first brick buildings for hotel construction. It was known as the Terminal Hotel and it existed as such until after World War II, and then they converted that to, I believe, apartments, and then it just decayed and was torn down recently.

JP: When it was in its early years, who stayed there?

Dr. Richardson: In its early years the salesmen and the travelers on the Norfolk Southern and Atlantic Coast Line trains which went to Morehead that came from Raleigh area and going to the beach. The largest group were the sales people, which at that time were quite numerous and applied a trade in New Bern from Raleigh to Charlotte, Winston-Salem and Richmond. The Atlantic Coast Line came from Wilmington and South Carolina.

JP: Your family had this boarding house too?

Dr. Richardson: That was my grandfather. His name was Charles Henry Richardson and he ran the boarding house. He remarried again after my grandmother died and they ran that boarding house right until

after World War I and they closed it out in 1921.

JP: What happened to it?

Dr. Richardson: A family moved in at that time and they lived there until the bank failures, and then I believe the bank took it over along with my father's store building. In 1935 my father regained both buildings.

JP: What did he do with it then?

Dr. Richardson: Fixed it up and we moved in it.

JP: So, that's where you lived. Where were you living before that?

Dr. Richardson: Before then we were living above the store where the upstairs extended from next to the house over to Queen Street, and they made the lower portion into two businesses. One was originally a cafe run by a James Whitcomb, and the other was the store. The cafe was on the Queen Street side and it catered to travelers coming in and leaving on the train. At the same time there was a cafe in the railroad station run by a Scotsman named MacDonald. These were the two eating places. The hotel finally opened up a dining room over there and did well until the Depression hit. I believe there was a strike about 1929, and the railroad popularity and financial conditions changed considerably.

JP: What was your father's store like?

Dr. Richardson: It was a general store, meat market, and grocery store, plus generic drugs; such as, "3-Sixes" which was very popular in those days. It would cure everything. It was a preparation

containing quite a bit of quinine. And rubbing alcohol, turpentine, Vicks Vapor Rub was very popular, and Lydia E. Pinkham, and B.C., and shortly after that B.C. Headache Powders, Stanback Powders came out and Goody Powders. In fact, there were just about as many remedies for headaches over the counter treatments as there were causes for headaches. The store was considered a success; but in reality we ate good and had the security that we had something to eat and a place to sleep and something to wear, but spending money for luxuries was not available. My father also went into commercial fishing to supplement his income.

JP: Did you ever work in the store?

Dr. Richardson: I was one of three children and I detested the store, evidently at a very early age. I always looked for work in the summer time at other places, which I continued to do. My brother and my sister were very interested in it, but I never had an interest in it.

JP: Your brother and sister were younger than you.

Dr. Richardson: My brother was three years younger than I and my sister was two years younger.

JP: And your brother was Charles?

Dr. Richardson: Charles, he was named after his grandfather, Charles Henry Richardson, and one of the salesmen nicknamed him "Skeeter" who was a character in the funny paper. When he was about three or four years old he was a very active child. The name "Skeeter," was used from the very first day and hung to him until he died. He

was a tall, handsome, blue eyed, very popular boy.

JP: Skeeter died just recently?

Dr. Richardson: He died in 1990 of a heart attack.

JP: And your sister Dolly?

Dr. Richardson: My sister died before then about 1985 from heart trouble.

JP: Now, she was younger also.

Dr. Richardson: She was two years younger than I.

JP: So, Skeeter was the youngest.

Dr. Richardson: He was the youngest. He was born June 16, 1920 and my sister was born July 18, 1919. In spite of my father's illness we were a very close family unit.

JP: Where were some of the places you worked? You mentioned the fact that you had summer jobs.

Dr. Richardson: The first recollection I had was working at J. C. Penney's Store when I was in high school.

JP: Where was that located?

Dr. Richardson: That at the time was located on Middle Street next to the old First Citizens Bank. The building is still there but very few people remember J. C. Penney's Store being there. Then later they move to larger quarters down in the next block on Middle Street and it was about twice as large. They stayed there a short time and that place was taken over by Belks.

JP: That's where the O. Marks building is?

Dr. Richardson: O. Marks building, that is a better name because

more people would remember that as the Marks building.

Then, they moved up on the corner of Middle and Broad Street down on the Bangert property. They built a building for them there and they stayed there, I believe, until about 1960 when they moved in the mall, wasn't it?

JP: Yes. Ernest, while we're on this subject, let me ask you what you remember about the block of Middle Street where Penney's was located. What other stores along there do you remember?

Dr. Richardson: Most of those buildings that I can remember there on the corner of Broad and Middle Street were on the north side; the Mohn building, which was of brick construction which was unusual for the area and was two stories. The main structure business there was a drug store called King's Drug Store with offices on the second floor.

JP: That's the northwest corner?

Dr. Richardson: Yes, the northwest corner. And on the opposite corner was a wooden structure, but there was a dry goods store, I was trying to think of the gentleman's name. It seems to me like it was Baxter. I can't remember.

JP: What corner was that?

