

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

DR. SAMUEL DOUGLAS BRYAN

INTERVIEW 1006

This is Dr. Joseph Patterson representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 1000. I am interviewing Dr. Samuel Bryan, Doctor of Dental Surgery, at his home at 1711 Dillahunt Street in New Bern. The number of the interview is 1006. Sitting in with us at the interview is Dr. Bryan's wife, Mrs. Dorothy Bryan. The date is Monday, August 17, 1992.

JP: Dr. Bryan, we'll start by my asking you for your full name first.

Dr. Bryan: Samuel Douglas Bryan.

JP: When were you born?

Dr. Bryan: November 2, 1918.

JP: Where were you born?

Dr. Bryan: In New Bern.

JP: Do you remember the place in New Bern?

Dr. Bryan: Yes. It was where the extension of the Good Shepherd Hospital is right there on West Street.

JP: Who were your parents, Dr. Bryan?

Dr. Bryan: Henry and Pearlie C. Bryan.

JP: Were they from New Bern?

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: What did your father do?

Dr. Bryan: He was a painter.

JP: A house painter?

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: And your mother was a housewife?

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: Do you have brothers and sisters?

Dr. Bryan: Yes, one each.

JP: Are they living now?

Dr. Bryan: My only brother is dead. My sister is living.

JP: She's in New Bern?

Dr. Bryan: No, she's in New York. Her son is here now, visiting.

JP: When did you and Dorothy get married?

Dr. Bryan: We got married October 22, 1949.

JP: How many children do you have?

Dr. Bryan: One.

JP: A daughter?

Dr. Bryan: Yes sir.

JP: And she has one child, is that right?

Dr. Bryan: One child.

JP: Tell me again this child's name.

Dr. Bryan: Adia.

JP: Which means "gift of God".

Dr. Bryan: Yes. Adia Akosia Coleman.

JP: And your daughter and granddaughter are living here with you?

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: Could you go back a little bit in time, Dr. Bryan, and talk about growing up in New Bern; what it was like for you, and who your friends were, and what you did as a boy?

Dr. Bryan: At the time that I came along, another Bryan family stayed down in the next block from us; James Bryan, Gunnard Bryan, we came along together. We used to play polo. We used pool balls. We would make a hole in the ground and we'd roll those pool balls and hit each other. We went to school out there.

JP: What school was this?

Dr. Bryan: That was the West Street school.

JP: You lived on what street?

Dr. Bryan: I lived on Cedar Street, which was two blocks from the school.

JP: How old were you when you started to school at West Street?

Dr. Bryan: I was six years old. I started school at six years old, and we used to play around in the school yards. My early teachers were Miss Grey and Miss Fisher. She became Mrs. Booker.

JP: Wallace Booker?

Dr. Bryan: Yes. She was a Fisher before. I went from that grade to the first grade. That was pre-school; and then, went to the first grade and Miss Munford, her name came to be, she was a Blackledge at that time. I remember the teachers right on up through the grades.

Rawlings was the second grade, and Martin the third, and Martin the fourth, the fifth grade was Esther Powell, and Styron the sixth grade, and the seventh grade, Mrs. Bryant.

JP: What Mrs. Bryant was that?

Dr. Bryan: Mrs. Mary Bryant. We went from there over into the high school, and the teachers were all mixed up then.

JP: Was this still at West Street?

Dr. Bryan: Yes, at West Street High School. We played football. That was the main sport that we engaged in at the time. We didn't have any basketball team or track team or so forth. We played football.

JP: This is the high school team you're speaking of?

Dr. Bryan: The high school.

JP: Were you a member of the football team?

Dr. Bryan: Yes, I played football.

JP: What was your position?

Dr. Bryan: Halfback.

JP: Were you good?

Dr. Bryan: Oh yeah!

JP: I may of seen you play. I used to go watch the West Street High School football games.

Dr. Bryan: I only played two years. The third year, I assisted my uncle in carrying his papers. He was a paper man, and I carried the papers for him while he did other things.

JP: What paper was this?

Dr. Bryan: Sun Journal.

JP: So, you helped him deliver the Sun Journal?

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: Do you remember who the editor of the paper was then? Was it Mr. Dawson?

Dr. Bryan: I don't know. I tell you the truth, I really don't know. So, I was only two years with the team after that. We engaged

in the different sports and things like that. Well, I about finished with that.

