

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

ILENE PHILLIPS DISOSWAY
(MRS. DONALD DISOSWAY)

INTERVIEW 426

This is Marea Kafer Foster representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 400. I am interviewing Ilene Disosway, interview number 426. This interview is being conducted on Thursday the 21st of January, 1993. We are in Mrs. Disosway's home at 1202 Green Springs Road in New Bern. We have a perfectly beautiful view of the river except it's raining today. (laughter) MAREA K. FOSTER:

So, Ilene, we'll start by you giving me your full name, your birthdate and your place, mother and daddy, sisters and brother.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, my full name is Virginia Ilene Phillips Disosway and I was born in Floyd County, Virginia on May 4, 1923. The only daughter of Ezra and Nora Phillips. I have an only brother, Dallas Phillips, who lives at Fancy Gap, Virginia.

MAREA FOSTER: And he has the motel and restaurant there, doesn't he?

MRS. DISOSWAY: Through his life he's been in the restaurant and motel business.

MAREA FOSTER: Um huh, cause I've seen it.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Yeah, right.

MAREA FOSTER: Real nice. And you grew up in Fancy Gap.

MRS. DISOSWAY: No. I was eleven years old when we moved in the Fancy Gap area. My parents had a restaurant there called the Blue Ridge Tavern many long years ago. Then later in years they had the motel and restaurant at Fancy Gap.

MAREA FOSTER: So you went to school.

MRS. DISOSWAY: I graduated from Hillsville High School in Hillsville, Virginia.

MAREA FOSTER: Is that near Fancy Gap?

MRS. DISOSWAY: That's eight miles from Fancy Gap in Virginia. Then I entered Elon College, where I received a secretarial course in 1941.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, tell me, how did you meet Donald, because I know that you came to New Bern sometime in the early 1940's, so you had to have met Donald at this point.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, I went to work. My first job from college was with Selective Service in Burlington, North Carolina. While in Burlington I was introduced to Donald on a blind date. That was in June of 1941. We were married one year later, July 11, 1942 in Burlington at the Episcopal church.

MAREA FOSTER: How about that. Isn't that interesting. I didn't know that's where you all had met.

MRS. DISOSWAY: That's right.

MAREA FOSTER: Now, this was during World War II. Was Donald in the service?

MRS. DISOSWAY: No, Donald was not in service. He was with Kelly Springfield Tires in Burlington to begin with. He went there after New Bern ceased to have much opportunity for young men. He was there seven years when I met him. Then when we left Burlington, which was October 1, 1943, to come to New Bern, he was with the North Carolina State Unemployment Commission.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, I see. And give me Donald's full name.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Donald Justice Disosway.

MAREA FOSTER: And his mother and father.

MRS. DISOSWAY: His father was William Justice Disosway and his mother was Bertha Simpkins. They both were from New Bern.

MAREA FOSTER: And he had a brother.

MRS. DISOSWAY: He had an only brother, "Jack", or John Justice Disosway.

MAREA FOSTER: And they were the only two.

MRS. DISOSWAY: They were the only two children of that marriage. His mother died at quite an early age. She was only 30 years old. Then his grandmother and his Aunt Annie, more or less, had charge of him at that time. He lived in the house with them.

MAREA FOSTER: And who was his grandmother?

MRS. DISOSWAY: His grandmother was Lula M. Disosway.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay. I'm getting them all straight in my mind. And they lived on Spencer Avenue.

MRS. DISOSWAY: They lived on Spencer Avenue.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay. Now you came back to New Bern, what 194??

MRS. DISOSWAY: I came to New Bern October 1, 1943.

MAREA FOSTER: And this again, during World War II. What was it like in New Bern during World War II?

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, at that particular time New Bern was filled with many Marines and a busy place with Marines living mostly in New Bern at the time. Other than the Marines, it was a rather quiet town.

Not a lot of industry or businesses.

MAREA FOSTER: Do you remember rationing? Did you have to have coupons?

MRS. DISOSWAY: Yes, we had to have coupons.

MAREA FOSTER: For meats, for shoes?

MRS. DISOSWAY: For our food mostly. Meats and our food mostly.

MAREA FOSTER: And gasoline.

MRS. DISOSWAY: And gasoline. But we didn't have a car, so it didn't make any difference to us.

MAREA FOSTER: And where were you living when you came to New Bern?

MRS. DISOSWAY: We moved into the Disosway house on Spencer Avenue in their apartment and we lived there for seven years. Then we moved on Rhem Avenue for five more years.

MAREA FOSTER: Where on Rhem Avenue?

MRS. DISOSWAY: 1509 Rhem Avenue.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh! The next block up from me.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Right.

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah.

MRS. DISOSWAY: I lived there from 1950 to '55.

MAREA FOSTER: And then you moved over here?

MRS. DISOSWAY: And then we moved on the river on March 31, 1955.

MAREA FOSTER: Perfectly beautiful over here.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Oh yes.

MAREA FOSTER: Nice high spot.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Yes, I thought so. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: You won't flood out over here. (laughter)

MRS. DISOSWAY: I thought I was in the mountains when we came over here with all these trees.

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) I know you did. Now tell me about the Disosway family business, the "Home Bakery." Who owned that bakery?

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, I made some notations here that are from memory. The things that I remember about Home Bakery are conversations with Mrs. Lula M. Disosway, the grandmother of my husband Donald Disosway. I don't know the exact date when the bakery was open, but as I recall it was in the very early 1900's. It was started with Mrs. Lula Disosway and her son-in-law Ernest McLacklan and located on Broad Street across from the New Bern Fire Department.

MAREA FOSTER: Before you go any further, how do you spell McLacklan?

MRS. DISOSWAY: M C L A C K L A N.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay. I'm sorry.