Dr. Richardson: That would be on the southwest corner, wouldn't it? It was across from the Green Door Restaurant.

JP: The Green Door Restaurant was on the southeast corner.

Dr. Richardson: Southeast? Then, this would be on the southwest corner.

JP: Where was Williams' cafe?



Dr. Richardson: Just before the Depression, the dry goods store failed and that cafe was put there and they remodeled it and the front of those stores were brick and glass. Next to the cafe was a flower shop, Shriver's Florist, and later that became Emmie's Flower Shop, and next to that, if I recall correctly, was Wood's Drug Store. It was Mr. Wood, and his son was Ernest Wood, who later became a doctor and head of the Radiology department at Chapel Hill.

JP: He was a world famous Neuroradiologist and the first Chairman of the Department of Radiology at the medical school at Chapel Hill.

Dr. Richardson: Then, if I remember correctly, the old First Citizens Bank which is an imposing building of marble.

JP: That's where the Art Center is now.

Dr. Richardson: And across the street from that were a number of stores. Mainly, there was a small barber shop at that time and next to it was the famous Baxter Sporting Good run by Ben Baxter and Guy Gaskins and Bernie Cole. Then next to that - was trying to think what was originally on the corner.

JP: How about Caprio's Shoe Store?

Dr. Richardson: Thomas McCann and Buster Brown shoes were jammed in there next to Wood's Drug Store, if I'm not mistaken, and then Kress's, and then we had Woolworth at that time, and then a Charles store, and then there was an Elk's Temple corner.

JP: If you back up just a little bit, wasn't Kafer's Bakery in there too?

Dr. Richardson: When I was a kid, it seems to me like that had

started out on Broad Street, and it had burned down and then they rebuilt it in a small place. You must remember that these were small stores, I believe, owned by the Robinsons, whose brother was William Blades that had the district Texaco oil and gas business at that time, and they were made into small stores which were later combined to make larger places for larger business. You're right, there was a Kafer's Bakery in there which did not last. It was next to Shriver's in that area. Also a successful and well known business was an appliance center run by a lady, Mildred (Boody) Hawk.

JP: That's right. And do you remember the A&P store in that area?

Dr. Richardson: Oh yes. The A&P store with, what was his name? He recently just died and he was manager for a long time.

Fred Latham: Short?

Dr. Richardson: Short, but who was after that that stayed there until they moved? Yeah, it was an A&P store. Then, there was another store there that ran a meat market, Bernie Sweat, lived out in National Avenue area and when the A&P moved, I believe he closed up and opened up there. He was what they called at that time a local independent merchant.

JP: Ernest, across the street from these stores on Middle Street where Baxters was located, do you remember a Chinese laundry?

Dr. Richardson: It was over on the side of the Green Door area. Again, you must realize that the Green Door Restaurant combined the small store that was next to it, and he moved across the street over

there in the area of Wood's Drug Store. The reason I remember that is because my mother used to carry my father's shirts and collars to be cleaned, and at Christmas time he always gave his customers what we called paper whites or narcissus flowers for trading with him.

JP: This is the Chinese laundry place?

Dr. Richardson: Yes. He stayed there until the Depression wiped him out.

JP: Ernest, you've mentioned the Green Door Restaurant several times. What was that restaurant? What do you remember about that?

Dr. Richardson: It was opened by a Mrs. H. Waldrop during the Depression, in fact, I think it came into being somewhere around 1933 or '34. She had two children, Carolyn and Grayson. Carolyn became a nurse and Grayson an M.D.

JP: And it was right on the corner of Broad and Middle Street on the southeast corner?

Dr. Richardson: Right and she ran a very modern establishment for that time; excellent food, excellent help, and excellent cooks.

JP: Wasn't it associated with the Episcopal Church?

Dr. Richardson: I do not recall an association. I was always under the impression that it was Mrs. Waldrop's brainchild.

JP: Fred, do you remember anything about that? My mother was very active in that restaurant for quite a while and that's why I think the Episcopal Church was involved. I think she told me this, and that was the role she played in it. Now, whether that was after Mrs. Waldrop gave it up, I don't know. It may of passed through several hands.

Dr. Richardson: The Green Door opened there in, I believe, 1933 or '34 just before I went off to college. Then, I do not remember more about it because when I came back I entered med school in 1938 and in '39 I had to drop out because of a lung abscess following a tonsillectomy for a year, and there was the old Blades home that had been converted into a hotel.

JP: This was on Broad Street where the First Citizens Bank now stands. Vernon Blades home you're talking about?

Dr. Richardson: Vernon Blades, and it had been sold to Mr. McLawhorn and then he sold it to the Miles brothers.

JP: What was that house like? What did it look like?

Dr. Richardson: It was imposing southern style home with large white columns with a very large back yard which was decorated with camellia bushes and rose bushes.

JP: The Blades had lived there for a long time, had they?

Dr. Richardson: As far as I can remember as a child. Then when the Depression came, is when I believe it changed hands. Mr. McLawhorn bought it at auction and then he ended up selling it to the Miles brothers, Forrest (Dan) and Fred Miles, and they established the Queen Anne Hotel which was quite successful and was one of the outstanding hotels in Eastern North Carolina for that time.

