

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

SARA MEADOWS

INTERVIEW 418

This is Marea Kafer Foster representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 400. I am interviewing Sara Meadows, interview number 418. This interview is being conducted on Saturday, the 11th of July, 1992. We are in Miss Meadows home at 500 8th Street in New Bern.

Marea Foster: Now, Sara, if you'll give me your personal history; your full name, birth date, parents name.

Miss Meadows: My full name is Sara Meadows. No H and no middle name.

MF: That's unusual not to have a middle name.

Miss Meadows: My father didn't have a middle name, nor did one of my brothers. I was born in New Bern on South Front Street on March 27, 1914. My mother's name was Ella Simmons Meadows, and my father's name was Wade Meadows. I had two brothers; John Alexander Meadows, who is still living, and the other one was Wade Meadows, who was killed in World War II.

MF: The portrait I see over your sofa, a very handsome man.

Miss Meadows: Oh, he was. He was the only blonde, blue eyed, we had. He was tall and slender.

MF: Well, he certainly was a good looking man. Was he married?

Miss Meadows: No, he was quite young.

MF: Was he a flyer?

Miss Meadows: He was a navigator on a B17.

MF: And killed in Europe probably.

Miss Meadows: No. They was leaving Kearney, Nebraska, near

White City, Kansas, I think, going to North Africa to replace Col. Dodson's group. That's all I know. The plane disintegrated in the air. There were witnesses on farms around there. That big tail just fell all to pieces. Everything just fell all to pieces and he crashed down to earth, with witnesses. It could have been sabotage, in fact, it was a brand new plane.

MF: But no one never could ever prove it?

Miss Meadows: No, nobody ever tried, not in those days.

MF: It was too hectic. What about sisters?

Miss Meadows: I have one sister; Ella McLendel Meadows Gieseey, she is now. She was first married to Richard E. Ward, and her children are all Ward's.

MF: I don't think I knew him.

Miss Meadows: He was in the Marine Corps in Cherry Point. He was the General's aide.

MF: Tell me about your childhood and who your playmates were, and maybe games you played.

Miss Meadows: I don't know. I was in the water all the time. It was just a matter of a couple of hundred feet from the water on South Front Street, and that's where I'd spend most of my time, in the water or at the shipyard. I couldn't wait to get out of school to get to the shipyard to see what boats they were building. At age nine, my father built a sailboat for me, a twenty-five foot sailboat, a Sharpie. He said, "the only way to learn to sail is to sail," and put me on the boat.

MF: By yourself?

Miss Meadows: I think I may have had somebody else with me, but he didn't go with me. Anyway, I spent two years jibing instead of tacking until I met Shoot Hall coming up the dock one day, and he said, "Tatie, why can't you learn to tack on the side that the sail ain't?", and I learned how to sail.

MF: He was a great one for sailing. Tell me about the shipyard.

Miss Meadows: The shipyard was pretty big. Well, it was the only shipyard here at that time. They built big boats, Menhaden, and further on down the line they built, in particular, one yacht which was about the last big boat they built. It was a Cutter, a sailing yacht, forty-nine feet, eleven inches. It was built for Col. Henderson, the T.A.T man in Washington, that's all I know. I went to Annapolis aboard the boat, sailed to Annapolis. Haydee Morris sailed with me, and some people from the Columbia Yacht Club in Washington. We really spent most of our time in my boat sailing over to Green Spring, sailing up and down the Neuse river. We had the only pleasure boat as far as I know, sailboat on Neuse river, at that time.

MF: Where was the boat yard located?

Miss Meadows: Right in front of the house.

MF: Any other business along that way?

Miss Meadows: Plenty of them. Bishop's warehouse was there, and my father also had a grist mill, which went up to where the bridge is now. All that area on the water from the bridge right on back to a little beyond the Harvey House was Meadows' property

with the shipyard and grist mill, and that's about all there was.

There was a fertilizer factory across the way on the same site as, I believe, Dixie Chemical is now. I don't know the name of that factory, but on that same site was a big fertilizer factory that belonged to my father.

MF: Was that the Baugh Fertilizer Company?

Miss Meadows: No. This was E. H. and J. A. Meadows. That was before these others. That's where we learned to swim. There was a long dock that went out from the fertilizer factory. Well, it was two docks, one on top of the other. One way up in the air, to unload the ships that came in. They were mostly sailing ships too, that came from Chile and South America with guano to make the fertilizer. I saw one four master ship; though, they were usually three masted schooners that came to the dock to unload, and that's what they used mainly to make the fertilizer, I guess.

MF: Our rivers aren't deep enough for steam ships. Is that why you think they used the same ships?

Miss Meadows: This was a long time ago. Now, whether these people were native of South America or North America, I have no idea, I was too little. Maybe they didn't have any motorized boats in the area from which they came.

MF: I did not know that your family had a grist mill or that we even had one.

Miss Meadows: Yeah. We used to get hands full of meal warmed from the stone and eat it.

MF: Just eat it plain?

Miss Meadows: Yeah. Not very much of it. Crabby took one of the warehouses and had Crabby's Club down there. That was my father's warehouse that Crabby's Club was in.

MF: So, that was in that same general area.

Miss Meadows: It was in the same area. He had a machine shop on the Meadows' property and did all the machine work for the shipyard, and for the grist mill, and other people too. Albert Crabtree was his name.