JP: You finished high school, though, at West Street?

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: Do you remember the year you graduated?

Dr. Bryan: Yes, 1936.

JP: Looking back in your school career, when you started school, were your classes very large?

Dr. Bryan: No.

JP: About how many were there?

Dr. Bryan: They were about thirty.

JP: In a room?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah.

JP: In high school, was it about the same size?

Dr. Bryan: Yes. It was a little smaller, about twenty-five or twenty.

JP: Did your football team have good success when you played on it?

Dr. Bryan: About the first two years they lost. They'd loose everything. About the time that I got on, we were a winning team.

JP: What teams did you play?

Dr. Bryan: We played Kinston, Goldsboro, Washington, Wilmington.

JP: The community, as I recall, was very excited about the football at West Street High School. Not just the black community but the white community too.

Dr. Bryan: We had a winning team at the time I was on there. I don't remember how many games we won, but each season, we had a winning season, until Coach Brown left. Coach Brown was a math teacher in the school and he coached. And right on through 1937 it was a winning team.

JP: After you finished at West Street High School, what was your next step? Did you go to college?

Dr. Bryan: No. My first year out of high school, I worked at Woods Drug Store.

JP: That's down on Middle Street?

Dr. Bryan: Yes, it was on Middle Street along there where Booty Hawk's store was.

JP: What was your job?

Dr. Bryan: I was a delivery boy.

JP: Do you remember Mr. Wood very well?

Dr. Bryan: Oh yeah.

JP: What was he like?

Dr. Bryan: He was a very fine fellow I thought. His left hand was doubled over from an injury he had received at the time he was small, but he could tie those knots just as quick as anything you'd want to see. He would sit back in the back and talk in the back of the prescription area. He'd sit back there and talk with his friends.

JP: He was the Pharmacist?

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: And you delivered all over town?

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: Do you remember his son, Ernest?

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: What do you recall about Ernest?

Dr. Bryan: At the time I went there to work, Ernest was in school at Harvard. He would come down to visit. He came two or three times when school was out. He was pretty nice. I didn't meet him often, occasionally he'd come down.

JP: He became a very famous man. He was a radiologist, and wrote textbooks on neuroradiology, and was world famous. He became the first chairman of the radiology department in the medical school at Chapel Hill.

Dr. Bryan: I knew he was at Chapel Hill.

JP: How long did you work at the drug store?

Dr. Bryan: I worked there that first year, from '36 to '37. Then when I came back in '38, I went there and worked the summer of '38.

JP: Did you deliver on a bicycle?

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: Where were you from '37 to '38?

Dr. Bryan: I was a student in school.

JP: For your summer school?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah, but I worked there during the summer of '37.

JP: What happened after that?

Dr. Bryan: I continued my education. I finished in '41.

JP: Where did you go?

Dr. Bryan: North Carolina Central University.

JP: That's for your college?

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: Were you there three years then?

Dr. Bryan: Four years.

JP: And you had a B.A degree, or B.S.?

Dr. Bryan: B.S. degree.

JP: And that school is located where?

Dr. Bryan: In Durham, North Carolina. So, when I finished the school, the war was on. World War II had started. I left school and went to the service, not right away but a few months later. I stayed there until '46.

JP: Five years in the Army?

Dr. Bryan: All of them weren't in the Army. Some of it was waiting before. I finished in '41 and I went to the Army in '42 and I stayed until December of '45.

JP: What sort of outfit were you in?

Dr. Bryan: I was with the Quartermaster Battalion. I was with the medical detachment the whole time that I was in the service. We would take care of sick call and do a lot of medications for the men.

JP: Were you in combat at all?

Dr. Bryan: I wasn't in combat, no. I went over to France, and we were close by, but we didn't provide service for them.

JP: After the war, did you go to dental school right away?

Dr. Bryan: No. I came back in January of '46. I went back to North Carolina Central and updated my degree; I got more chemistry, from '46 to '47. Then, I finished a year in Howard University in graduate school, in chemistry. After the year at Howard University, I went to Fisk University. No, I went to Fisk first before I went to Howard; and then, I went to Howard; and then, I went back to Nashville to dental school. Now to put it properly, I went to Fisk from '46 to '47, and I came back to Howard in '47 and '48; and then, I went back to Meharry in '48 to '52.