JP: Did they enlarge it?

Dr. Richardson: They enlarged it. They kept the front of the building as the entrance and an office space and a lounge and they kept the large beautiful fireplaces, and in the fall and winter they

kept those lit for the guests. The addition was of brick construction and added on to the back of the original building.

JP: Now, this building occupied most of the block, didn't it, from Middle Street to Craven Street?

Dr. Richardson: I would say it occupied from about one third of the block which was in the middle of the block. The Bangert property occupied the corner on Middle and Broad, and then came a two story building where Mr. and Mrs. Braddy Lived. She also had a beauty parlor in her home. Then the Blades property and then, there on the corner, wasn't there a service station? It seems to me like Mr. Carpenter had a small flower shop there.

JP: Was his house there too?

Dr. Richardson: His house was across the street on Craven Street. Mrs. Midyette lived in a large two story home, which was the Episcopal Rectory. This is now the Episcopal Church's parking lot.

JP: H. G. Carpenter?

Dr. Richardson: His house was on the opposite corner.

JP: Where the office building now is, which used to be a motel?

Dr. Richardson: Yes.

JP: That's where the Carpenter's lived?

Dr. Richardson: Yes.

JP: Called Primrose Court now?

Dr. Richardson: Right.

JP: But he had a shop on the corner of Craven and Broad?

Dr. Richardson: In front of the courthouse, yes.

JP: Do you remember Miss Mary Windley? There was a house next to the Carpenters.

Dr. Richardson: Yes, I do.

JP: I know because I went there and took tutorial lessons. Then, there was the hotel? Am I saying that right, or were those two buildings gone?

Dr. Richardson: I think the hotel was actually next to the Braddy and Bangert property. The other properties to the corner of Craven Street, as I recollect.

JP: Yes. There would be the Bangert property as you're going East, then the hotel, then Mary Windley's house, then Mr. Carpenter's shop.

Dr. Richardson: That's right. The Bangert property, those buildings were later torn down and they made way for the brick building and J. C. Penney's occupied it.

JP: How long did the Queen Anne Hotel stay in operation?

Dr. Richardson: I don't exactly remember when they first moved in. It had to be about 1937 or '38 when they came and remodeled it and built on to the back. Then, it stayed in business until I'd say about 1952 or '53.

JP: What happened then?

Dr. Richardson: The Holiday Inn was built on the corner.

JP: Which corner?

Dr. Richardson: The Holiday Inn opened up on what was known as the Civils property -a dentist. He had just built a large two story

house which they moved to the end of Pollock St.

JP: This is down Broad Street on the river?

Dr. Richardson: No. That was out on East Front Street in front of Senator Simmons' home which was on the corner of New and East Front.

On the waterfront side was Civils' home and several more homes along there because it seems to me like Sonny Foote lived in there somewhere.

JP: Sonny lived on New Street, and the Civils' house was below Pollock Street I think, wasn't it?

Dr. Richardson: Maybe it was, but he acquired most of that property to the highway bridge that went through there and was at the foot of Broad Street.

JP: When the Queen Anne Hotel stopped being a hotel, what was the cause of that? What happened?

Dr. Richardson: Progress, the new hotel chains, rerouting U.S. Highway 17.

JP: The new Holiday Inn came in.

Dr. Richardson: Yes, and I believe there was another hotel out near DeGraffenreid, what was that called?

JP: The Palace Motel?

Dr. Richardson: Yeah, the Palace Motel. Then too, the traffic from North, due to the improvement of the highways, no longer made New Bern a stopping place.

JP: When they built the new bridge?

Dr. Richardson: The new bridge and enlarged the highways and destroyed the beauty of Broad Street by widening it and cutting down

all the oak trees against the wishes of the people. The guest travelers on their way from New York started going by plane rather than driving their cars, and I think that contributed to the shift in the traffic as well as the highway improvement.

JP: Due you think putting the bridge at the foot of Broad Street and making a thoroughfare through town hurt business for the Queen Anne?

Dr. Richardson: I certainly do, and it certainly ruined the tranquility and the looks of a small, southern, historical community like New Bern.

JP: What was Broad Street like before that happened?

Dr. Richardson: Before that it was a wide street paved with brick, that I think was made back in 1800 or 1700, and these beautiful oak trees and elm trees lined it from the waterfront on back. To make it more picturesque, the Coast Guard kept their Cutter, "The Pamlico", which made a beautiful background for visitors to take pictures of the river and then look at that long expanse. Broad Street extended from one end of the main part of town to the other.

JP: What prompted the building of that bridge?

Dr. Richardson: Politics I believe, because there was a big petition. One of the leaders of that was a physician at the time, Dr. Harvey Wadsworth, and he did his best to prevent it but to no avail.

Also in 1933 there was a hurricane that destroyed most of the waterfront and mills on Neuse River. The bridge was several damaged and had to be replaced. Remember the old bridge was at the foot of



Johnson Street.

JP: What did the politicians want?