MF: Was this a club for girls as well as boys?

Miss Meadows: Oh yeah. It became a club very late. That was when they took over the warehouse down there. It was built out over the water.

MF: It was a place where young people could go to swim?

Miss Meadows: Yeah, swim. I believe they had a pool table. I never frequented it very much because I had other things to do. I was in the boat.

MF: Having a better time sailing. Do you happen to remember how many people your father employed?

Miss Meadows: I wouldn't have any idea. There were quite a few at the fertilizer factory, I know that.

MF: How long was the boat works in existence?

Miss Meadows: I don't know. I wouldn't have any idea. When I first remembered it, it was old then. You could tell it was old, old! It was my father's father and his father's uncle who were the E. H. and J. A. Meadows who owned it before my father and his brother.

MF: I don't remember it when I was growing up.

Miss Meadows: The E. H. was the uncle of J. A. Everybody thought they were brothers, but they were uncle and nephew. The reason they had it was because of Amos Wade. Amos Wade was a man of parts. This was many, many years ago. He was the one that built that house on South Front Street. It was just one story I believe, and I don't know whether he did it, but it actually was four stories including the basement, but each floor had the same height ceiling. He must have done it. Anyway, my grandmother, Jane K. Meadows, was Amos Wade's favorite niece. Amos Wade never married, and he left all of his money to my grandmother, Jane K. Meadows. She was his amanuensis. She went to a boarding school in Hillsborough and also to Greensboro college. This is a Meadows' story, I mean, I can't guarantee any of this, this is the story I grew up with. She took a little colored girl with her to Greensboro college to take care of her clothes. I don't know where she learned to play the piano, but she could play the piano. Afterwards, of course, she gave the organ to the Methodist church, and then she had to go to the Peabody Institute to find out how to play that organ, and did, and came back and played the organ. I can remember sitting on that bench with her on Saturday night practicing. I was a little, little, girl cause I was six years old when she died.

MF: That's a lovely story. I like that.

Miss Meadows: I like it too. She was well beloved. You ought to see the paper when she died, the article in the paper.

MF: We'll get Fred to make a copy of it some day.

Miss Meadows: When I was a little girl going to school, I'd wheel around the Episcopal churchyard, and usually two or three of our colored friends were sitting on benches there, and a number of times somebody said to me, "Ain't you Miss Janie Meadows' granddaughter?", I'd say, "Yes. Best woman in North Carolina, best woman in North Carolina!".

MF: What a lovely tribute.

Miss Meadows: This happened a number of times. She was the secretary and treasurer of the Benevolent Society before the welfare, you see. And she never turned anybody away. They had farms, and she had a smokehouse full of meat in the back too, beside the Benevolent Society money.

MF: Did she ever tell you much or did you learn much about the Benevolent Society?

Miss Meadows: I was only six years old when she died, but I remember her well. My mother helped with the Benevolent Society after she died. My mother took it over.

MF: Do you remember any ladies that worked with your mother in this?

Miss Meadows: No. I'm sure I would if I just thought, but my brain is not much help to me these days.

MF: Tell me about school in New Bern.

Miss Meadows: Miss Molly Heath was the first grade teacher. I believe she taught my father too.

MF: She probably did. I think she taught most everybody.



Miss Meadows: And Miss Lizzie Hancock was the second grade teacher. Miss Ruth Berry was the third grade teacher. Louise Bell was the fourth grade teacher. If you were lucky, you got in all those grades with those teachers.

MF: They were excellent teachers.

Miss Meadows: They were grand.

MF: You were in the New Bern Academy, weren't you?

Miss Meadows: Yes.

MF: From there, did you go to what we call the Bell building?

Miss Meadows: Yeah.

MF: Did they have Moses Griffin High School at that time?

Miss Meadows: Yep, and I went to Moses Griffin High School.

MF: Did you have twelve grades?

Miss Meadows: No, we had eleven. Frances Claypoole, and Alice Taylor, and Iris Rawls were in my class. They were my closes friends in that class; and Mark Dunn, Simmons Patterson, Jack Hellinger, and Jack Dunn, Clifton Daughtery, there were lots. I hadn't thought of them in a long time. They're all gone but Simmons and Mark. They are the only ones around. Well, Frances is in a nursing home in Raleigh. Iris is in Albemarle because I talk to her on the telephone all the time. Alice Taylor is in Greensboro. I talk to Iris and Alice frequently on the telephone.

MF: I see Alice Taylor every now and then. Were there any sports that the girls played in high school?

Miss Meadows: I played basketball. They only put me in in a

crisis, I think. They wanted somebody knocked out on the other side because I made so many fouls that I was in and out.

MF: Do you remember who played on the team with you and where you played?

Miss Meadows: We played at Stanly Hall. They seem like shadows. I know Amy Williams was a real good player. She was two years older than I was. I think Iris Rawls was a good player.

MF: But you all had a good time?

Miss Meadows: Yeah, we had a good time.

MF: That was the only sport in high school that girls participated in, is that right?

Miss Meadows: Yeah, as far as I know.

MF: There was no such thing as a physical education class then.

Miss Meadows: We had exercises out on the school ground.

MF: Oh, you did?