MRS. DISOSWAY: The bakery was quite successful; however, Ernest McLacklan died in 1918 at 30 years old during the flu epidemic. Afterwards, his widow, Annie Disosway McLacklan, came in as a partner with her mother. Always different members of the family did help in the bakery. I remember my husband talking so much about how he used to ride a bicycle with a tray of cookies or cakes or what-have-you to deliver all over New Bern.

MAREA FOSTER: I can't imagine carrying a tray of cookies or cake

and riding a bicycle at the same time.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, he did. He was a teenager.

MAREA FOSTER: Perfect balance.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Perfect balance, yes. He did that a lot.

MAREA FOSTER: Gracious.

MRS. DISOSWAY: As I mentioned, the bakery did well. Mrs. Lula Disosway and her daughter Annie, who were both widows, were able to retire around 1929. Now is that when the bank closed?

MAREA FOSTER: Uh huh, it's when the banks closed.

MRS. DISOSWAY: About right before 1929 I'll say, because Mrs. Lula had built three houses on Spencer Avenue next to her own home and one on Rhem Avenue thinking that this would enable her to have income to live on the rest of her life. At that time she turned her bakery over to her son, William Justice Disosway. One little note that I remember hearing my husband talk about was some of the well known families in New Bern. The more wealthy, thought of as the wealthy families, often never paid for their goods from the bakery. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: Now, Ilene, that is very true, because when daddy closed his bakery, and I think he closed it in 1949, or he sold it in 1949, it was absolutely amazing the number of people who, very prominent, owed him money and never ever paid it.

MRS. DISOSWAY: That's right. And I wouldn't want to mention some of the names. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: Well, daddy never told me who they were, but he knew who they were.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Oh yes, yes. But with no warning the Great Depression came with all the banks closing, and this took all the savings of the two widows. Well, naturally, no one had money at that particular time and the houses rented for very little. So the two widows started making bread and cakes in the home on Spencer Avenue.

They also made big hominy which they sold in quart jars and they parched peanuts. This also was sold to anybody that would ask for it or it was peddled around town, or delivered into town. Somehow, as everyone else lost their life savings, Mrs. Disosway and her daughter survived.

At this time, which was in the early 1930's, William Disosway was having to struggle keeping the Home Bakery and business. He had a truck and he traveled in the surrounding area selling his bakery goods.

With the economy, (interruption) finally, the bakery was closed. When I first came to New Bern I met many people who talked about the delicious bread and cakes from the Home Bakery.

MAREA FOSTER: Now, that was located on Middle Street, wasn't it?

MRS. DISOSWAY: No, it was on Broad Street.

MAREA FOSTER: It was on Broad Street? Where on Broad Street?

MRS. DISOSWAY: Across from the fire department.

MAREA FOSTER: You said that earlier.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Um huh.

MAREA FOSTER: Was that in a building owned by Mr. John Parker?

MRS. DISOSWAY: I don't know.

MAREA FOSTER: About the third one down from the ABC Store on

the corner of Broad and Hancock?

MRS. DISOSWAY: I would say it was somewhere right along there where Mrs. Wray's studio is in the middle of that block.

MAREA FOSTER: Closer down to Middle Street then. Well, you know, Kafer's Bakery was on Middle Street in two different locations.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Right.

MAREA FOSTER: And then I think about 1938, according to a book that Fred has, daddy moved the bakery to Broad Street.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Yes. See, I remember that.

MAREA FOSTER: In a building owned by Mr. John R. Parker and it was the second one from the ABC; ABC Store, a cafe, and then the bakery.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, I was only told that they were there on Broad Street in the middle of that block.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, that bakery probably went out of business before the CCC Camps came into existence. Do you know?

MRS. DISOSWAY: Probably so, because I remember hearing my husband say that the Depression was so bad for everyone that there was no money.

MAREA FOSTER: That's right.

MRS. DISOSWAY: And that his father went on WPA for a while.

MAREA FOSTER: Now that's Work Progress Administration?

MRS. DISOSWAY: Right.

MAREA FOSTER: Did that mean that someone found a job for him or was that public work?

MRS. DISOSWAY: It was public works as I recall.

MAREA FOSTER: You know, if I'm not mistaken, I believe it was

the WPA that listed all of the grave sites in Cedar Grove Cemetery.

There's a book on that, a little booklet, in the public library, I believe in the Kellenberger Room, in the North Carolina Room. But I believe the WPA, some public works group did, during the Depression to give men a job, did go and list every tombstone.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, I'm sure they did something, whatever was available for them to work, public works. I can remember my husband saying that; at this particular time William Disosway and his wife, his second wife, lived on Rhem Avenue and sometimes my husband lived with them, sometimes he lived over at the Disosway home on Spencer Avenue, but that when they came in from working, mostly all they had on the table was a bowl of butter beans, you know, and some breads.

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Not any meats, but butter beans, which he said was awfully good.

MAREA FOSTER: Butter beans are delicious. (laughter) They are. I've heard mother and daddy, when they were living, talk about the Depression. Kafer's Bakery had to take care of daddy's family; mother, daddy, and me, cause I was born then, my grandmother, and daddy's two sisters, and I think it fed Aunt Bertha's family, and fed Nannie Kafer's sister and her family. How they were able to make a living I don't know, but they were able to keep the doors open. It was very hard.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Everyone worked together to survive, because money was nowhere to be found. No money was found anywhere.

MAREA FOSTER: Did you ever hear anyone say what the hours of

the bakery were; what time they opened in the morning, what time they closed at night?

MRS. DISOSWAY: Oh, they went down to the bakery real early in the morning. Say like three or four o'clock in the morning, always in the bakery.

MAREA FOSTER: Right.