Dr. Richardson: Progress. Evidently there was talk at the time of bringing the Marine Corps base here and they thought they would bring a lot more industry. Unfortunately, the only industry that I can see that made a big impact was Weyerhaeuser which succeeded successfully in destroying the beauty and the quality of the Neuse River. Establishing the Marine Corp at Cherry Point was the best thing for New Bern economically.

JP: But Broad Street was changed tremendously by the traffic?

Dr. Richardson: There's absolutely no resemblance about what it was before and what it is today.

JP: When the Queen Anne Hotel stopped being a hotel, did the First Citizens Bank buy that property then or what happened?

Dr. Richardson: Now that part I do not remember actually. It seems to me that they did buy it but they did not build right away. They were making plans to build and trying to decide on the impact of their business.

JP: Well, they eventually tore the hotel down to build the building.

Dr. Richardson: Yes. They tore it down and put a magnificent building and parking lot there.

JP: We've wandered from our original intent but that's fine. This is tremendously important, this information about downtown New Bern.

Dr. Richardson: I would like to add that when I had my illness in the year of 1939 and '40, when I came back and my doctor, Dr. Patterson, said that I was able to assume normal activities, I applied with Mr. Fred Miles for a job as bell hop. The pay was something like twelve dollars a week plus the tips for waiting on the guests. The dining room was well known, run by an individual - Axon Smith. He was quite a character, and the bell boys were quite amazing. When I went there, Leon Scott was there, and his father was former mayor, and there were several more young men working there plus myself. It was a very interesting job and a well paying job at that time. Most of the guests were from New York, Connecticut, on their way South with their chauffeurs and it was quite an experience meeting people which I never had an opportunity to meet before. They were amazed to find bell boys from the family backgrounds and the characters that were working there. They were also amazed at the service that the hotel offered; excellent dining facilities, large open fireplaces, serving beer and wine, which was something that they were not quite accustomed to in the South, and the help, the maid service, and the room service. They had a very prosperous clientele, list of guests, affluent. They tipped generously. I would say that the bell boys probably had an income equal to, if not, the best job available in that area. I remember on a New Year's Eve night that I was on with, I believe, Scott and I made over one hundred dollars that evening in tips which was quite outstanding. Of course remember, you could get room and board at Chapel Hill, where I was enrolled in med school, for thirty dollars

a month. So, a hundred dollars in one night was quite a windfall.

JP: What were the rooms renting for?

Dr. Richardson: That I don't remember. They were in keeping with good hotels along Route 17, but they were much higher than the rents in New Bern.

JP: You mentioned that a lot of these people had their chauffeurs with them. Now, were these black chauffeurs or white?

Dr. Richardson: Now, that amazed us. Most of them were white, but they stayed at the surrounding hotels. They had the hotel, at the request of the guests, get rooms for them at various other places.

JP: Were there some black chauffeurs that you remember? Where did they stay?

Dr. Richardson: If I remember, they were in the minority, very few, and those that did stayed at the Rhone Hostel Miss Charlotte Rhone and her sister ran on Queen Street which was around the corner from her father's store.

JP: She's a very well known lady.

Dr. Richardson: Yes. One of the sisters was in charge of the social service division for the minority group and Mrs. Whitford, John D. Whitford, was in charge of the white division. The two Rhone sisters ran the first and only Afro-American hotel in town.

JP: Ernest, where was that located in relation to your store? Was it on Queen Street?

Dr. Richardson: It was on Queen Street. The Cohen-Goldman Sewing Room was on the corner of Pasteur and Queen and right next to it was

the hotel, which was a fine hotel, and to my knowledge it was the only Afro-American hotel in New Bern.

JP: It was on Queen Street next to the building on the corner?

Dr. Richardson: Yes.

JP: Now the building on the corner at Queen and Pasteur Street across from the depot was the Cohen-Goldman Company?

Dr. Richardson: Cohen-Goldman Sewing Room.

JP: That building that's still there?

Dr. Richardson: Yes. To my knowledge the Sewing Room, when World War II came along, I was away, but it seems to me like that when I came back, they had closed up and moved.

JP: How long did the Rhone sisters run the hotel for blacks?

Dr. Richardson: They were there ever since I can remember as a child growing up in the area. Then when I left and went to the North to finish my education, that's when I lost track of it. When I came back, one of the sisters had died and one was still here running the hotel, so, I would say it existed as a hotel until her death in the fifties.

JP: That building still there?

Dr. Richardson: The building is still there, and they've tried to make it into apartments and then office buildings. At the present, I do not know what use it is put to.

JP: Let's backtrack a little bit and let me ask what memories you might recall from growing up as a boy; boyhood memories, your friends, the things you did.

Dr. Richardson: I do not remember this on my own except that it was told to me that I was born in the big brown house next to the store and that when I was born my father and grandfather hired this young black girl to be my nurse. Her name was Minerva Jones and her family had come up from South Carolina. Her grandmother was Indian and her father was, I can't recall what the blacks were known on South Carolina coast.

JP? Gullah.