Miss Meadows: Yeah, but it was a desultory thing. We had exercises for probably ten minutes.

MF: We didn't even have that when I was in school. Of course as you well know, there was no gymnasium. We certainly didn't have that for a long, long time. Let me ask you about childhood illnesses.

Miss Meadows: Oh, I had them!

MF: Everything that came by.

Miss Meadows: Yes. Not only that but I had allergies, which they didn't know about in those days. I would break out all over.

Finally, my mother took me to Philadelphia. We would go up there every fall to see Dr. J. Frank Shambers, who wrote the book on dermatology. Of course, allergy was unknown at the time, but I remember he gave me twenty-one food tests, which was given with needles, as far back as that. But most of the dermatologist had his book on their desk. For several falls we'd go up there. It was always worse in the fall. He practiced in Vienna in the summer time, I believe. Anyway, we had a grand time in Philadelphia. We went to Atlantic City, Valley Forge, went all over the place when we'd go up to see the doctor. Amy McKnight went with me one time to keep me company. Both of us got out of school.

MF: You had a wonderful time, I know. Did you go up by boat or by train?

Miss Meadows: By train.

MF: And you caught the train in New Bern?

Miss Meadows: We had a pullman in New Bern, and then, all you had to do was get on the pullman and off you went.

MF: How long did it take you to get from New Bern to Philadelphia then?

Miss Meadows: I have no idea.

MF: Did they have a dining car?

Miss Meadows: Oh yes.

MF: So, you could have your meals?

Miss Meadows: Always a dining car, and parlor car too.

MF: I always enjoyed travelling by train.

Miss Meadows: I love to travel on the train. I did a lot of travelling on the train with my mother, going back and forth to Washington, my grandfather was in Washington.

MF: Simmons mentioned that in his interview. I believe he said, "Senator and Mrs. Simmons lived at, while he was in Washington, Muirkirk, Maryland."

Miss Meadow: Before that, they lived on DuPont Circle. As a matter of fact, there was a building that looked like a slice of pie, so they had an apartment there. This was before they bought the Muirkirk place. There were great tall ceilings, big rooms. I don't know the name of that place, but I remember going there. They had Allie and Allie's wife. Allie always drove my grandfather. He never learned to drive a car. He always had somebody to drive him. Allie's wife was the cook and Allie drove him. They came to New Bern every time. There was a little cottage in the backyard of that house, and that's where they'd stay when they were in New Bern.

MF: At your house?

Miss Meadows: No, his house on East Front Street.

MF: The big house that we always refer to as the Senator Simmons' house?

Miss Meadows: That's it.

MF: Simmons also mentioned Allie in his interview, that he would take him.

Miss Meadows: Allie was with him for so long. When he left, Allie wanted to stay up there and so did his wife, and he got him

a job with the Sgt. at Arms of the Senate.

MF: That was a nice thing to do.

Miss Meadows: He took care of him. He was sorry to see him go.

MF: I'm sure he was.

Miss Meadows: Then, he had Sam Williams when he came down here.

MF: Simmons mentioned, and maybe you can elaborate, his mother's electric car.

Miss Meadows: It was the only one I ever saw.

MF: It looked like a regular car?

Miss Meadows: No, the back was the same as the front. The body part of it was a little tall thing, and very small, and then it sort of sloped down to the front and sloped down to the back, both ends were the same. I don't remember riding in it. I must have, but I don't remember it.

MF: When you were a child and you had any illnesses, other than going to Philadelphia for your allergies, who was your doctor in New Bern?

Miss Meadows: Dr. Patterson was, and then, Dr. Pollock.

MF: Two fine old gentlemen. I remember Dr. Pollock, but I don't remember Dr. Patterson.

Miss Meadows: I remember one time when I fell off the horse, Cousin Robert Jones was called. I went head first over the horse's head into the curb stone. I was showing off. My cousin from Raleigh was down here, and we had borrowed a pony from Any

and Betsy for her to ride. This was Mary Simmons Andrews. That was a dumb pony that Amy and Betsy had. Slow as she could be, couldn't make her move! So, Mary Simmons wasn't getting anywhere, and I said, "Well, you stay right here and I'm going to show you how fast Nancy can go!" Nancy was my pony. That was right by Miss Faith Nunn's house on East Front and Pollock. I came flying through that intersection and a pickup truck landed right on my leg and I went across the horse's head and landed on Miss Faith Nunn's sidewalk. I broke one arm and sprained the other. The truck kept on going, it didn't stop. I looked up and saw my father running around the corner; because his office was on South Front Street, up to the right of East Front Street, almost up to the now bridge, and I saw him running. The word had gotten out somewhere, and I guess he had left work to get a doctor. He flagged a car down. I wasn't a very big girl because he picked me up and put me in the car. I don't know what happened to Mary Simmons, she may still be there.

MF: Did he take you to the hospital?

Miss Meadows: No, he took me home and cud'n Robert met us, Dr. Jones met us there. I had both hands tied up. I don't think Mary Simmons came to see me anymore.

MF: She was afraid of what would happen if she did.

Miss Meadows: May put her on a sailboat the next time. The main sports we did was riding the horse and going sailing. Leah Jones Ward and I used to ride horses all the time together after school, before she went away, and then, in the summertime when

she'd come back from Hollins.