MRS. DISOSWAY: And worked all day. They were long hours - very long hours. It was a big job.

MAREA FOSTER: It sure was.

MRS. DISOSWAY: They had some help. As the picture I gave you, it shows some of the black children, young black children that helped in the bakery along with Katherine Disosway, one of the daughters. And as I said, my husband also, they used him after school to deliver.

MAREA FOSTER: Ilene, did you ever hear him mention if they had a wood oven?

MRS. DISOSWAY: Yes, it was a wood oven, yes.

MAREA FOSTER: I have a picture of the back of Kafer's Bakery with a huge woodpile and that's the first time it ever dawned on me that wood was used in this great big oven.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Yes, as far as I know. I can't be sure about that, but I assume that at that particular time wood was used more than anything else.

MAREA FOSTER: This picture's in the 1920's I think, that I've seen with this huge woodpile. And I've heard daddy say that they stayed open until eleven o'clock on Saturday nights.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Oh yes. There was no limit to the hours that they were in the bakery. They worked very hard. Justice Disosway, the grandmother's husband, never worked in the bakery. He died in 1922, but he never worked in the bakery. He was a man that sold insurance on the streets.

MAREA FOSTER: When you say he sold insurance on the streets, he didn't have an office?

MRS. DISOSWAY: Not that I know of. They never talked about an office. I guess he went around to different homes selling insurance.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, I see. Okay.

MRS. DISOSWAY: That's all that was ever mentioned, that he sold insurance.

MAREA FOSTER: Life insurance?

MRS. DISOSWAY: I think so.

MAREA FOSTER: How interesting.

MRS. DISOSWAY: But he never worked with her in the bakery. Just the two women ended up with the bakery and thought they had their life planned.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, sure, until the crash.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Yes. Uh huh.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, now, is there anything else you can think of to tell us about the bakery because you're our only source for this particular information.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, I don't think so.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, as we go on, if something pops in your mind...

MRS. DISOSWAY: Yes. I don't know of anything. I'm just trying to remember back, the conversations that I heard about this bakery.

There are people still living today who remember the bakery and talk about the wonderful cooks. The Disosway family were wonderful cooks.

MAREA FOSTER: Did you ever hear any of them ever talk about McSorley's candy store?

MRS. DISOSWAY: No, no, I did not.

MAREA FOSTER: I just wondered. It was on Middle Street, on the water end of Middle Street if I'm not mistaken. I think it was a soda shop and candy store and I just wondered.

MRS. DISOSWAY: No, I never did hear that.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, next time you see Gene McSorley, we'll have to ask him.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Yeah, Gene would know.

MAREA FOSTER: He sure would. But he can tell us about that. Well, now I want to ask you about Dr. Lula Disosway and her relationship to Donald, your husband.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, Dr. Lula Disosway, or known as Lula Marjorie Disosway, her first name was for her mother, her relationship was an aunt to my husband Donald. There were three daughters of the Disosway family and one son.

MAREA FOSTER: The son was William.

MRS. DISOSWAY: William, they called him Willie, was my husband's father. He was the only son of Mrs. Disosway. The daughters were Annie who later married Rip Summerell, and Katherine Disosway who never

married, along with Dr. Lula Disosway.

MAREA FOSTER: She's the one you call...

MRS. DISOSWAY: Kaki, we called her Kaki. She never married. She was a nurse by profession and she had a Masters in Educational Nursing Association with the Visiting Nurses Association in Brooklyn for thirty-six years. She retired from that.

MAREA FOSTER: That's interesting.

MRS. DISOSWAY: And then her sister, the other daughter, was Lula Marjorie Disosway who became a doctor and was a missionary throughout her life.

MAREA FOSTER: I remember Dr. Lula very well. She would come speak to us in Sunday School.

MRS. DISOSWAY: All about China.

MAREA FOSTER: All about China, um huh. And show us things she would bring back, and we all loved it. Just loved it when Dr. Lula would come.

MRS. DISOSWAY: She had a wonderful life. A hard life and a wonderful life.

MAREA FOSTER: If you'll tell us about her we sure would appreciate it.

MRS. DISOSWAY: I have written an awful lot for the Craven County Hospital, the Auxiliary, which has established a chapel in Craven County Regional Hospital in her name which they first dedicated this in September of 1977. Recently, in 1992, the Auxiliary wanted to rededicate this chapel in hope of making it more available for the

people in the hospital; families who need to go there for prayer, meditation, when they have someone in the hospital. Now Dr. Lula, as we called her, and we called her Lulu, was born in New Bern on January 9, 1897. Her father was Reginald Justice Disosway. Her mother was Lula Stanley Disosway. She suffered as a young child of five years old. She suffered spinal meningitis, which the doctors told her parents she would never live because they had no way at that particular time of fighting the disease. Her life was spared and the family said that prayers had saved her and that God had a purpose for her life. After hearing a Japanese missionary speak when she was eleven years old, she decided to become a missionary. She went to New Bern High School, graduating in the high school here and then she enrolled in Woman's College in Greensboro, North Carolina, which is now known as UNCG-Greensboro. She graduated in 1918. She had made a commitment before, I guess, with the college that she would teach for one year which she did as principal at the high school in Moyock, North Carolina. Deciding to become a doctor, she went to John Hopkins University to study and obtain additional credits in science. She studied pre-medical at John Hopkins in Baltimore and then continued at the Woman's Medical College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where she received her medical degree.

She was the first woman intern at James Walker Hospital in Wilmington, North Carolina.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh how interesting.