Dr. Richardson: She was just a young girl. I believe she was around fourteen or fifteen, and this young girl stayed with my family until I returned after World War II and took care of my father through about 1940. The next thing I remember as a boy was about four years old, and I spent a great deal of time in the store. Mother had my hair long with curls down to my shoulders, and the salesman would come in and kid me and wanted to know if I was a boy or girl, and that was quite a thing. Finally one day, I ran away to the barber shop which was just down the street from where we lived and had my hair cut! My mother cried and threatened to shoot the barber, and I do remember that, I was about four. Then at five, I developed diphtheria and was very ill and that's the first recollection I have of a very good friend Dr. Patterson and his partner Dr. Jones, and they gave me diphtheria antitoxin to save my life evidently. All I can remember is that my mother said I had to take 20,000 units. That was impressed upon me.

JP: Were you quarantined?

Dr. Richardson: Oh yes.

JP: The whole household?

Dr. Richardson: The whole household and my father too. He had three black men that had been with his father and were with him; one was John White, he was the butcher; and Ben, I can't remember Ben's last name but he was a butcher; and Jerry Coleman who took care of opening oysters and cleaning fish. All these men were light skin and full of stories which interested me and my brother and all our friends, and they stayed with the family until my mother died in 1935. The next thing I remember was going to school and meeting Miss Molly.

JP: Miss Molly Heath.

Dr. Richardson: She was the first grade teacher and Miss Heath evidently was loved by everyone, and I'm not sure, but I think she taught my mother somewhere along the line.

JP: What was she like?

Dr. Richardson: She was an old maid. A lovely person with the patience of Job, and I never saw any youngster in a class that didn't love her.

JP: Where did she live?

Dr. Richardson: She lived in what's known now as the Attmore-Oliver house on Broad Street.

JP: With Mary Oliver?

Dr. Richardson: I don't remember that.

JP: I think that's true.

Dr. Richardson: She was just one of New Bern's prize individuals

and citizens. Everyone knew Miss Molly. She also taught Sunday School at the Episcopal Church.

JP: Was she a small lady?

Dr. Richardson: A small lady. I don't believe the lady weighed more than 100 or 110 pounds if she weighed over 100, I don't believe.

What she lacked in height and size she made up in character, personality and love.

JP: Did she fuss at you?

Dr. Richardson: NO! If she fussed at you, it was in a voice that was soothing and not one that was of anger, and she would try and let you see where it wasn't nice to do this or that, and she would encourage you to study if she thought you could do better than what you were doing.

JP: This was in 19???

Dr. Richardson: That would be about 1923.

JP: We were probably in that class together.

Dr. Richardson: I don't remember that. I remember you beginning in the seventh grade, when we were in the seventh grade. After Miss Molly, I did not get Miss Lizzie Hancock who was also a well known citizen of the community, I got a Miss Kate Luther. She was a young, attractive lady and very patient with children, and I just fell in love with her. Then my next one was Miss Fannie Howerton, my third grade teacher, who was also the city librarian at the time. The library at that time was next to the Christian Science Church which was on Middle Street. She started encouraging us at that age to use the

library, and I got interested in adventure stories, Tom Swift, Horatio Alger books, and so forth. Then she would make us participate in plays.

We had several plays for class work. This was the outstanding thing to me. Then, I don't remember much until I got in the sixth grade and came under the influence of another lady that was well known in the community, Miss Chadwick. She encouraged me to write and study, and it was the first time since I'd been in school that I was interested in grades, and I made A's and B's. Next go round was in the seventh grade, which was something new to me and was very hard. I had Miss Lana Winslow, then, another teacher in Geography, Miss Mary Grey Moore.

The English teacher was Miss Louise Anderson who was a very attractive young lady for those days, but some how or another I lost interest in studying. When I went to the eighth grade, I had Miss Ola Andrews who was from Chapel Hill, and she was an algebra teacher, and again she took an interest in me. I had a male teacher, Mr. Frank Alston, who was the coach of athletics and he also taught civics. But Miss Andrews got me interested in studying and I worked myself to death for her. I believe I made B's and A's in algebra and C's in everything else but Latin. My next influence was in the ninth grade and I came under the influence of a man, Mr. Ralph Raper, who taught biology.

He was behind me all the time, and I ended up making B's and A's in biology and C's in algebra, D's in english. We had Miss Masie Brookhart for english teacher, and I believe I made a D in Latin under Miss Laura Roberts, the Julius Caesar. In the tenth grade I had Miss Roberts again. At the time I had been fortunate to have developed a relationship



with Dr. Joseph Patterson Sr., and he told me it wouldn't hurt me to take Latin and that it would come in good in writing prescriptions when we took pharmacology. I did good. All at once I started making B's in Latin and Virgil and A's in chemistry because of Mr. Raper and did well from then on through my senior year. In my senior year I had no desire to go to college because I didn't have the money. We had a place to sleep, a good family life, clothes, but there were no luxuries as we knew them. We had luxuries but we didn't realize them.