MF: After high school, where did you go to college?

Miss Meadows: I went to Duke. I only went two years. I went to Duke because Dr. Few was president at that time and he sent a courier down here from Duke to see if there were any grandchildren of Senator Simmons who would be interested in a scholarship at Duke. Papa was a trustee of Duke, and I think he'd done something to help them in the Senate. I don't know exactly, but they felt grateful to him for some reason. Simmons and Joe Pat, of course, were Carolina to the hilt. Simmons and I are the same age. He was born in January and I was born in March. So, I was elected. I was the only one of the right age. That's how I got to Duke, on a scholarship, because my grandfather was a trustee. I stayed two years. I really didn't know what I wanted to do. What I wanted to do was come back and sail sailboats.

MF: That's what you wanted to do for your life's work, be on the water! When you did come home after two years, what did you do?

Miss Meadows: I can't remember. I must of done something. By that time, we moved out to Green Acres.

MF: That's the large farmhouse on Trent Road?

Miss Meadows: Yeah, that's the one. I don't know exactly what I did until I started driving the Bookmobile. In the meantime, not right away, my father lost his business in 1929. The whole thing went into the hands of the receivers. It was a long court case.

MF: This was the grist mill?

Miss Meadows: This was everything. And going into the hands of the receivers means that you don't have anything and can't own anything for fifteen years, no, more than that. Anyway, they thought that was the only fair way to handle it, and not go into bankruptcy. That's what the bankruptcy laws are made for really, but they didn't use them though. At the end of the trial, the court case, the judge said this is one instance when these people have been almost too honest. These are all family stories. I can't verify them. Anyway, no money, I can tell you that. The house went too. My grandmother had built this house with the idea of going to live out there. It was the old Armstrong house. What they had to do was tear most of it down. It had rather small rooms, and they were great big rooms in it, and there were three and a half baths in it. It was a real nice house. I think things got very bad, and so we moved in there. My grandmother was ill, and she didn't think that she'd ever move out there because she was constantly going to Tacoma Park or to Richmond to Dr. What's his name, that everybody went to at that time. She was constantly going to doctors, and she didn't think she'd ever move out there, so she told my mother to go out there and take shelter. And this is what it was, taking shelter. It had a furnace, but we didn't have any money to buy coal for the furnace. We had a stoker when we didn't have any money to buy coal. So, they put tin heaters in the fireplaces, there were four fireplaces, put tin heaters in the fireplaces cause you could get wood out of the woods and heat the



place that way. My mother took various jobs during that time, and before that too, and when I was at Duke. She wasn't trained for anything. She would take goods on consignment from Boylan-Pearce, for instance, in Raleigh. In the house that belonged to Dr. Latham, right across from the Athens Show Shop, that little front room, she rented that and had all these things from Boylan-Pearce and sold those at one time. Then, she worked at the Vogue; and then, she covered quilts on the floor, if you can imagine my elegant mother doing that. There was nothing that she wouldn't try.

MF: Well, she had a family to think about.

Miss Meadows: My father worked for one of the "alphabets" up in Raleigh. Mrs. Whitford gave him a job starting the, I don't know whether it was the WPA or what it was, but some sort of government business in New Bern. That's what he did. Then at one time, he worked in Raleigh for another government agency. He had to ride back and forth. Then, he was the secretary of the housing project.

MF: The one at Trent Court?

Miss Meadows: Yeah, Trent Court, and the other one too.

MF: And Craven Terrace?

Miss Meadows: Yes. He was selected by, I guess, the Board of Alderman, I don't know. My mother decided that there was only one thing to do. Ecky and Bucky and I were in college. One of them had a scholarship, a Col. Rodman's scholarship because Rodman Guion got it for him, Col. Rodman from Washington North Carolina.

Anyway, that's when my mother decided to go in the tourist business to make some money.

MF: I didn't know she'd done that.

Miss Meadows: Yeah, went into the tourist business. The boys weren't there and Ella was a baby. I spent a year in New York around there too. That was in 1934 in the middle of the Depression, and there was practically no chance of getting a job.

But Martha Kirven's father knew a man on Wall Street, and I went to see him because Mr. Kirven had written him a letter. He said, "I just happen to know somebody at B. Altman's who owes me a favor." In the meantime, I had signed applications at every department store I could, cause I wasn't trained for anything. All my friends were signing applications at department stores. I met several girls from Duke up there, just met them on Broadway. One of them, Giles, was a Lieutenant Governor's daughter. She would follow me around, and we all wound up in the same department store. Except, she went to Macy's, and I said, "I'll be derved if I'm going to Macy's." She said, "They kept me all day long there!" I waited one day to see what happened to all those applications, and they dumped them in the waste basket! They had all these women just signing their little hearts out, and then when everything cleared out, they dumped them in the waster basket. They didn't have anything, just kept people busy I guess.

Anyway, because of this man that knew somebody at Altman's, I got a job at Altman's in the book shop. That was a fine place to be because you didn't have to answer to any floor walkers, or section

managers, they'd call them. You had to answer only to the book buyer, and, so, that was the place to be.

MF: So, this really started your career with the library, so to speak.

Miss Meadows: No, it didn't. I had read all my life. My mother had read everything. She had a background of classical reading. One time she decided she was going to read every book in the Congressional Library in Washington. She was very young. She got through two and a half feet, and that was the end of that! She was going to take it book by book and read it.

MF: Some of it, I think, might be hard reading.

Miss Meadows: I swear she told me that.

MF: When you came back home from New York, do you remember your job here?

Miss Meadows: I was helping with the tourist business. I don't think it had started then. Anyway, that was the next thing I did. Boy, did I make up beds! I was helping out there. During the war, I worked at the shipyard. I was a storekeeper for the Navy at the shipyard, which meant, I was in charge of all the government furnished materials that went on all those ships.

MF: Right here in New Bern?

Miss Meadows: Yeah.

MF: In Meadows Shipyard?

Miss Meadows: No. Meadows shipyard was a thing of the past, it was Barbour. Mr. Barbour was the manager of Meadows Shipyard while we had it, but this was Mr. Barbour's own shipyard. I

worked for the Navy out of Norfolk and not for the shipyard. Two of the biggest boats that ever came out of New Bern were the BARS boats, rescue salvage boats for England.

MF: What kind of boat did you say that was?

Miss Meadows: British Admiralty Rescue Salvage, BARS, that's an acronym. There were a number of mine sweepers and net layers. Six or seven mine sweepers, I'm not sure about these figures, and I believe, two net layers, and two BARS. But they were always launching boats down there. I went on the sea trials of that first BARS boat. Lord Carrick was the British representative at the Norfolk Navy yard, and he went with us. We had to go inside the submarine nets. Submarine nets started on one side of Bogue Inlet and went all the way around to the other side of Cape Lookout. You had to go within the submarine nets for the sea trials.

MF: I never heard about the submarine nets.

Miss Meadows: Oh, we had submarine nets. The salvage ships drew so much water that first thing that happened was it got stuck on right across from Union Point. The biggest boat ever built in New Bern and everybody was out to see it go, and it went to Union Point and quit cause it was stuck in the mud! It finally got under way though and plowed a furrow down Neuse river. I think it drew eleven, thirteen feet of water, I don't know, but a lot of water. I had the Captain's cabin. I was the only woman aboard. I don't know why we stopped opposite Oriental, but we did. Maybe we were stuck in the mud again. Anyway, I took a small boat

ashore at Oriental and came back to New Bern. We had left all the spare parts at the shipyard to lighten ship. The spare parts could be very heavy, in metal boxes naturally. So what happened, we had to truck all the spare parts down to the port terminal in Morehead and stow them there. I had to lie between decks and stow them and write on the list of parts what space it was in on the ship, well, where it was so they could find it.

MF: And you had to do that?

Miss Meadows: Yeah, because I was in charge of the spare parts because they were government furnished materials. The propulsion engines and the generators, were government furnished material. It was hot as hell down there in the middle of the summer lying down under that deck! But we finally got it loaded and off it went. I believe it had four skins. It was a wooden ship. The mine sweepers were metal, but BARS, the salvage ships, were wooden. They had four different skins; like one, you make a boat, then, you make another boat, strap another boat to it, and that's four skins in that. Rubbing against each other and salvaging ships in the English Channel or round about, it could rub an awful lot and get battered an awful lot before it sank, with four skins.

MF: I didn't know that. You're just telling me such fascinating stuff.

Miss Meadows: I'd forgotten all about it, completely.

MF: And you worked for the Navy?

Miss Meadows: For the Navy out of the Norfolk Navy Yard. I

was the storekeeper for the Navy Technical Inspector, and in charge of all government furnished materials. I had three warehouses. One of them was that antique shop right next to, well, when you start down Hancock, it's on the right hand side.

MF: Poor Charlie's, is that the one?

Miss Meadows: Yeah. That was one of my warehouses to store the government furnished material. There were two others aboard the shipyard.

MF: You did that all during the war?

Miss Meadows: I wouldn't say all during the war. I can't give you any dates now, but while they were building those ships, I did it; when they were building the ships for the British Navy and the American Navy. The net layers were for American and most all the mine sweepers were British. We had a lot of British sailors. They were usually the ones that had four or five ships sunk out from under them and needed R & R, and they would send them over here to familiarize them with the new ships and give them a rest at the same time.

MF: They would be in New Bern?

Miss Meadows: They would be in New Bern.

MF: Where did they stay in New Bern?

Miss Meadows: Different people's houses usually. I don't remember, but one captain and the rest of them were crewman, but whoever needed rest the most I think were the ones that they would send. They were very nice, all of them. We had to check over all those spare parts. We had to open the box and check all the spare

parts and see if they were all there.

MF: A time consuming job. After working for the Navy, this is probably about the time you started with library on the Bookmobile.

Miss Meadows: I don't even know the date of that. Elinor would know.

MF: She's marvelous about dates.

Miss Meadows: She was not there when I started.

MF: Who was there when you started in the library?

Miss Meadows: Mary Scott Gurley.

MF: Was Hilda Lancaster there?

Miss Meadows: No, she came in later. She came in while Mary Scott was still there, though. Then after that, it was Bill Flowers' wife, Betty Flowers, then, Elinor.

MF: When you first started with the library, what was your job?