MRS. DISOSWAY: The first woman. She was sponsored by the National Episcopal Church and she was sent to Shanghai, China where she directed

a 150 bed hospital assisted only by one Chinese physician. She was primarily interested in obstetrics but she became proficient in all types of medical practice. In her later years she recalled delivering approximately 10,000 Chinese babies and often putting in 24 hours a day. She loved the Chinese people. During her fifteen years there she did encounter several conflicts of war. When the Japanese invaded Shanghai in 1940, she and all the other missionaries were forced to leave the country. So she came to the states on a furlough. They had no idea if and when she could ever go back to China, which she wanted to do. But anyway, during the meantime, the church called her to head this hospital at Ft. Yukon, Alaska above the Arctic Circle, and for seven years she served as doctor, cook, housekeeper, and administrator of this hospital. She was the only doctor in a 600 square mile radius area. It was a hard life. She really aged in Alaska because the church couldn't keep people there. They didn't want to stay in that isolated area, in that cold country. Oftentimes she had no cook, which she had to cook for as many as 35 or 40 people every day.

MAREA FOSTER: And these were...

MRS. DISOSWAY: These were Indians. It was in an Indian village, this hospital was. In 1948 she was awarded a scholarship and returned to the United States to attend a special teaching seminar on cancer at Memorial Hospital in New York City. She then returned to New Bern when her mother became ill, and cared for her until her death in 1954.

This is what I had written for the hospital. There's a lot more details about that. I don't know if you're interested in that or not.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, everything about her life and when she became medical director of Good Shepherd. When did that take place?

MRS. DISOSWAY: All right. Well, the church called upon her after her mother's death in 1954. They did not have anything at that time to offer her on the mission field and so they called upon her again to become medical director at the Good Shepherd Hospital in New Bern.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, so the church did that rather than...

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, the church from New York. She worked under the National Episcopal Church in New York.

MAREA FOSTER: I see.

MRS. DISOSWAY: They sent her on the mission field and her orders came from the office in New York. The hospital was affiliated with the Episcopal Diocese and it had served the local black community for years. So she served at Good Shepherd delivering babies and tending to whatever medical needs were required from 1954 until the hospital closed in 1967. Dr. Lula was asked then to continue her work at the Craven County Hospital and was given a mobile unit to be used as her clinic and office at the hospital. The unit was known as "Stork Haven."

It was outside. It was right outside of the emergency area at the hospital. She operated maternity clinics twice weekly from the hospital's emergency department and would see approximately 200 patients per month. She offered free pre-natal clinics for expectant mothers as well as counselled them on maternal duties, marital affairs, sex education, proper diet, all while she continued to deliver babies.

MAREA FOSTER: Now she was doing this at the hospital, and yet

I thought duties of that type were carried out by the Health Department.

MRS. DISOSWAY: No. The hospital asked her to come over there because she was doing the work mainly with the black community. She was doing this for people who could not pay or didn't have insurance.

This is what they wanted her to do at the hospital. They had a need for that.

MAREA FOSTER: Yes they did. I did not know that. Another star in her crown.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Right.

MAREA FOSTER: What a wonderful thing.

MRS. DISOSWAY: She worked. She had no relief at the hospital. Because if she had a mother in labor then she stayed at the hospital.

MAREA FOSTER: She stayed there.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Her family saw very little of her at times.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, now, Ilene, when she finally decided to retire...

MRS. DISOSWAY: She did not retire.

MAREA FOSTER: She died on the job?

MRS. DISOSWAY: She died while still working at the hospital.

MAREA FOSTER: I didn't realize that.

MRS. DISOSWAY: She never retired. She would never have retired! She was 76 years old, but she still could deliver babies with her eyes shut.

MAREA FOSTER: I'm sure she could.

MRS. DISOSWAY: She said that. She always hoped that, for years

her family would hear her say, "I just hope that when my time comes that I have just delivered a baby and stepped back", and it almost happened that way. However, she became ill. There was a flu epidemic in New Bern. The hospital was full of people. Several doctors begged her to stay in the hospital and let them take care of her. She refused to do it. She said that she could take care of herself and the other people needed the hospital rooms, so she went home. She called all of her family and told her family not to come to see her at the house that she didn't want them to catch this flu, that she could take care of herself, that she had everything she needed in the house. The family always had to obey whatever she said. She was strong in dealing with us.

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) You would not have disobeyed her for the world.

MRS. DISOSWAY: No!! If Lulu said not to do anything we didn't do it! After several days of being at home she would call each member of the family and say, "Now, I'm all right." Then we had a terrible snow storm. As a matter of fact, when she went home from the hospital I believe one of the men at the emergency room drove her home she was so sick. I think I recall her saying that. Oftentimes at night the men at the emergency room wouldn't let her go home by herself. They would drive her car and one would go and bring the emergency vehicle with them and take her home. They all loved her and they cared for her.

MAREA FOSTER: I'm sure they did.

MRS. DISOSWAY: But she was very independent, and so she refused to stay in the hospital. This snow storm enveloped the whole area and made it almost impossible for any of us to get out anyway. But her sister Katherine in New York kept calling one night, which they talked with each other daily, and she kept calling and couldn't get an answer. She called my house and was worried about her sister and wanted us to go over and see about her. We did go over to see her on a Sunday I guess it was and she wouldn't let us in the house. You could tell that she had been very sick, she looked terrible, but she just wouldn't let us come in the house. She didn't want us to be sick.

Evidently she had a problem with coughing anyway a lot all her life.

She used to smoke cigarettes all the time. The doctors had convinced her to give up the cigarettes, but she still had this chronic cough.