JP: And that's where you got your degree in dentistry?

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: That's a pretty long time of educational progress. Did you have any difficulty funding all of this?

Dr. Bryan: No, I didn't have any difficulty because I was on the GI Bill, and I had the full rights of the GI Bill. The GI Bill paid all of my expenses except the very last quarter, and I had to pay that.

JP: It was a wonderful thing for you.

Dr. Bryan: It really was. It was the only way I could have gone.

JP: When you finally got your dental degree, where did you go to locate?

Dr. Bryan: I went to Kansas City for a year of internship. I left Kansas City, and I came to New Bern. I've been in New Bern ever since.

JP: Did you consider going any other place besides New Bern?

Dr. Bryan: No. New Bern was my choice. I came to New Bern, and I guess I wasn't practicing long enough to consider going any other place besides.

JP: What prompted you to go into dentistry?

Dr. Bryan: I remember when I was in the first grade, there was a little girl, and she was a cute little girl; and how the teachers go down and ask various ones what they want to be when they grow up, and I said, "I want to be a Dentist." They said, "Why you want to be a Dentist?" I said, "So I can pull Willie Mae's teeth." It seemed like a nice thing to do. And sure enough, that's what I turned out to be. I just wanted to be a Dentist.

JP: When you came back to New Bern, were there any other black dentist here?

Dr. Bryan: No, there were no black dentist here at the time. In fact, there never have been very many black dentist here. I practiced from '53 on to '66, and in all that time, there was no other black dentist here.

JP: You must have been very busy.

Dr. Bryan: Well, I was busy, but the practice wasn't the same as it is now. Now they have dual, triple, or even quadruple people in the office. At the time that I came in, we had one person assigned to the office.

JP: You were there, and you had one person helping you?

Dr. Bryan: I had an assistant, a girl, but no other dentist.

JP: In your office, there were just the two of you, you and the

assistant? You didn't have a secretary or anyone to keep the books.

Dr. Bryan: Yeah.

JP: Did you handle the books yourself and the bills?

Dr. Bryan: I handled them both because it wasn't that much to handle. We would do an extraction or denture or whatever, and I would keep the books between the patients. There weren't that many patients really. Dentistry now, you keep the patient more or less coming along. It's a treatment, you know...

JP: Preventive medicine?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah, preventive medicine. And they keep you coming back and you go back and visit the dentist and it's just a prolongation.

JP: Once you start as a patient, you continue.

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: But in those day, that wasn't true?

Dr. Bryan: No.

JP: Where was your office located?

Dr. Bryan: On Broad Street. The building is torn down now. It was in the block of buildings from Roundtree Street to where they put the building. You start at Roundtree Street, Kay Fahaad had a place there. In fact, he owned the block of buildings.

JP: Who is this Kay Fahaad?

Dr. Bryan: He was Assyrian. He had a 4-unit building. I don't know who was in there. He was in the first. Different ones were in the second; and then the next one was Dr. Hill, the pharmacist; and the next unit was mine, the next office was mine.

JP: When you were in practice in those days, what was your equipment like?

Dr. Bryan: I used the trident dental machine. It had an electric light on the dental unit that came up and you could swing it around all different ways. Then, the cuspidor. It was pretty good, but it was about the time that they were ready to change the dental design.

JP: Was your drill foot operated?

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: I remember those. When teeth cleaning was done, you did this, there was nobody else to do it.

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: So, you did it all.

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: Did you use anesthesia in your office?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah.

JP: What sort of anesthesia?

Dr. Bryan: I can't even remember the name of it.

JP: Nitrous Oxide? Gas?

Dr. Bryan: No, I didn't use gas. I used local.

JP: Local anesthetics. Were the patients sitting up?

Dr. Bryan: Yes, in the chair.

JP: Later, that changed, and they began to recline in the chair.

Dr. Bryan: Yeah, and the mode of the chair changed from the kind you sit up in and you could let the back down, in back. They changed to laid out.

JP: Dr. Charles Barker had something to do with that.

Dr. Bryan: With that chair, yes, he did.

JP: Did things go along about the same for the years you were practicing dentistry, or was there a change?