Miss Meadows: Bookmobile librarian. Well, I was suppose to be driving the Bookmobile, but, they said that you're doing all the work that a Bookmobile librarian usually does, so, you're the Bookmobile librarian. I knew quite a bit about books. First, I was just the driver of the Bookmobile, they thought. But immediately I became the Bookmobile librarian. Mary Scott and I went to Raleigh and got that first Bookmobile. It was a green, Chevrolet panelled truck. The sides of the truck pulled up. You'd look straight at the books. When it rained, you just got under the side that was pulled up and that's how you kept dry

after a fashion. Then, the back door opened and a long slender table pulled out on rollers, and that's where you did all the checking out of the books. Inside the Bookmobile, on either side, there were book shelves all the way up to the ceiling where you'd kept the extra books.

MF: And your route was in Pamlico County?

Miss Meadows: And Craven County, both.

MF: Do you happen to remember any of your stops?

Miss Meadows: Oh yeah, I remember all of them. Sometimes we went up Vanceboro way. I've forgotten the names of these little, tiny towns that we stopped at.

MF: When you would go to these little towns, would that be once a month you would make your stops?

Miss Meadows: Two weeks in each county. It took that long to get around. We went to houses. Not just necessarily towns or groups of houses, but individual houses, and schools, wherever they needed books.

MF: When you started on the Bookmobile, were you all by yourself?

Miss Meadows: Yes.

MF: Until Hayden came? Was she the first one to assist you?

Miss Meadows: I think Mary Scott may of gone with me in the beginning. I was by myself most of the time because the state librarian came down a couple of times, and she went with me to see how I was doing. That's what she went with me for. I remember we went to Oriental one day and then came back Dawson's Creek and



Minnesott, back to New Bern that way. We stopped at Stonewall on the way. That's one route I do know. We went to Whortonsville, and Lowland, and Pamlico another day. We went to Vandemere, and of course, Bayboro, and Kennel's beach.

MF: You stopped at every place down there.

Miss Meadows: Everywhere they wanted a book. Then, we would stop at these houses out in the country on the way, to or from.

MF: When you would go out each day on the Bookmobile, you had to take your own lunch, is that right?

Miss Meadows: Took a sandwich. I had different lunch rooms, wherever happened to be convenient. I usually stopped at the same place every time. Sometimes people knew where I was and wanted to check out books during lunch hour too.

MF: Well, I'm sure you accommodated them.

Miss Meadows: Oh sure. On the Oriental side of Dawson's Creek was one of my favorites because I had a nice big tree overlooking the water. They didn't have a single library in Pamlico County at that time. They had school libraries after a fashion, I mean, they weren't too good. But they didn't have a single library in Pamlico County.

MF: So, they depended on you for books?

Miss Meadows: Yeah. You had a long list people would ask you to bring the next time if you could. You ordered them from Raleigh, or you got them from the New Bern library if they had them. But you tried to get them. You knocked yourself out to get what they wanted.

MF: Just like they do today. With this inter-library loan, you can get most any book you want.

Miss Meadows: That's right, and recordings too. The machine and the recordings are all free. It's wonderful.

MF: During that time, did you lend out paintings like they do now?

Miss Meadows: No. That was a little, bitty Bookmobile. Then, we graduated to the Gerstenslager. That was like a little room, and it got me completely confused. I felt as if I were in a little room instead of driving a car. I remember driving down the road one day, and I remember something I hadn't done in the back of the thing, and I just got up out of my chair to go back there.

We're going fifty miles an hour, and I almost wrecked the whole thing! That's the last time I did that. I had a little black poodle on it when Hayden was there. It's name was Bo-Bo. When he was a puppy, he learned to ride right beside me on a mat. He didn't bother anybody, he was too little. I had him trained. The first thing I did was train him to go to the bathroom when I told him to. The signal was when I said, "Pick a daisy", he was suppose to go to the bathroom. Well, Hayden was driving the Bookmobile one day, and I remembered that he hadn't been to the bathroom all day. We were on this back country road, and Hayden was driving, and I had Bo-Bo in the back of the Bookmobile with a bunch of newspapers down, yelling "Pick a daisy", "Pick a daisy" with the Bookmobile flying down the road. He finally did.

MF: That was a well trained little dog. But, he was a lot

of company for ya'll.

Miss Meadows: Yeah. He didn't jump out or anything. He stayed where I put him. He was a smart dog. His name was Bainridge Beau-Geste.

MF: Did ya'll ever have your lunches with any of the families? Did they ever invite you in for lunch?

Miss Meadows: Only one time, and that's the first time I went to Pamlico County. Miss Joella Sadler was on the library board, and she invited me for lunch. But that was the only time. I'm sure they would of been happy to have us if we wanted to come in. She made a point of asking me, and she knocked herself out. That's the only time I can ever remember a formal invitation though.

MF: Let me ask you about Mary Scott Gurley. Were there any improvements in the library under her that you can remember? Did the library expand in any way?

Miss Meadows: No, I think it just ambled along without much help.

MF: What about Betty Flowers?

Miss Meadows: Betty was all right. She was a smart girl, but she sometimes was "flying around". "Fluttering around."

MF: I know what you're saying because I knew her. She was the librarian when I was in high school, and then, went into the public library after I graduated. Hilda did tell me that there was no card catalog system until Betty Flowers made one.

Miss Meadows: I had forgotten about that.

MF: Without a card catalog system, when you wanted special books for your patrons in Pamlico County, did you have to just go read the shelves for them?

Miss Meadows: Yes, that's what I did.

MF: That's very time consuming.

Miss Meadows: Well, you see, we didn't have that many books then. It was a fairly small library, and they were well kept shelves; in other words, they were not stacked up waiting to be shelved.

MF: Dorothy DeWeerdts did the research for us on the library. She found out that in 1938 the WPA supplied book menders. Do you know anything about that? Were they local people?

Miss Meadows: I wasn't there.

MF: I know you weren't there, but I didn't know if you had ever heard anybody talk about it.

Miss Meadows: We had book menders when I was there but they weren't supplied by anybody. They were just part of the library personnel.

MF: Who did the mending of the books for you?

Miss Meadows: My cousin, Nina Jacobs. She did, I think, all that I had at that time. She was the main one.

MF: Did you ever hear anybody mention that the WPA set up branch libraries in 1938?

Miss Meadows: No. WPA! That's what Mrs. Whitford made my father the head of at first.

MF: What does WPA stand for?

Miss Meadows: Works Progress Administration.

MF: I thought that's what it was, but I wasn't sure. I knew you could tell me. You and I have talked about Miss Fannie Howerton, Frances Jones Howerton, so, do you mind sharing your memories of Miss Fannie with me?

Miss Meadows: I never had Miss Fannie as a teacher, but I knew her in the library of course. I read quite a bit. She was a good librarian, but she was very strict. She wanted order at all times and she wanted quiet in there too. And it better be! Then, she had a drawer where the naughty books were. You couldn't read the naughty books unless you were married. I don't think they were real naughty books. Anyway, my mother thought I ought to be able to read anything I wanted to read. So, she told Miss Fannie; I was mainly reading detective stories, frankly, but she told her that if there was anything in there that I was particularly interested in, she would be very pleased if she would let me read it. Put it diplomatically, in other words.

MF: Was this when the library was on Middle Street in the Christian Science building?

Miss Meadows: Yes, that's it. There were probably six of us from our grade in school. I don't know whether we did it more than two years, but we took all the books out and put them back and wiped them off. I think there was Iris, and Alice, and Frances, and I think, Jack Dunn, and there may have been Mark too.

I know we had some boys there. We would give the library a

spring cleaning; take the book out, wipe the book off, put it back.

MF: What a wonderful thing to do.

Miss Meadows: I think we were forced into it by circumstances.

MF: Can you tell me anything about Miss Rosamund Meadows, her association with library?

Miss Meadows: She was there in the children's room. I was there at the very last of her tenure. I don't even know whether I was working there or not. She was around behind the Post Office at the John Wright Stanly House. I remember her. It may have been just because I was going in to get books there, I remember her, or she may have been there after I got on the Bookmobile. I have a feeling that she was there when I went in to get books.

MF: What about Miss Lula Broadstreet?

Miss Meadows: I knew who she was, but I don't remember her at the library.

MF: I have asked others about the negro library that opened in the West Street School in 1936.

Miss Meadows: I don't know anything about it.

MF: Was it still operating when you were on the Bookmobile?

Miss Meadows: I don't know anything about it. We went to negro schools in the county. We wouldn't go in the city. There was a big one in Fort Barnwell I remember. We always went to all the negro schools, but it wouldn't be in a city, because the Bookmobile was county.

MF: I know that they did not have a professional librarian, so, they could not get state and federal funds. Elinor has told me that. Mrs. Flowers' book review program on WHIT, did you know anything about that?

Miss Meadows: No.

MF: How did Mary Hendren Vance Memorial Fund for book purchase happen to be establish?

Miss Meadows: I don't know anything about the establishment. She was a good friend of mine, and she was an English professor at Duke. I was sort of a protege of hers up there. Miss Carrie Roberts was her sister, and she came down here every chance she got. I would drive her car and get her down, and get me down too at the same time.

MF: So, you don't know anything about it?

Miss Meadows: I never heard of that.

MF: Hilda mentioned something about having a UDC book shelf. She thought in some way this Mary Hendren Vance Memorial Fund was connected to the UDC. She thought that maybe the funds in this memorial fund supplied the history books for that shelf, but she wasn't positive.

Miss Meadows: Mrs. Vance's husband was Zebulon Baird Vance, who was the son of the Governor Vance. Her husband was a Major. They could of been mixed up with the Confederacy. The Governor could have been mixed up with the Confederacy.

MF: I'm just having a hard time finding out any information out about her.

Miss Meadows: She had some relatives in Winston-Salem. The only relative I know of is Lib, but I bet Lib is dead. She was Elizabeth Roberts from New Bern. Her husband's first name was Ed. Ed had to go to Duke Hospital for some reason one time. He decided he wasn't going to shave the whole time he was in the hospital, and when he decided to shave, he shaved all the way around here and he looked like Henry VIII. Lib didn't know he was going to that until she came in the room and saw him.

MF: Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the library?

Miss Meadows: I had a grand time while on the Bookmobile and I still am meeting people on the street who recognize me from way back, mostly in Pamlico County.

MF: Do you mind me asking you, how much were you paid?

Miss Meadows: I don't even know. About \$120 a month or something like that.

MF: I know it wasn't very much, but it's interesting to compare salaries in the late forties and fifties.