Sometimes she would cough to the point she'd lose her breath. We believe that that's what happened to her that night. The next morning her sister called again. We did go that one time but the next morning it was impossible to get out. But anyway, her sister in New York called my husband Donald and I about her. We couldn't get out of the yard that morning and so we called other members of the family who lived nearby. Her niece lived next door to her and had a key to the house and she called Jack Disosway, another nephew that lived nearby, and his wife Elizabeth, and they went in the house and found her dead in her bedroom and the phone was off the hook. So we think that she had a bad coughing spell and couldn't get the message out from the house because the phone was off the hook, and nobody could call in either,

see. So we don't know whether she died February 12th or the 13th.

MAREA FOSTER: For heaven's sake.

MRS. DISOSWAY: But on her tombstone we have the date as February 13th. But she died the night of February 12th at sometime during that night. So we really don't know. She'd been dead several hours when they went in the house to find her.

MAREA FOSTER: And what year was this?

MRS. DISOSWAY: This was in 1973. February of 1973.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, is there anything else you would like to tell us about Dr. Lula?

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, there is so much to tell about her and so much that I've heard through the years having been in the family, now 50 years.

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) Well, you just tell us, because she was so important to New Bern, to the medical care of New Bern.

MRS. DISOSWAY: She was. She did love her family a great deal. She was a person who wanted to keep the family close. Although she didn't always have time for us we always knew she loved us and she wanted to be with us. But she gave her life to God. She always told us that. She always had prayer when she went in to do an operation or deliver babies. God was first in her life. She said that He had given her life as a young child for a purpose, and therefore, that's why she wanted to work and give her life and self in His work with other people. And all the people that she helped were people that were unfortunate; not having enough money perhaps or even to pay a

bill.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, you just read from that paper you have. All of it or part of it. Whatever you like.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, I think it's interesting, one thing was interesting, how God led her. She loved her mother - Mama! All the letters from everywhere she went, she always wrote home, "Dear Mama and All". She didn't have time to write each one of us, but it was "Dear Mama and All." She just loved her mother! I think she felt guilty that she didn't have more time to be with her family and her mother. But this was her calling and that's what was so important to her. She would write these letters home and tell Mama what was going on all over the world and we all knew from that. Of course we heard many stories after she came back to the country. Oh, by the way, she was honored by the Civil Service-Selective Service in Alaska because she gave physicals to the men going into military service. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: How 'bout that! (laughter)

MRS. DISOSWAY: We had some citation or whatever you want to call it that was given to her by the Government.

MAREA FOSTER: Before you go on let me ask you one thing, when she went to China, did she learn to speak Chinese?

MRS. DISOSWAY: Yes. Six months. She went into a school for six months to learn the Chinese language and she could speak it well enough over there to get along and everything. She had a fabulous life in China. She had the opportunity to do her work. She was young

at that time. She taught medicine over at John Hopkins, I believe it's called John Hopkins University in Shanghai. Along with everything else she taught in the University there, taught medicine. I'm looking at so many notes that I have about her. I spent hours doing this for the hospital. But I was talking about when she came to New York to take this one month course in cancer work. That was in like 1948 and '49 that she did that. Her sister, Annie Summerell, who lived in the house and took care of her mother on Spencer Avenue, when Aunt Lula came home on a short visit she found that her sister, Annie, had a problem. As it turned out it was cancer. That meant that she had to stay home during that time. She took her sister to the hospital in New York for treatment and stayed with her up there for whatever time it was now, several weeks or a month more of treatment. Then she came home and lived in the house with her mother. That's when she gave up her going back to Alaska, was whenever her sister developed cancer and couldn't take care of her mother. Her mother was aged and somebody had to be in the home with her. Aunt Lula didn't make any money to amount to anything. Her sister in New York was the one that made more money, so therefore, she was left to work and make enough money to support the family. I think it was interesting that she had just had this course in cancer work and then her sister developed this problem and she was here. She ministered to her sister and took care of her at home until she died in 1949. Then she continued to live with her mother those last years until 1954 when her mother died, the National Church asked her to go to Good Shepherd Hospital as a

medical director there. That was called part of her missionary work, at Good Shepherd.

MAREA FOSTER: I didn't realize that.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Um huh. That was part of her missionary work at Good Shepherd.

MAREA FOSTER: I didn't know the church had sent her. I guess I thought the Board of Directors at Good Shepherd had asked her.

MRS. DISOSWAY: No, it was through the church. The need was there and the church still had charge of Good Shepherd, so that's how come her there. But the day her sister Annie died, that very day her brother Willie, as we called him, he was the ice cream manager for Maola Ice Cream Company, he was at Maola from the very beginning with Mr. Barnes...

MAREA FOSTER: How 'bout that.

MRS. DISOSWAY: So was my husband.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, good. You can tell us about the Maola Company too.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, all I can remember is that my husband Donald and his daddy worked in the very beginning with Maola Ice Cream, I mean Milk Company.

MAREA FOSTER: Now where was it located, Ilene? Do you remember?

MRS. DISOSWAY: It was over in the area of Riverside in a little small building. A little building is all it started in with Mr. Harvey Barnes.

MAREA FOSTER: They're on North Craven Street now.

MRS. DISOSWAY: All right. It was in that area now sitting right there on North Craven. It started out in just a little tiny building with Mr. Barnes who was the owner. Donald worked there in the ice cream part, which was mainly what his father did, making the ice cream.

MAREA FOSTER: Do you remember what year Maola started?

MRS. DISOSWAY: No, I do not. I do not. But I assume it was around 1934, '35, or '36, in that area. My husband worked there before he went to Burlington, North Carolina. It could have been 1933 or '34. In the early thirties I guess is when it was started. Just a small little building. But his father remained with Maola until he died. At the time he died, he was top man in the ice cream division. He was manager of the ice cream division. Maola was so good to him. He bought a house right across the street, so he was right in front of Maola all the time. He loved it better than anything, his father did.