Dr. Bryan: They were changing slightly during the time that I was practicing dentistry. I didn't get to employ the new chairs, to use the new chairs because I wasn't in practice long enough. But they were changing at the time that I was in practice.

JP: Were your patients all black patients or did you have some white folks come too?

Dr. Bryan: I saw a white patient. I think in the time that I was out there, the thirteen years that I was out there, I probably saw about three or four white patients.

JP: All during this time, surely some of the black folks were going to white dentist too, because there were so many people. I know you have had severe eye trouble and that you are blind now. Would you comment about your eye trouble and what's happened to cause you to stop practice?

Dr. Bryan: There rose a situation with my eyes. I had eye problems when I started my dental practice. My problems ran over from dental school into practice. I had one good. I say good eye, but I had glaucoma in that eye, in my left eye.

JP: That was your good eye?

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: What happened to the right eye?

Dr. Bryan: Well, the glaucoma took that vision.

JP: So, glaucoma produced blindness in the right eye?

Dr. Bryan: Yes. That vision was gone the year of my graduation. That vision was gone in my right eye. I practiced with the good eye, which was my left eye. I used my drops and what not to maintain the eye in good health. I practiced from '53 to '62. Then I had an accident in the office. I bent down to pick up something that had fallen on the floor. I had finished my service for the day and was getting ready to come out of the office. I dropped something on the floor and I reached to pick it up, and when I picked it up and turned, I caught that good eye in the handle of the chair. Then, I was gone, really. I practiced '63 to '66 just trying to decide what to do. I later went to the rehabilitation center in Raleigh. From there, I went to the State Division of Services for the Blind and worked with them for eleven years.

JP: You weren't there as a patient, you were working with them?

Dr. Bryan: Working with them.

JP: Did you move to Raleigh?

Dr. Bryan: No. I was at the rehab services in Raleigh for just a three month period. That's how you usually start out. Then, I went to Durham to the Butner Rehabilitation Center School over there, and I learned braille over at the center. After I learned braille, I went from there to the school at East Carolina. I finished East Carolina in '70, and then I went back to Greenville, where the Greenville district office was in '71. I worked there from '71 until '81 or '82.

JP: What was your job?

Dr. Bryan: I was a rehabilitation counsellor. I would counsel people and provide services for them at the behest of the Blind Commission. Either all services or partial services, depending on their dependability.

JP: How did you get to and from Greenville?

Dr. Bryan: I had a driver that took me daily. In other words, I use a driver all the time. The last driver I used, who worked with me the longest period of time, was Miss Viola Brown from James City.

She would take me over to Greenville. When I worked in the office, I would go over there and work from eight until five. Then three days or four days, or however it turned out, I spent those days going around to different counties like; Nash, Pitt, or whatever county. I would work with the clients in that county.

JP: Dr. Bryan, when you came back to New Bern and during your practice here and after that, do you remember the black physicians who were here during those years?

Dr. Bryan: Yes. When I came back, there was a Dr. Johnson here. He wasn't here when I came to practice, he was here the year before, and he left. But the ones who were here when I came to practice were: Dr. Fisher and Dr. Martin and Dr. Munford. They were practicing here then.

JP: Did you do any work at Good Shepherd Hospital?

Dr. Bryan: I did a little work. I didn't engage in a hospital to any large extent, but I did repair a fracture. Someone had fractured

their jaw, and I did that. I did two of those, jaws. That was about the extent of it.

JP: What were your relations with the white dentist in town during your practice years?

Dr. Bryan: My relationship with Dr. Barker was excellent. When I first finished and was getting ready to practice, I went down to Dr. Barker. He's the only one that I went to. I went to Dr. Barker and had a conversation with him. Everything was fine with him. He would let me borrow the bridge remover. I needed it only once, and I used that. Dr. Barker was a very nice man.

JP: Was there a dental society in town then?

Dr. Bryan: I don't know. I think that there might have been a dental society, but I didn't belong to it. I didn't keep up with it.

JP: Were you not asked to belong to it?

Dr. Bryan: No.

JP: Perhaps at that time, it was just for white dentist.

Dr. Bryan: Maybe so.

JP: Looking back on it, are you glad you went into dentistry?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah. I'm glad I went into it. I'm sorry I didn't have longer to practice.

JP: Would you recommend to a young person today that he or she go into dentistry?

Dr. Bryan: Well, dentistry has changed so. I think for the better. So, I would certainly recommend, but I don't have any idea of what

they would be getting into now. But I would recommend it for various reasons.

JP: Looking back again, do you have any thoughts about the medical care the people in the black community were receiving in those years? Was it good care? Was it inadequate?

Dr. Bryan: It was adequate in so far as it went. The black doctors could carry them so far. I noticed for surgery and things of that sort, they had to use the white physicians. So far as the treatment and the day to day medication and things of that sort, it was okay.

JP: The hospital care for blacks then was at Good Shepherd, and that's the only hospital in town they went to.

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: And you were not here before Good Shepherd started?

Dr. Bryan: Yes. I was here not before it started. It started about '35 or something like that, and I was just finishing high school then.

JP: Before Good Shepherd opened, do you remember where black folks went for hospital care?

Dr. Bryan: They went to St. Luke's.

JP: What was the feeling about that?

Dr. Bryan: As far as I could see, they were glad to get there, only they were put down in the basement. They had a unit down in the basement for the black patients, and they all went there.

JP: Did they resent that?

Dr. Bryan: Well, they might have. I don't know much about that.

JP: A long time ago, and things that happened in those days just happened. That's the way it was. I remember that basement. I was there with my father many times, making rounds with him.

Dr. Bryan: To tell you the truth, the basement was seldom full. I worked there at St. Luke's Hospital a while before I went to Virginia to the service. I worked there for several months. In the hospital, it was never filled full down there while I was there.

JP: What did you do in your job?

Dr. Bryan: I took care of the surgery room, you know, prepare the room for surgery.

JP: Would you call it an orderly's job?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah, an orderly.

JP: Do you remember my father, Dr. Patterson?

Dr. Bryan: I don't know which one was Dr. Patterson. I know he was there, but I don't know who he was.

JP: Dr. Jones?

Dr. Bryan: I know Patterson and Jones were two doctors that were there.

JP: Since you stopped your work with the Blind Commission, what all have you been doing?

Dr. Bryan: I retired from the Blind Commission and that's what I've been doing, enjoying retirement. Just in the home, and that's it.

JP: Tell me about your violin playing.

Dr. Bryan: My violin playing is escapoop. I don't play the violin.

I never played the violin as such. I took it up when I was in the Army as a means of occupying myself; because I didn't go to town, I stayed on the base and I practiced. This was when I was in California, and I practiced the violin. It was all self taught. In '85 I took some lessons from Mr. Moeller. He was a Danish fellow. He had travelled on the ships, the cruises, playing all over all the world. He was really good. I took lessons from him in '85, '86, for about two years. Then he left to go somewhere in Kentucky.

JP: Are you still playing the violin?

Dr. Bryan: No, I don't play it now. Up until last month, I played it. Something is wrong with me. I just can't play it now.

JP: Let me ask you about dentist again. Why do you think over the years that there's been no black dentist in New Bern except for yourself?

Dr. Bryan: I tell you the truth, I really don't know. It seemed like a nice place to me, but I guess there's not that cross section of traffic that keeps the economy flowing. It is now, more so, than it was then because there are more people here now than there was then. I don't know why. I honestly don't know.

JP: During the war years of World War II, I know you were gone a lot of the time, but do you remember any impressions in those times of any particular effect the war had on the black community in New Bern? Did it change the population? Did it change attitudes?

Dr. Bryan: No. It changed the population I know in that Cherry Point being so close. There were plenty of jobs, and the economy was

pretty stable. The fact that there was the Marine base down there so near to New Bern, made it so that the economy was pretty good.

JP: Some folks think that in a lot of towns in those days that black folks just moved North because of jobs that were available. I wondered if this happened in New Bern?

Dr. Bryan: It might have happened, but I think that they began to move back some because of the Marine base. A lot of the jobs were available then. The folk that had gone North for a job, a lot of them came back here to this area.

JP: So they shifted, but they came back?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah.

JP: Do you have any memories about the way things were when the civil rights movement came along? Was there a pretty easy transition during the civil rights movement of the sixties, or was it difficult?

Dr. Bryan: As I recall, when the civil rights got started, the civil rights transcription affected, I can think of one, Clark's Drug Store.

JP: What happened at Clark's?

Dr. Bryan: The black people were staying out. I didn't know why at first they weren't going to Clark's Drug Store. I had my prescription filled there. I was down there in the store getting my prescription filled and found out that some of them didn't want to use the Clark Drug Store.

JP: Was the problem with Mr. Clark wouldn't serve them?

Dr. Bryan: No, it wasn't that. They just didn't want to use

the store. It didn't effect me because I was getting my prescription, but I found out that some of them didn't want to patronize it. This is in the beginning. The City Laundry used to be around there on Fleet Street. I don't know what caused them to pick these certain stores.

JP: They wouldn't use the City Laundry either?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah. They had been using them right regular, and then all of a sudden, didn't want to use them. I don't know why.

JP: Was there much unrest in the whole community? Were there outbreaks of violence?

Dr. Bryan: I don't recall any outbreaks except that they used to have demonstrations. Down at the five and ten cent store when they use to have the sit-ins, the sit-ins could be serious. They use to take the seats out so they couldn't go in and sit.

JP: Who would take the seats out?

Dr. Bryan: The management. First they had seats in their store.

JP: Is this at the Kress's store?

Dr. Bryan: Kress's store and the McLellan's store, they had seats in there. The black people would go in and sit down to be served. So, they would take the seats out.

JP: Would they make them get up and take the seat out?

Dr. Bryan: No, the seats were attached to the floor. So, in order to stop them from sitting down, they'd take all the seats out. So, you'd go in and you would stand to the counter at that time. The thing that got me, I don't know why, they would march in front

of the Kress's store and McLellan's. The fellow that worked in the dental laboratory was down there. He was demonstrating. His name was Dallas Green. He was demonstrating against the blacks eating there.

One of the fellows, Jeff Johnson, he owned the laboratory, and he came up and talked with me about him protesting, demonstrating against the blacks eating in the store. I told him, as far as I was concerned, it didn't matter. I knew where he stood and he had a right to protest.

I didn't want to take any action against him or anything of that sort.

So, he passed over that; and of course, Dallas and I always had a nice relationship. I never had any problems with him. The demonstration, I guess, he cut those out too. As far as I was concerned, he could of kept right on demonstrating.

JP: When Martin Luther King was assassinated, did that cause a lot of troubles?

Dr. Bryan: It did because people were so much behind Dr. Martin Luther King. I was at East Carolina at the time. It so happened that I was in New Bern at the time. It happened on the weekend. The violence that erupted, I missed that in Greenville; and naturally, I missed what little there was here too because I didn't get out in the street in it to see was going on. I could of been right in the middle of the violence in Greenville because I would have ordinarily been going back to school over there. They canceled the school for a day or two.

JP: Here in New Bern?

Dr. Bryan: No, in Greenville, to get things settled down. By the time I went back over to school, it was quieted down.

JP: Did you hear of any particular problems here in New Bern at the schools or other places?

Dr. Bryan: No. I didn't hear of too much violence in the streets. Then too, I wasn't getting around. I was getting to the bus station to travel over to the school in Greenville, and I'd come back and I'd be home. So, I wouldn't be seeing it.

JP: I'm going to change the subject, Dr. Bryan. You're a very famous person in this great New Bern fire of 1922. I know the story, but for the purpose of this tape, would you tell again where you were and the beginning of the fire?

Dr. Bryan: I was at my grandmother's house.

JP: And you were how old then?

Dr. Bryan: I was four years old. I had just turned four November 2 and this happened at the end of November back toward December 1.

I was eating my meal at the table, and I heard a child come by. She had been to the pump. There was a pump right in front of the house, and she had been getting water there to the pump and was coming back down the alley. When she was coming back down opposite the kitchen door, she called out, she said, "Miss Bryan, you're chimney is on fire."

It seemed like that words "fire" and "the chimney" just erupted into action. My grandmother and aunts and others got to scurrying around, but I wasn't paying any attention, I was eating my dinner. They went out and started moving out the furniture. They had sealed the kitchen door. You had to come out of the house to go in the kitchen, and the kitchen door was blocked off. They had moved something there in front

of the door. I was eating, that didn't make any difference to me.

So, they asked, where is Sam? Leasor Chapman moved the thing away and came in and got me out of there. I wasn't worrying about it, I was eating.

JP: That house burned down.

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: But your home did not burn, is that right?

Dr. Bryan: No, my home did not burn. My home was about four blocks from my grandmother's house. The sparks caught in the top of the house right along the eaves. The men jumped up there and put that out, and that house was spared.

JP: So, you were in the house where the fire started. Do you remember much about the fire other than that? You were only four years old.

Dr. Bryan: No. I've some vague memories, but I can't quite put them together. Seems like I remember coming around to my house, and the people across the street that were connected with my family, were out in the yard watching. They started a lot of running and scattering, but I can't get that straight.

JP: I can understand. I was only five at the time of the fire. I have trouble with that too. Dr. Bryan, downtown New Bern, you have mentioned that there was a millinery shop and the Green Door Tea Room. Would you like to comment about those places?

Dr. Bryan: I worked at the millinery shop.

JP: Where was this?

Dr. Bryan: On the corner of Broad and Middle.

JP: Which corner would that be? The Green Door was on the southeast corner.

Dr. Bryan: It was on that same corner. The Green Door started after the millinery shop.

JP: They were in the same place?

Dr. Bryan: Uh huh. It was later on in time. But the millinery shop, and I don't know whose it was; I don't know who owned it, but I worked there to keep the coal fire going. The Green Door opened many years later. This was in the late thirties. At that time; all that section over there has been torn down now, but across the street over there, there was an Assyrian living upstairs. That was before the Green Door took place. The Green Door, I don't know the year it got started over there.

JP: Do you remember who ran the Green Door?

Dr. Bryan: No, I don't remember.

JP: It was a nice restaurant though.

Dr. Bryan: Yes. Then the Green Door moved from there down to Pollock Street behind McLellan's store in the back, back there.

JP: It was across the street from the Athens behind the building?

Dr. Bryan: Yes.

JP: Did you work there?

Dr. Bryan: No, I didn't work there. I just happened to notice.

JP: You're the first person I've talked to who remembers that. You told me about the black doctors that you remember at Good Shepherd.

What do you remember about Dr. Lula Disosway?

Dr. Bryan: Dr. Disosway came to the hospital after I had gotten started in practicing dentistry. She was more or less director of the hospital. She was pretty good. I liked Miss Disosway. She took care of my daughter. I had spilled some hot coffee, my wife had spilled hot coffee on my daughter's arm and she had burned her arm pretty bad, and Dr. Disosway and Dr. Littman took care of that. She was pretty good.

JP: She ran the hospital pretty well. Who are some of the nurses you remember there?

Dr. Bryan: Miss Rebecca Hennie was the first head nurse, and Mrs. Burkette. I can't think of her first name.

JP: What about Venable?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah, well, Venable became Burkette. She married Burkette. And Miss Martin. These were early nurses.

JP: And Miss Privett.

Dr. Bryan: Yeah, Miss Privett.

JP: And Moore?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah, Miss Moore came on later.

JP: You checked skating on the list I gave you. Did you do a lot of skating when you were growing up here?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah, I did a lot of skating. I skated from the time somebody bought me some skates. I guess I must of been eleven years old or less. I started from one skate to two skates. I did a lot of skating around the belt.

JP: Downtown?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah, I skated downtown. I was on the one skate when I was working at the millinery shop down there. I was on the one skate just starting to skate on two skates. I used to bring in the coal; and then in the meantime when I wasn't doing anything, I'd skate from Middle Street down to the next corner, Craven Street.

JP: Your granddaughter probably wouldn't use the same skates that you used. She has a different kind of skates these days. You also checked Memorial Day on the list.

Dr. Bryan: I remember Memorial Day and how we used to line up on George Street and the parade was coming and it would go down to the National Cemetery.

JP: Was this when you were younger?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah, when I was a kid coming up. They'd have all kind of vendors selling sandwiches and peanuts and what not, going down to the cemetery. The men would march down out there at the time, and then they'd come back. I don't know what company it was, but they would march. It must of been some sort of an Army unit because it would come back and they served the dinners at the grand Red Cross hall. They served the bar-be-que and beans and what not.

JP: Was this a time for the whole town?

Dr. Bryan: Yes, all that was interested.

JP: Just a big Memorial Day parade and celebration.

Dr. Bryan: Uh huh.

JP: You did some swimming in the rivers, did you?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah, I did some swimming.