We spent a lot of time in the summer on picnics. There was a custom at that time that businesses would close on Wednesday afternoons, and my father and mother would take us and the children in the neighborhood, or our friends, down to a place called Magnolia Farms which is now known as Carolina Pines, with the Hughes who were the farmers on this large, tremendous farm which a lot of people call a plantation, the Magnolia Plantation. We would have a weeny roast on the beach and then crab at night with a gas light which had become popular, a Coleman gas light, and come home ten, eleven o'clock. Then July and August we would carry watermelons down and have these parties and we would close up on Sunday afternoons. The store was opened on Sunday mornings.

There was a law that you could not stay open unless you sold meat because of lack of refrigeration in those days. When the store would close and we went to church, then after church we would go down and have an evening picnic at the Magnolia Farms on Sunday evenings. So, we really did have things that other kids did not have in that regard if it was related to the river and hunting. My father loved to hunt

and he was a friend of the Hughes which had the Magnolia Farm and the Eborn's which had this large farm, and they owned a lot of land down to a creek called, what's the first creek before you get to Slocum's creek? I'll think of it in a minute. And then of course the Hughes home from what was known as Flanner's beach which is now Croatan National Forest to Slocum's Creek which is now known as the Marine Corps base. So, we had a lot of territory to play in the summer time and in the winter time, hunting. Hunting consisted of bird hunting.

We always had bird dogs, rabbit dogs, and of course, there was lots of duck hunting. One interesting thing in my life, I remember along about 1927 or '28. I was down at the school ground when Babe Ruth, the baseball player came in on the train. He was on his way to Camp Bryan and Cedar Island to goose and duck hunt. He gave me and several other children baseballs with his signature on it; my brother confiscated mine right away since he was the athlete in the family and I was the bookworm. But I've always remembered that, how friendly he was and patted us all on the head and he had a dozen baseballs that he handed out, and they picked him up at the old Bell building on the school ground and carried him to Camp Bryan. That was one of my highlights as a youngster. Another thing that people have forgotten, when I was a youngster about eight or nine years old, minstrels came to town in the summer and early fall. "The Orange Blossom Special" which was from somewhere in Alabama and it was a black minstrel show.

The music was excellent. They would come to town on these train cars and stay over about a week. Then there was another one that would

follow them within a month or so called "Silas Green from New Orleans" and it was excellent.

JP: Where did they put on there show?

Dr. Richardson: They put on their show on a piece of property owned by the Norfolk Southern Railroad. That juttet from what they called, Jenkins Alley in those days, to Howard Street. It was a big empty lot and they would put up this huge tent. They would hold a parade and march through downtown New Bern and through what was known as Five Points, the downtown section of the black community, then on back up to Queen Street. Another highlight would be the Barnum & Bailey & Ringling Bros. Circus. We used to go out and watch them feed the elephants. They would take and pitch their tent in what was known then as the McSorley Field, which was an empty lot that was bounded on one side by First Street and then Queen Street, and it went half way from Pollock Street to Broad Street. It was known as the McSorley Field. There were only two houses there that were occupied, small cottages by two black families. The rest of it was a circus ground in my day. Of course when Barnum & Bailey & Ringling Bros. got too big, we had Clyde Beatty's Circus to come here. They would parade down Middle Street, Broad Street, and over town in the wagons, and the clowns, and that was a big excitement for everybody. All of us would go out to the circus grounds and help with feeding the elephants and this and that for a free ticket. Another thing I think people have forgotten, there was an Athens Theater here run by a Mr. Tom Kehoe and he used to bring vaudeville shows here.

JP: This was on Pollock Street?

Dr. Richardson? Yes. They had boxes on the sides and then the balcony. The one that I remember the best was a company came here and put on Maggie and Jiggs skit. It was really more of a vaudeville but they always had a little play. That was a big deal. And they always stayed at the Terminal Hotel, which was across the street and was one of the first big hotels in New Bern, run by Mr. Charlie Taylor.

Also, Mr. Kehoe would get big name pictures like "The Big Parade" and "All Quiet On the Western Front". We would take and hand out handbills. You'd go all over New Bern, the City of New Bern. He would get a dozen boys and he would take and put two and three out in each section and you just go up put out a handbill on the front porch and go on. It would take you all day to do this but you got a ticket to go to the theater. Prices then for a special movie was something like a dollar, and a dollar for a movie was just out of this world as far a poor family going to see. The movie would always be accompanied by an orchestra playing music. The picture was a silent.

JP: This was a live orchestra?

Dr. Richardson: Yeah, a live orchestra.

JP: And the movies were silent movies?

Dr. Richardson: That's right, and they would be packed and here we would be in the balcony looking at this with what we call the wealthy folks below seated in the "mezzanine." We used to do this. At least they'd always have one or two big pictures that would require special advertising and that's how most of us got in in my neighborhood.

JP: Do you remember the westerns on Saturdays?