MAREA FOSTER: How 'bout that. That's interesting.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Um huh. And Mr. Barnes saw that he was paid every week til he died. And he died of lung cancer. So that Dr. Lula's brother and sister both developed cancer, and they'd never been sick a day in their lives before.

MAREA FOSTER: Strange.

MRS. DISOSWAY: But it was fortunate that she'd had this training and knew all about cancer when she was in New York that one month learning about it. But it was a sad time for the family in that it just happened together. The very day that his sister died, Dr.

Ashford's office called to talk with Willie to come by the office.

He said to Dr. Ashford's office, "I can't do it today. My sister just died and I'll have to wait till later." And as soon as she was buried and the funeral was over, the next day he went there and found out that he had a spot on his lung and that he had to go to Duke. His sister, Dr. Disosway, took him to Duke.

MAREA FOSTER: And they operated.

MRS. DISOSWAY: They operated on him but there was nothing they could do for him. So, he died fifteen months later I believe it was.

MAREA FOSTER: How sad. Well, is there anything else you'd like to tell us about Dr. Lula?

MRS. DISOSWAY: I've covered a great deal of her life I think. It was unfortunate, I think, that she died during that snow storm when people couldn't get out to the funeral or do anything. New Bern was sort of at a stand still because we had just enough snow that no one could get out, several inches of snow. But anyway, she was buried from the Episcopal Church, which she loved dearly. This local motel displayed a sign to a departing yacht, which most felt in New Bern was a salute to her, which said, "Bon Voyage, Gallant Lady." Ed Sharp, our minister at Christ Church, always said that that was for her. She received a lot of honors. One thing, an honor that she was one of ten women from the University of North Carolina in Greensboro that was honored in 1968. She was given the Alumni Service Award after she graduated in the class of 1918.

MAREA FOSTER: (tape turned over) Okay, Ilene, if you'll finish

telling me about Dr. Lula's honors.

MRS. DISOSWAY: There were awards that she was given, which I mentioned. Another award was in 1971. She was named "Woman of the Year" in New Bern. And as I said earlier, on September 1977, the Craven-Pamlico Jones County Medical Auxiliary honored her work at the hospital - Craven Regional Hospital - with a memorial chapel in her name - Dr. Lula M. Disosway Memorial Chapel.

MAREA FOSTER: I think that's wonderful. A life of service. Dedicated. That's just absolutely wonderful.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: You've been in New Bern since 1943. Tell me about the changes - then and now.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Oh my. Through the years there have been so many changes. For one thing, New Bern has grown. We have developed some industries that came into town. I can see that Cherry Point, our big Marine Air Base, has brought much money into our area because of civilian workers that work there. I think one thing is that I have seen New Bern change with its people who were so close knit now opening up their arms and their homes to outsiders, as they would call them, that have come into our area and brought more financial success to our town. I loved it when I came here, but today I see it as a town that has progressed with the years, as a town for all people, and they welcome people into our town. Even though we don't want them to change a lot of our things, we still welcome these newcomers.

MAREA FOSTER: You're right. What about the church's role in

town life?

MRS. DISOSWAY: Oh, our church has grown and grown! Christ Church when I came in '43, of course Donald's grandmother, Mrs. Lula Disosway, had been in the church at that time over forty years. She had been one of the women that was always in church, except Christmas Eve, and she was very involved in a lot of things happening in the church. She and Rev. Charlie Williams were close friends. She used to say that he called her on many occasions about things in the church. But the church was small in number and no young people were in church when I came in 1943. I saw no young people! I was, what, about 20, 21 years old and there were no young people.

MAREA FOSTER: Right, because at that age when you came, I was ten years old, our young people were in college or off to war, like you, and then that left a big gap down to my age and we were in Sunday School.

MRS. DISOSWAY: And didn't go to church.

MAREA FOSTER: No, we did not go to church.

MRS. DISOSWAY: People did not take the young people to church at that time.

MAREA FOSTER: No, we did not. Uh uh. We had special services for the young people.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Right.

MAREA FOSTER: We had our church, so to speak, in the Parish House at that time.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Right.

MAREA FOSTER: We had a little church service before we went into Sunday School.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, of course, I didn't go to the Sunday School at that time because it was mainly for the young children.

MAREA FOSTER: Yes it was.

MRS. DISOSWAY: There was no adult class.

MAREA FOSTER: I don't think there was.

MRS. DISOSWAY: There was no adult class.

MAREA FOSTER: It was all for us.

MRS. DISOSWAY: I went and I met the people in the church through Grandma Lula. She always introduced me to everybody. We always went every Sunday with her. We took her to church in those days. But I didn't meet any young people, so I joined a chapter to meet the young people, the young adults, in the church. We just didn't have a lot of socials or activities at Christ Church in those days.

MAREA FOSTER: Like we do now. It's grown considerably.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Oh, it's grown! Oh yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: Where you hardly know anybody now.

MRS. DISOSWAY: I don't know anybody now I think sometimes, but I knew most of the people back then.

MAREA FOSTER: Right. Yeah. You did. Tell me something else. What about the relations between blacks and whites then and as you see it today.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, we were just not thrown with the black people too much I recall. The black people stayed in their area of town and

you didn't see them downtown too much or mingling anywhere in town too much.

MAREA FOSTER: But as far as you know...

MRS. DISOSWAY: The relations were good, uh huh.

MAREA FOSTER: As far as we were aware there were no hard feelings.

MRS. DISOSWAY: I never heard of anybody saying anything about the black race. Nothing. My husband's great-grandmother, Fannie Stanley Williams, who run what they call the "Poor House", she worked black people in the County Home.

MAREA FOSTER: Now the County Home you're talking about was the home next to where the hospital is now. The county home is the present day health department.