Miss Meadows: Elinor can find out.

MF: She's a fountain of information.

Miss Meadows: She can just look it up. I don't know how much I got at the shipyard either. I know how much I got for bed making, nothing!

MF: That's because you were working for your mother and she was providing you with room and board. It's different when you work for your family, isn't it? Do you know who originated the



idea of a Bookmobile?

Miss Meadows: No. But they were all around us when we got ours. Even, I think, Carteret County had one before we did. I believe that was before Carteret County was hooked up with Craven County. But I remember a friend of mine drove the Carteret County one. I hope I'm not mistaken on that. I was in Ireland, six, seven, eight years ago, and we were at Lady's Peak on the highest mountain range in Ireland, MacGillicudy's Reeks, and here comes a Bookmobile flying around the curve. I had a camera in my hand and I got so excited I forgot the camera and didn't take a picture. He went flying around the curve right in front of me, at Lady's Peak on MacGillicudy's Reeks. I was taking a picture of a little stream that was going down the mountain and here comes this Bookmobile.

MF: I guess we associate Bookmobiles just with America.

Miss Meadows: He was just carrying on. The houses are few and far between up there. As a matter of fact in the country in Ireland, it's as green as it can be, but there are not very many houses. We stopped one man on the road one day. He was all dressed up in his Sunday clothes, so, he must of quit working, he must of been retired. We asked him about this village that was about fifteen miles away, which road to take to get to it. He said he didn't know, he'd never been there.

MF: Fifteen miles away?

Miss Meadows: He didn't know, he'd never been there.

MF: I can't imagine that.

Miss Meadows: I think it must be fairly prevalent that they go to the pub, to the house, to the church, and that's it. We may have gotten the only one that hadn't been there.

MF: There were probably a lot more, if they were older. Getting back to the library, do you remember anyone on the library association? That was made up of a group of ladies.

Miss Meadows: I knew Mrs. Whitehurst, and Mary Louise Guion. I knew them all.

MF: These were the ladies who more or less started the library. I know we had a lending library a long time ago. Dorothy found that out through research. But these were the ones that kept it going.

Miss Meadows: I knew them. Mrs. Dowdy, I knew them, but I just can't remember them now.

MF: When Elinor Hawkins came, there were great strides made in the library.

Miss Meadows: She was the administrator that they had been missing all these years.

MF: She's just been absolutely fantastic and done a wonderful job. Well, is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Miss Meadows: Well, there are some things that I have not told you because I don't know where it's going!

MF: These tapes will be put in the public library for people to listen to. We're going to have them transcribed and some of the information will be used in our book that we hope to put out.

You've given me wonderful information that will be perfect for downtown New Bern; the Meadows Boat Yard is perfect.

Miss Meadows: And the grist mill.

MF: And the grist mill.

Miss Meadows: And Crabby's machine shop.

MF: Crabby's, yes.

Miss Meadows: And there was a brick office on the sidewalk. That was the office that was the head of all these. We didn't always have a bridge there because there was a trash pile across the way and when we could get loose, we landed on that trash pile. You found the most delightful things on the trash pile.

MF: Now, the trash pile is at Union Point?

Miss Meadows: Yes.

MF: And the Woman's Club, or someone, leveled that off and filled it in and built that stone building?

Miss Meadows: That's right. Well, they built it out of old sidewalks. This is the story I've always heard. It seems to me the Ladies Home Journal, or some magazine, had a picture of that and said that they had built it out of old sidewalk. They chopped them up and used them for building blocks. Then, somebody said that those sidewalks have to be returned. That was probably some jokester.

MF: It's such a pretty setting down there at Union Point. It really is perfectly beautiful.

Miss Meadows: Most of my friends in New Bern remember me and the sailboat, and especially, the moonlight sailing we used to go

on. You can't dictate the wind, so, we would be becalmed about half the time and it would be about one, two or three o'clock before we got in. Half the time the strong swimmers would be overboard with the bow line over their shoulders swimming back pulling the boat ashore. It was a big boat. It didn't have any engine in it.

MF: You had a wonderful childhood.

Miss Meadows: Yeah. Then we went down to Gloucester, not to the house we have now, for the month of August. We stayed down there and ran wild. We didn't put on shoes the whole time.

MF: Do you still go to Gloucester?

Miss Meadows: I have a house down there, and we have my mother's house, all three of us own. Ella has just been down there with all of her children and grandchildren. Not at one time. They've been coming and going to California, to Charleston, to Maryland, to Boston. One would come and the other would leave. The last ones left Thursday of this week. They had lunch with me and I put them on the plane.

MF: It's so nice that you kept it and that the family stays together. So many families don't.

Miss Meadows: I know. This is the only place that we have it. We built two more bedrooms and two baths on it the year before last. They were sleeping on the screen porch and anywhere they could sleep before that. Then, I have a house all to myself. Everybody else has the same house, and I have a private house.

MF: You need a retreat. Well, is there anything else you

would like to add to this interview?

Miss Meadows: No. I didn't know it was going to be taped for posterity.

MF: It sure enough is. Well, on behalf of our oral history program, Memories of New Bern, I thank you so very much for sharing your memories with us.

Miss Meadows: You're certainly welcome. It's been a delight to have been with you.

END OF INTERVIEW