Dr. Richardson: Oh yes. The Masonic Theater which was run by the Masons and the managers was Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Kafer. On a Saturday was a double feature. They would have Friday's picture which would be a Laurel and Hardy or something of that nature and then Tom Mix or William S. Hart to follow. You would go at two o'clock and get out at six. This cost every bit of a dime and you could get a drink for a nickel, or in those days they had a sucker, an all day sucker and it would last at least through the movie, for a nickel. You had to work all week to get fifteen cents to go to the show on Saturday afternoon. You did not go to the show if you didn't do your work around the house or if you got a bad report from school. So, everybody tried to be as good as they could so they wouldn't be punished by not being allowed to go to the show. The place would be jammed and packed. We played up at the Depot and we were already integrated. If you didn't have some of the black people to play, you didn't have enough to play baseball and we always played in a empty lot on Queen St. or either on the school ground or over at Mr. Taylor's parking lot. The players that I remember was one called "Bear". He was a football man. Then there was another big boy, Walter.

JP: These are black boys?

Dr. Richardson: Black boys. And when we would go down to the school ground, some of the neighbors around would complain about the colored children over there playing and when the police said they had to stop it, we told them we couldn't play if we didn't have them cause

there wasn't enough to play and besides if we didn't have them, we'd get beat. The nice thing about the Kafer's was, on Saturday afternoon, when these boys would come and we'd go down to the theater, Mr. Kafer would let us go up in the balcony and sit together.

JP: Now, were black people not allowed in the theater?

Dr. Richardson: They were not allowed in the theaters in those days. Mr. Kehoe would let us come in and go up in the balcony with them, also at the Athens Theater. There were two small black theaters - one in Frog Pond on Queen St. and one in Five Points on Broad Street.

JP: Are you talking about the balcony or the boxes?

Dr. Richardson: No, the balcony. You didn't get in the boxes. We would go up in the balcony and that's how we would get our black friends in on a Saturday afternoon. Unfortunately, they didn't go every Saturday afternoon, but every now and then either my mother would take and pay their way or they would work and get to go and save their money. Money was very tight. Neighbors were neighbors in those days.

The whites helped the blacks and the blacks helped the whites. If someone was sick, it was not unusual at all for a black woman to come in and take over until the individual got on their feet again. Most of them worked as cooks and maids or the men worked at the lumber yards.

The lumber yards in my day were numerous, in fact, they were one of the big industries in the area and the men worked on the yards jacking lumber or kiln drying it and so forth. I think the hourly pay then was about ten, eleven cents an hour. That was a big, big thing. The relationship with the black and whites, I would say, in our area, was

better than in other communities. Another amazing thing that people do not realize, that at the foot of Middle Street there was a wall, a bricked in harbor where boats would come up from Morehead City and Beaufort through the inland waterway and from Pamlico sound area and dock and unload their oysters or their watermelons or bring beef or just bring passengers up that morning and carry them back that evening, as ferry boats. There were always a half a dozen or so large boats.

When I say large boats, we're speaking thirty feet, twenty-five feet, fishing boats. Along in those areas there were warehouses. I remember E. K. Bishop and then the Maxwell Wholesale and Mack Lupton's Fish House and the Nelson Brother's Fish House and then Watson's Oyster Bar was there and then there was Bowden's oyster bar and then there was a T. E. Land store that was considered a chandler store - that is a store that carried marine and commercial fishing supplies. That was something that people that haven't been born here just don't realize, that this was a great big busy area.

JP: All along the Trent River waterfront.

Dr. Richardson: Yeah! It was a harbor.

JP: And Mark Stevenson had a dock down there too.

Dr. Richardson: That's right, there was lots of them. The Meadows Ship Yard and then the Barbour Boat Works was there and people just don't realize that because it's gone. You can't picture it.

JP: In the 1950's some of those docks were still there, because my children would come from living out on the Trent River and take boats down there to dock and go see their friends.

Dr. Richardson: I didn't realize that. I guess you're right. I just was so busy then I didn't realize that they were still there. Then another thing that was very nice to me as a youngster, we had a number of very active Boy Scout Troops here. The one that I remember was Troop 8, which at the American Legion lot on Broad Street where Barker Apartments are now. There was Troop 11 with C. Green, which I joined when I was in the seventh grade.

JP: I belonged to Troop 11 too. It met on Craven Street below Stanly Hall.

Dr. Richardson: The old Stanly Hall, and then on Friday nights after the meeting, we would take and march. We had a drum and bugle corp.

JP: What did you do? Did you play the bugle?

Dr. Richardson: No! I was just one of the marchers.

JP: I was a drummer.

Dr. Richardson: I remember that, and I thought we were pretty good. We would march down Broad Street, Middle Street, and South Front Street then and back again to Stanly Hall and go home.

JP: The streets as I remember were deserted, but it didn't make any difference we were having a great parade.

Dr. Richardson: Yeah, and everybody would stop and listen cause I think we were pretty good, and Mr. Green really put his heart in it. Since the social life in New Bern wasn't too much for us, we all put our hearts in it. I believe Troop 13 was run by Mr. Potter which consisted mostly of boys from Riverside. Another thing unless you



were an old citizen of New Bern that didn't remember, was that there was the Riverside group and the Depot group and the East Front group, and we used to go swimming down at Mamie Sadler's store in what they call "Pocono."

JP: Where was that?

Dr. Richardson: It was on Griffin Street and Avenue A. Unfortunately, the sewer emptied just below there, but that didn't bother us. Once in a while the boys from Riverside would object to the Depot boys being there and they'd get in a fight, and the Depot boys would have a few blacks along with them, and so, it was about evenly balanced. But they'd call the fire department out to turn the hoses on us to break up the fights, and we'd come home and then we'd get a lecture about fighting. The other thing that amazed me about life along in there, were the ball games. I believe that several business men had a local ball team out at the ball park, and the fare was about twenty-five cents to get in or about thirty-five cents, and those of us that didn't have twenty-five cents would go out there and sell peanuts and coca cola. And since I didn't like to work in the store, that's exactly what I did. We had quite a few heros on the ball team. I remember Lefty Kennel and then there was a fellow from Pollocksville, Claude Allen. They were the home run hitters. Then, Fred Shipp was an outstanding ball player and the Ferebee boys. So, that was part of the social life in those days. There were several beaches; Hobbs Beach down near Vandemere on Bay River and Minnesott Beach on the Neuse River run by Mr. Garvin Hardison's father, and they

would hold dances on Saturday nights and even on Wednesday nights, because the whole area shut up on Wednesday afternoons for the day, and have picnics and go fishing. The fishing was excellent. The dancing was good. The orchestra was local. Somebody was always playing a guitar or horn. I think it was fifty cents admission. Of course prohibition was here, but that didn't seem to matter, because someone would always have a half a gallon jar of some kind of "tea", which was plain corn whiskey that had been colored with charcoal. I think it was ten cents a drink and five cents for a coca cola. You had to mix it with a coca cola or it would remove the enamel from your teeth.

But there were very few fights and everybody seemed to have a good time for a quarter. In those days, people don't realize, that to get from Morehead City to Atlantic Beach, you had to take a ferry boat.

The local natives had these fishing boats, which on the weekends they hauled passengers over for a dime to Atlantic Beach. They had a pagoda pavilion down there and they'd hold dances maybe once a month or twice a month. One highlight was I heard Tommy Dorsey play down there before it burned down.

JP: I heard Paul Whiteman play down there.

Dr. Richardson: That was something. Then another thing that I think people have forgotten, there were two recreation areas in the city of New Bern; one was out at the end of Rhem and Park Avenue where McCarthy had the trolley cars that went out that way, and they used to have parties and dances on weekend or once a month.

JP: There was a casino out there.

Dr. Richardson: Casino, that was it! Casino was out there with concession of ice-cream, candy, cotton.

JP: Basketball games were played there too.

Dr. Richardson: That's right.

JP: Do you remember what that casino looked like?

Dr. Richardson: And Stanly Hall, we used to play basketball up there, if you remember.

JP: What was the casino like? Do you remember the building.

Dr. Richardson: It wasn't anything fancy. It was a big rambling building, what people would probably now refer to as a barn, but it had nice smooth big wide pine flooring in it. Excellent for dancing and basketball.

JP: It was up off the ground in a way.

Dr. Richardson: Yes, that's right. The floor was smooth, and it was good heart pine, which now is antique. Then there was another area out at the end of National Avenue and is now a city park. There was a pavilion out there where the Shriners used to hold a lot of their parties.

JP: Glenburnie Park?

Dr. Richardson: It was named Glenburnie Park, that's right. The Shriners used to hold their parties and I remember a lot of the other parties. It seems to me like the beauty pageant once, when Miss Louise Jackson, who later was Mrs. Dan Roberts, was selected Miss North Carolina. You remember that?

JP: Yes.

Dr. Richardson: Now I believe it's a city park ground. Then the warehouses. I don't remember the name of the one that was on George Street, at the beginning of National Avenue right where D. M. Parker later put up his Parker and Heating and Roofing Company. That was a big warehouse. I don't know whether it was Monks or what, I can't recall. There were several big warehouses in New Bern, tobacco warehouses, but that one was where they had a lot of parties that I remember, social things.

JP: Dances?

Dr. Richardson: Yes. There were others but I wasn't familiar with them.

JP: What were the tobacco warehouse dances like?

Dr. Richardson: They would have a small orchestra from Rocky Mount or Raleigh, and all the young people would go. The reason I remember it, very good friends of the family, R. E. Smith, he was a mail carrier, and he had seven girls and two boys and they taught my sister and my brother and I how to dance. As we got older we used to go out there with them. The one that taught me how to dance was Evelyn Smith who later became Evelyn Morris and her son Ken Morris is an insurance agent here now. Mrs. Morris' husband died and she remarried and is now Evelyn Scott.

JP: The younger brother was named Coolidge.

Dr. Richardson: And then the older one was Kenneth that married Evelyn Smith.

JP: At the warehouse dances, there was a lot of decorating inside

them?

Dr. Richardson: Oh yes! There was crepe paper; yellow and blue and red, and then they would have the flag decorations and the Japanese lanterns. It really was very colorful as well as enjoyable.

JP: I'm saying to you, Ernest, that this is a great interview. We'll cut this off for today but will continue at another time.

END OF INTERVIEW