MRS. DISOSWAY: It was at that time. Well, recently the health department has moved, but that's where it was.

MAREA FOSTER: It was.

MRS. DISOSWAY: It was located there on the grounds and my husband's great-grandmother run the county home for thirty years.

MAREA FOSTER: I remember you telling me that. And there was a county prison out there by it.

MRS. DISOSWAY: The prison was right next to it. They had a little farm where they had their vegetables grown and everything.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, you know, getting back to church for a minute and your talking about this, our Service League, because that's what the young people's group was called then, the Service League, at Christmas time always had little gifts to take to the people at the

County Home. And at Easter we would go. Different holidays we'd go to visit. I do remember that. And she ran that. But I do not remember if there were blacks in the County Home. Was it just for whites, do you remember?

MRS. DISOSWAY: Yes it was just mainly for the white people I believe. But there were blacks over there that worked there in the kitchen some. My husband's step-mother, Fullilove Disosway, was in charge of what they called the County Home which started out called the Poor House. She was managing the County Home at the time. I was there very often. Every week I was there. She really had a wonderful relationship with the people there. The people that were there were able to work. I mean, they were not really sick in the bed or anything like that. They just needed a home. They worked in doing little special jobs in the building. She had one gentleman that always kept the flowers outside. He loved doing that. She was a great manager of the people there and well loved. She was there seven years until her health became such and she gave it up.

MAREA FOSTER: But as far as you can tell with the relations between blacks and whites, everything went along fine.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Was fine. I never heard anything mentioned. And I know the Disosway family were very close to some. They had some that worked in the bakery.

MAREA FOSTER: Sure.

MRS. DISOSWAY: They were close, good friends.

MAREA FOSTER: Right.

MRS. DISOSWAY: And of course Mrs. Disosway always worked with the poor people in New Bern!

MAREA FOSTER: Now when you say poor people of New Bern, are you including blacks in with whites?

MRS. DISOSWAY: No, these were the people that lived on what was called Spring Street now Fleet Street. It is now where Trent Court is.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, okay.

MRS. DISOSWAY: I was told that during the Depression that, Mrs. Disosway, she was a widow at that time, she would get a wagon, have it loaded with wood, and she would take that wagon up and down the street and throw wood out to the different houses there for them to burn. She and her husband, when they were first married, were in the Salvation Army.

MAREA FOSTER: That's interesting.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Oh yes! That started them together.

MAREA FOSTER: I didn't know that. That's a nice little tidbit today.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Yeah. Oh, I've got pictures of them, her husband Reginald. They called him Justice. His name was Reginald Justice, but they called him Justice. Justice was a Captain. He had gotten to be a Captain in the Salvation Army. It was a big group and very active at that time. The Disosway family, Reginald's family, disowned him practically because he became involved with the Salvation Army and they did not speak to his wife for fifteen years after they were

married because of the Salvation Army. They were an aristocratic family and being in the Salvation Army was beneath them. But, Grandma Lula, she was able to turn them around. She was a great person, a good Christian lady, and she didn't believe in anybody being at odds or hard feelings, and she finally in the later years they adored and loved her and became close again.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, did they stay in with the Salvation Army?

MRS. DISOSWAY: They were in the Salvation Army quite sometime, yes.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, that is really interesting. Well, Ilene, is there anything else you would like to tell us about New Bern? Anything that's happened here that's made an impression on you.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, I just think that the change is mainly in the fact that there were people that maneuvered to get some industry into our town. My husband used to say that when he was a young boy growing up here there was no work for any of the young people to do and that New Bern was nothing more than a sleepy fishing town when he was real young. But it has changed. Industry has been coming into New Bern for sometime. I think it's brought work for people and it's made our town grow, along with being on two beautiful rivers that have drawn these people that drive through our town and say, "Oh, what a lovely place to stay and let's just buy a house and live here."

MAREA FOSTER: Well, they do. A number of them do. What do you see in the future for New Bern?

MRS. DISOSWAY: I don't see any great changes in the future.

I think that we'll continue to grow with people coming into our area, because we do have this water that brings them for sailing and whatever, but I don't see a lot of industry or that sort of thing coming into our town. I think with our Tryon Palace that we're going to be a place that draws tourist. We have some lovely homes and some history, and being the second oldest town in North Carolina, that we will continue to grow with our tourist attraction.

MAREA FOSTER: I agree with you. I want to say that you have become a wonderful North Carolinian to have been born a Virginian.
(laughter)

MRS. DISOSWAY: (laughter) Well, yes, I've been in North Carolina longer than Virginia.

MAREA FOSTER: You had to learn to love North Carolina. (laughter)

MRS. DISOSWAY: Yes. Well, I loved a man.

MAREA FOSTER: Yes.

MRS. DISOSWAY: I had a wonderful husband.

MAREA FOSTER: Yes. You certainly did. You certainly did. Well, Ilene, if there is nothing else you would like to add to this interview...

MRS. DISOSWAY: I think we've covered a lot of things that were important.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, I know one thing before I do close, you have two children.

MRS. DISOSWAY: I have two children; James Thomas and Katherine Ann Cowper. She lives in Windsor, North Carolina.

MAREA FOSTER: And you also have one wonderful...

MRS. DISOSWAY: One wonderful grandson - Matthew Justice. We picked up our Justice name.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh good, good. Well, I had to get that in. I almost left it out and I'm sorry about that.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, that's the important thing for me right now is my grandson.

MAREA FOSTER: That's right. They really are important.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Oh yes, you know.

MAREA FOSTER: It's amazing. I sure do. I sure do. But I want to thank you so very much for myself and for Memories of New Bern for letting me come and interview you. I can't tell you how much I appreciate it. This information on Dr. Lula especially and the Home Bakery is just invaluable, so thank you for participating in our program.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Thank you.