JP: Where did you swim?

Dr. Bryan: I'd swim along National Avenue. Do you know where the fire station is now? Well, there used to be a path to the river there. I haven't seen the area.

JP: I'm not sure. As far as Maola's?

Dr. Bryan: It's past that.

JP: About Glenburnie?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah, that's where it was. I swam out there and I swam in town. Down there, there used to be an old boat or ship that was anchored out there in front of Guy Boyd's Fruit Stand. About Hancock Street or somewhere along in there, we used to wade out there to the old boat. It had a diving board on there.

JP: This was at the foot of Hancock Street in the Trent river?

Dr. Bryan: Yes. We used to dive off the boat and swim around out there.

JP: But you also swam at Glenburnie in the Neuse river?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah.

JP: It's a shame there are no places to swim in this town. You have noted in this list that you would like to speak to men who died in the service.

Dr. Bryan: She just asked me if I knew any people who had died in service. I said I only knew one that died in service. I met a lot of people from New Bern overseas, but I only know one that died, Mack Rutledge. He was in the Navy.

JP: You lived through the Depression years in New Bern. Was that a bad time?

Dr. Bryan: Not for me because in 1929 I was in elementary school. I was a young fellow. Mama and daddy might of been having it hard, but I didn't have it hard. They had a collard patch on the side of the house. They might of had a hard time getting it, but I didn't find it hard myself.

JP: So, life just went along pretty well?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah, just went along.

JP: It seems to have affected different people our age in different ways. It didn't affect me a great deal, but it affected Dr. Richardson tremendously. I know that the church has been an important thing in your life. I wonder if you would speak to what the church has meant to you?

Dr. Bryan: The church has meant a lot to me. I grew up in the church from knee high on up. They used to have Vacation Bible School there.

JP: What church was this?

Dr. Bryan: St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church. In the summertime they'd have Vacation Bible School, and we'd always go down to the Bible School and learn the catechism. The church to me was a place for a social life. At the time when I was coming along, the church served for social life primarily. That is for ones of us who were, say, "good".

The Bible people that went to the other extremes, they would go out to the beer garden and probably go right on through church. But by

the time seven o'clock came, we would tear out of there, start running to get down to church on time. We grew up reading in the church, lay reading. They had a group of boys that played ball for the church. We played baseball and we read in the service. We'd take turns reading. It just meant so much to me. I'm up there now. I'm not doing anything, I'm humming more or less in the choir. I still sit up there. It just doesn't seem right for me to sit any place else but up there.

JP: Do you sing in the choir?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah. I hum in the choir.

JP: Are you still doing some lay reading?

Dr. Bryan: No. I cut that out back in October of last year. I had to cut it out. I got so I couldn't carry my words. I couldn't remember.

JP: We'll go back to swimming in the river, Dr. Bryan. You have a story about your father you'd like to tell.

Dr. Bryan: My father didn't like for me to swim, you know, go in the swimming hole. They could sit upstairs on the porch and they could look all the way down Cedar Street. We thought we were being slick, and we went across Cedar Street and went on up and on out to the water hole. We swam out there, and we'd come back, and daddy said, "Well, did you go in swimming?" We said, "No, we didn't go in swimming." He said, "Well, come here a minute." So, we walked in and he took our arm and scratched it, and it come up ashy. He says, "Uh huh, so, you didn't go in swimming huh?"

JP: What happened when he scratched your arm?

Dr. Bryan: He would scratch it and it would come up right ashy like and it would chalk up. He would say, "Didn't go in swimming, huh?". So, he took the belt and wore us out with it!

JP: He could tell from the way your skin looked that you had been in?

Dr. Bryan: Yeah.

JP: And the water hole was down on South Front Street?

Dr. Bryan: No. This was out at Glenburnie.

JP: Are there any other things, Dr. Bryan, that you would like to comment on about New Bern or about your memories or your experiences?

Dr. Bryan: I think we've covered about as much as I can talk.

JP: You've been very good. This has been tiring for you. You've done a good job, and this is going to help our program to have these memories. I want to thank you for letting me come and letting the Memories program talk to you like this.

Dr. Bryan: I'm just sorry I wasn't able to talk more and get out what I wanted to say.

JP: You've told me some very fine things and I appreciate it.

END OF INTERVIEW.