MAREA FOSTER: See you later and let you read about it. (Added information) You have some information on All Saints Chapel. Please share that with Fred and me.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Well, the beginning as I recall, information was that the vestry men of Christ Episcopal Church of New Bern in March 1885 confirmed the sale of the Daves Memorial Mission Chapel which was "the old palace outbuilding on the grounds of what is Tryon Palace" by the Christ Church Relief Society and appointed a committee to investigate the cost and location of a new chapel and school. The

erection of the new chapel, after this beginning in March, the new chapel began in May on a lot situated on the south side of Pollock Street west of Bern Street, a part of the property bequeathed to the Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina by the Rev. Edward Forbes, Rector of Christ Church from 1866-1877 and went to the parish without any Diocesan charge. Now Marguerite Donnel Shepherd Nelson, a wealthy widow of Samuel Stewart Nelson, donated the new structure with its belfry and bell. Upon its completion it was then called All Saints Chapel. The services were long held there regularly, for in those days, without modern transportation, it drew numbers of person residing in that section of town distant from Christ Church. The memories that I wanted to talk about are from some people that went to this chapel, Sunday School, in the early 1920's.

MAREA FOSTER: Now this chapel, All Saints Chapel, was Episcopal.

MRS. DISOSWAY: It was of the Episcopal church.

MAREA FOSTER: And it was in an area of poor people.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Poor people.

MAREA FOSTER: And in this Spring Street area that you spoke of earlier,...

MRS. DISOSWAY: Yes.

MAREA FOSTER: So this chapel would have served the poorer parishioners of the church.

MRS. DISOSWAY: In the church in that area.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Many wonderful memories of All Saints Chapel have

been expressed by some who attended Sunday School there in the early 1920's. Marguerite Banks Tilghman has told of many fond memories of the wonderful people who were Sunday School teachers and who took part in the activities. She quotes, "I wish I could say what it is in my heart about Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Disosway, the superintendents. Mrs. F. W. Hughes, Mrs. Myrtle Carr, Mrs. Ruth Medford, and Mrs. Rosa Dail, all these beautiful people, faithful servants of our Lord Jesus. They loved us and taught the catechism creed and to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbors as ourself. We loved all the teachers and can say with grateful hearts - thanks be to God for putting in their hearts to feed my sheep. We are his little sheep." Marguerite remembers being in the chapel at age twelve years, which was in 1923.

She was confirmed at Christ Church about this time. Rev. Charles Williams, Rector of Christ Church, told her he was against having two separate Sunday Schools, that all should be together in the big church downtown! But also, during Lent, Mrs. Lula Disosway, would cook big hominy and put in jars which was delivered by the Sunday School members to members of Christ Church who had placed orders earlier. This money was put in mite boxes, and on Easter Sunday all would march from the chapel to the big church carrying their banners and cross where they put their mite boxes on the altar. Another member, Parthenia Goulding, remembers at the Easter egg hunt. Whoever found an egg colored black with a white cross on it was given the prize. Well, Marguerite remembers always being "The Angel" each year at the Christmas play. At the Christmas party, taffy candy was cooked and pulled, fudge made, a

dressed Santa Claus gave gifts, and Mrs. F. W. Hughes gave money and a card.

MAREA FOSTER: Now, this Mrs. Hughes that you're talking about is the grandmother of Caroline Dunn Ashford.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Right. Mrs. Hughes sometimes took the children after Sunday School down to the big church to let them know the meaning of worshipping together, and before the sermon she would let them go home. She often invited children to her home for a picnic and to make cheese straws. When it seemed to be no longer needed, the chapel was closed in 1931. Some of its furnishings were given to nearby missions.

During 1938, the vestry permitted its use as a nursery school at the request of Mrs. Frank Hughes, the prime mover in a community program for the welfare of underprivileged children in the longwharf section of town. The chapel was then de-consecrated by the Rev. Thomas Campbell Darst, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, I'm so glad you have that because All Saints Chapel played such a most important part in the people's lives of that area.

MRS. DISOSWAY: They all spoke with such great enthusiasm and they said that you just felt the love from these people who taught.

I believe Mrs. Rosa Dail played the organ. All of them just took time with these young kids who were poor children and would had not have been in Sunday School downtown.

MAREA FOSTER: If they had not had All Saints.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Had this facility near them. It was closer to

them.

MAREA FOSTER: If I'm not mistaken, the Marguerite Banks Tilghman that you're talking about is the mother of a classmate of mine, of Patsy Taylor. Patsy Taylor's mother.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Right.

MAREA FOSTER: And they at one time, the Banks lived on Pollock Street, say the lower end of Pollock Street going out towards Ghent, but in this block, I think it's Fleet Street. Fleet Street crosses Pollock and they were maybe two houses from the end. Mrs. Banks...

MRS. DISOSWAY: May Banks.

MAREA FOSTER: Marguerite's mother, ran a little grocery store.

MRS. DISOSWAY: It was there when I came to New Bern.

MAREA FOSTER: Yes, it was there when I was growing up. I remember Mrs. Banks' grocery store.

MRS. DISOSWAY: The location is right back of what is now St. Mary's Church.

MAREA FOSTER: Was it right there?

MRS. DISOSWAY: Right there.

MAREA FOSTER: I knew it was real close to the corner in a little store. There were living quarters...

MRS. DISOSWAY: In the back.

MAREA FOSTER: And on the back. Well, Ilene, this has been absolutely wonderful. And Fred Latham who's here taking photograph, and thank you for posing for us. I have thoroughly enjoyed this.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Oh, I think it's wonderful to be able to talk

about memories.

MAREA FOSTER: We appreciate it.

MRS. DISOSWAY: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW