

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

THELMA C. LEWIS

INTERVIEW 1004

This is Dr. Joseph Patterson representing the New Bern Memories Committee. The date is July 21, 1992. I am interviewing Thelma C. Lewis who is Mrs. Sherman T. Lewis at her home at 501 New Street in New Bern. My number is 1000 and the number of this interview is 1004.

Dr. Patterson: Thelma, we'll start the interview now and we'll just talk to each other and what I'd like for you to is just tell me about yourself. I would like to know where you were born, who your parents were, brothers and sisters, when you came to New Bern, and then I might ask a few questions as we go.

Mrs. Lewis: I was born in Phoenix, northwest township of Brunswick County, North Carolina. Phoenix is about three miles from Leland, nine miles from Wilmington. The post office of Phoenix was located in the corner of the old Country Store (General Merchandise) owned by my family. My father was postmaster until his death, then my mother and older sister until , due to politics, the Phoenix post office was discontinued and became Leland RFD. I do not remember the year, probably in the late 30's. I came to New Bern in the fall of 1937.

Before that, I was working at the Pitt Memorial Hospital in Greenville.

I heard about the job being open in New Bern. I came over one beautiful moonlight night to see Dr. R. D. Jones. He was sitting on his front porch on East Front Street. When I first walked up the steps, before greeting me, he spoke lots of profanity. Finally, he greeted me and asked me to come in and sit down. He said, " you want a job," says, "you won't be working a year before you'll be off and married and leave the job!" So, from then on we talked about the job. I worked until

January 1940. In the meantime, Dr. Charles Duffy took me out to the New Bern Golf and Country Club to a bridge party. It was the Lord Tryon Bridge Club and I met Sherman Lewis there. He asked to bring me home. I said no, I will go home the way I came, but Dr. Duffy insisted that I go home with Dr. Lewis. On the way home we had a wreck on the Elk's Temple corner. There was a numbers racket in New Bern at that time.

A. J. Purifoy ran a numbers racket.

Dr. Patterson: What does that mean, Thelma? What is a numbers racket?

Mrs. Lewis: I don't know exactly what it means, but it's someway of gambling. Anyway, his truck ran through a red light and hit us broad side on the corner of the Elk's Temple corner. At that time Billy Arthur came running out to cover the wreck. He worked for the Sun Journal at that time. I hadn't been in New Bern more than two weeks I don't believe, so, I didn't want my name in the paper. I thought Dr. Patterson would fire me if he knew I was out that time of night.

We were going to the Central Cafe that was on Pollock Street to get something to eat. I ran home to the nurse's home. I didn't want to be interviewed by Billy Arthur.

Dr. Patterson: Where was the nurse's home?

Mrs. Lewis: The nurse's home was on Broad Street across from St. Luke's Hospital. The next day Dr. Lewis called me to tell me about what happened at the wreck. From then on we had dates and finally got married in January 1940. I was working at the St. Luke's Hospital

with Dr. Patterson and several other doctors; Dr. Wadsworth, Dr. Ashford, and Dr. Barker. I remember one night, I hadn't been in New Bern long when one Saturday night they had a shooting scrape in Vanceboro. The man was shot in the leg and I was called over in the middle of the night to cross match the blood for transfusion. One was so upset about having a needle stuck in his arm he was not going to let me have any sample of his blood. Another one of his friends yelled out to him and said, "Don't mind that. It won't hurt anymore than a chigger biting you in the bed at night!" Of course I was worried.

They were all drinking and I felt mighty eerie down in the basement of the hospital with all these drunken men. But everything worked out all right and the man's leg was removed. I don't remember whether he survived or not, but that was one of my first experiences in New Bern and that was in the fall of 1937.

Dr. Patterson: Before you came to New Bern to work?

Mrs. Lewis: No, I was working at the hospital at the time. In the fall of 1937, 1938, 1939, and I left there in 1940. I made lots of friends through Dr. Patterson who would take me on house calls to do blood tests, CBC's, complete blood count, and I did lots of malaria smears at that time. I also did the x-ray work because at that time we didn't have but one technician, both x-ray and medical technician.

I was happy working there but when I got married I started working for Dr. Lewis. He never had any help in his office after we were married.

The office girl did not return to work. She didn't give him any notice, but she never came to work any more. Her name was Betty Lawrence.

You remember Betty Lawrence?

Dr. Patterson: I remember Betty Lawrence, yes.

Mrs. Lewis: They said no wonder no one could work because I would probably not like them and run them off. So, I worked for him and he never fully retired because the office is in the home. It's unusual for one to be able to get a doctor to go make a house call and bring his technician with him. That would be unheard of today.

Dr. Patterson: Let's backtrack a little bit. You were born in Leland? Where is Leland?

Mrs. Lewis: That's right, Leland, North Carolina. It's out of Wilmington going south. My home was nine miles from the city limits of Wilmington but it was in Brunswick County. We had quite an acreage of land there that was sold to the DuPont Company. The DuPont Company bought my old home place and used it as a guest house. They spent lots of money in renovating and made it a pretty place. I enjoy going by and looking at it.

Dr. Patterson: Who were your parents?

Mrs. Lewis: My father was Augustus Marion Chinnis. My mother was Nellie Brew Chinnis. I went off to high school at Virginia Intermont Jr. College in Bristol, Virginia. I went there three years. Then, I went over to the Woman's College at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro and graduated in 1932. I was the youngest girl in the class. I was just barely twenty. My birthday is June 1, 1912. Then, the first job that I had was with Dr. Sidbury.

Dr. Patterson: He's the pediatrician in Wilmington?

Mrs. Lewis: That's right. I worked down at the Wrightsville Beach Hospital, baby's hospital, for about a year. I was not getting much pay. He said that I could stay at home and I didn't need much money. I got another job.

Dr. Patterson: How much was he paying you?

Mrs. Lewis: About one hundred dollars a month, a whole month.

Dr. Patterson: Does that include board?

Mrs. Lewis: Board and room and laundry, and that was back in 1933 or 1934. Then, I got a job in Kinston. I did not stay there long.

Dr. Patterson: This was doing laboratory work?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes. I had to do both, they only had one technician at that time for both x-ray and medical technology. I had visited in New Bern several times because I had classmates. Janet Hollister was my good friend and I visited her during the holidays off and I knew quite a few girls in New Bern when I came here which helped a lot.

Dr. Patterson: You came here from Greenville?

Mrs. Lewis: Greenville, yes.

Dr. Patterson: You were working in the Pitt County Hospital?

Mrs. Lewis: The Pitt County Hospital in Greenville. Dr. William Wooten was in charge.

Dr. Patterson: Did they treat you pretty well over there?

Mrs. Lewis: Pretty well, but they had one lady that was in the office, a Miss Barnes, but I didn't like her particularly and I was

happy to move to New Bern. That's where I've been since the fall of 1937.

Dr. Patterson: Now, you saw Dr. Jones and he made a forecast that you were going to get married in a year or two and he didn't miss it much.

Mrs. Lewis: Yes, he was right. He didn't miss it much.

Dr. Patterson: Thelma, when you came to New Bern, what was being done at St. Luke's Hospital from the standpoint of laboratory and x-ray? Who was doing that work?

Mrs. Lewis: A Dr. Joe Latham was doing what was being done as I understood it.

Dr. Patterson: Did he do the laboratory work too?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes, that's the way I was told. They didn't do too much here at that time. Other tests were mailed out of town, but I did lots of blood sugars, BUN's, blood urea nitrogen, and lots of malaria smears. That seemed to be one of my biggest orders.

Dr. Patterson: I remember your doing malaria, smears.

Mrs. Lewis: I went on house calls with the doctors with my little tray and collected the blood.

Dr. Patterson: What was your laboratory like. Was it in a small room?

Mrs. Lewis: Small room, not very well equipped. Just the old Folin-Wu methods were used at that time. I did red blood counts, white blood counts, and often platelet counts, and the malaria smear, and the differential. That was mostly what I did.

Dr. Patterson: You did urinalysis and the blood sugar?

Mrs. Lewis: The urinalysis and often stool specimens, examined for blood.

Dr. Patterson: And this was in a small room?

Mrs. Lewis: A small room with just a small microscope and a few pipettes, and a bunsen burner. It was not well equipped at all.

Dr. Patterson: You did the x-ray work too. What were the x-ray facilities like?

Mrs. Lewis: Very antiquated as what it is today, but we could get pretty good pictures with it.

Dr. Patterson: You had one machine?

Mrs. Lewis? One machine. Mostly my training in x-ray is what I got from the detail men, they called them, sold the machines. I never took any special training in x-ray. I picked it up myself and they'd teach me how.

Dr. Patterson: What sort of x-rays did you do?

Mrs. Lewis: We did lots of chest x-rays at the time. Then we'd do spine, shoulders, and extremities, any broken bones any where. Also, Dr. Richard Duffy would have us do these kidney function, pyelograms. Then we did some gallbladders, we gave the dye, G.I. Series, Barium enemas.

Dr. Patterson: Did you do any intestinal work?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes, we did GI series and did some stomach series and then the barium enema, we'd do that occasionally. We'd be very diagnostic. We diagnosed a lot of malignant places in patients.

Dr. Patterson: Who interpreted these films?

Mrs. Lewis: The different doctors, whoever ordered them.

Dr. Patterson: There was no radiologist?

Mrs. Lewis: No radiologist.

Dr. Patterson: Guess they hadn't even heard of a radiologist?

Mrs. Lewis: No! No radiologist here.

Dr. Patterson: Were the films sent off sometimes?

Mrs. Lewis: We would send some to the TB Sanitorium. We'd often send them off up there if there were any suspicious films. Other than the chest x-rays, I don't remember any being sent anywhere else.

Dr. Patterson: You were the first technician to work at St. Luke's?

Mrs. Lewis: I understand I was, yes.

Dr. Patterson: That's really interesting. The hospital was opened in 1914 and until 1937 then there was no trained technician there.

Dr. Patterson: I think Elizabeth Scales worked for Dr. Joe Latham. She did a little in his office, but so far as I know, I was the first one to come to New Bern.

Dr. Patterson: When you came to New Bern, what was St. Luke's Hospital like?

Mrs. Lewis: They had had a nurse's training school there but it was discontinued about the time I came over here. I think Mrs. Shupp can tell you about her sister-in-law was superintendent of nurses there when they had the nurse's training school.

Dr. Patterson: Mrs. Shupp was the superintendent?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes. She was Mrs. Roy Shupp, but superintendent.

Dr. Patterson: That's not Evelyn Shupp?

Mrs. Lewis: No, it's her husband's brother's wife. Her name was Jane Shupp and she will be glad to tell you a lot about that cause she's told me that she was the superintendent of nurses at the time. They trained some mighty fine nurses there. They all passed the state board as I understand it, which was quite a compliment to the school of nurses here.

Dr. Patterson: Did the local doctors in the hospital teach the nurses?

Mrs. Lewis: That's the way I understand it. As I say, I was not here. That was before I came that they had the nurse's training school. Several of the nurses I knew that were trained there were some of the best. They were just dedicated to their work. I wish I could remember more to tell you about it. Dr. Patterson was really a good friend of mine.

Dr. Patterson: That's Dr. Joseph Patterson, my father?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: What was the building like?

Mrs. Lewis: It was a three story building. We had an elevator. The lab was in the basement. The kitchen and dining area was in the basement. The lab was just a very small room. The sink there that I had to get after Dr. Latham for spitting tobacco juice in my sink occasionally. And I didn't like that, so I asked him to clean it up

one day. I never will forget that.

Dr. Patterson: Did he?

Mrs. Lewis: No. He patted me on the back and said, "I won't do it again!"

Dr. Patterson: Now, the patients were on the upper two floors?

Mrs. Lewis: Upper two floors and the x-ray machine was on the top floor as I remember.

Dr. Patterson: In the front or in the back?

Mrs. Lewis: In the back.

Dr. Patterson: And the operating room?

Mrs. Lewis: Was on the third floor also, wasn't it?

Dr. Patterson: I think the operating room was in the back at that time before the Sisters took it over.

Mrs. Lewis: In the back of the building, yeah.

Dr. Patterson: Were there any facilities when you came for black patients in the hospital? Did you have black patients?

Mrs. Lewis: They mostly went over to Good Shepherd Hospital at that time. That was operated by the Episcopal church. I never will forget Dr. Disosway, a lady doctor that worked at Good Shepherd. We sent all the colored patients over there as I remember at that time until it closed. Then after it closed, I can't remember the dates but I think that it was open when St. Luke's was moved to the Craven County Hospital.

Dr. Patterson: Was the hospital pretty busy in the early days?

Mrs. Lewis: Oh yes, we stayed pretty busy. I had plenty to do.

Dr. Patterson: What about the doctors? Who do you remember in those days, the older doctors?

Mrs. Lewis: I remember Dr. Richard Duffy very well and Dr. Raymond Pollock. He had an x-ray machine in his office in the bottom part of his home. It was very similar to the one at the hospital. I went over there and took x-rays for him quite a bit After I left the hospital and was married, he'd call me over there. In fact, he's really the one that influenced me to have Sherman buy an x-ray machine for his use. So, we got a more modern one at that time. When he partially retired, we gave that x-ray machine to a church, the Calvary Baptist Church and they sent it to Haiti. All the preachers came up and prayed over that x-ray machine. I thought I was going to get something off my income tax with giving it away, and I had taken too much depreciation and we didn't get a cent off.

Dr. Patterson: Now, this was the machine that Sherman had?

Mrs. Lewis: That Sherman had, yes.

Dr. Patterson: Dr. Pollock's machine was in his office and you worked there?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes. I worked there and I went down and took x-rays for him.

Dr. Patterson: What was Dr. Pollock like?

Mrs. Lewis: He was a kind doctor I thought and very personable. He had a way with him that I think appealed to so many of his patients. He had cancer of the throat. He was a good doctor and I think Dr. Richard Duffy was a fine doctor. In fact, all of them at that time.

We had Dr. Pollock, Dr. Richard Duffy, Dr. Wadsworth, Dr. Charles Duffy, and Dr. Ashford. They were the ones that practiced at St. Luke's.

Dr. Patterson: And Dr. Jones.

Mrs. Lewis: Dr. Jones and he retired soon after I came here.

Dr. Patterson: Tell me about Dr. Jones.

Mrs. Lewis: He was quite a character. He became ill and was a patient at St. Luke's for quite a while. He just seemed to love all the nurses and technicians. He loved to swear and cuss but he didn't mean a word of it. It was just his way of expressing himself. He was very kind.

Dr. Patterson: He was well liked?

Mrs. Lewis: Well liked! Everyone loved Dr. Jones. And Dr. Patterson had some mighty fine patients. I still have friends that I made that he carried me to their homes on house calls. Eleanor Breitweiser and I have been friends for over fifty years. I met her when Dr. Patterson carried me around to the Stevenson house.

Dr. Patterson: Did you get along pretty well with Dr. Patterson?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes, at times. He just wanted me all the time and naturally I would take off and be out of reach and I would tell him that I couldn't be there every minute, and he would say to me, "Now Miss Chinnis, let's us not feud." I would say, "I have to work but not here, I'll get me another job if you don't like the way I'm doing."

Dr. Patterson: How many hours were you working then?

Mrs. Lewis: I'd work until I got through with the work that was ordered and then he'd expect me to be on call twenty-four hours a day.

I naturally, was not there twenty-four hours a day.

Dr. Patterson: Who did the work when you were not available?

Mrs. Lewis: It just didn't get done. There was no one else that did that kind of work at that time.

Dr. Patterson: The x-rays weren't taken?

Mrs. Lewis: No. You just have to wait until I got there and I had no definite time off, just on call. Dr. Joe Latham, I guess, if they couldn't get up with me at all, they'd call him.

Dr. Patterson: Getting back to Dr. Jones, he had a real way with words, didn't he?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes, he did. He had a way with words. It was very interesting to hear him talk about some of his experiences overseas. He was in the Navy once.

Dr. Patterson: Yes, he was in the Navy and commanded a big hospital in Europe in the first World War. Who were some other doctors that you remember? Dr. R. L. Daniels?

Mrs. Lewis: Oh yes. He was our Eye, Ear, Nose, and Throat doctor, yeah. Dr. Bender was a Pediatrician. He took me on several calls out in Pollocksville in that area.

Dr. Patterson: Did he have patients at St. Luke's?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes, he did occasionally. He practiced there. I think Dr. Latham took care of the welfare patients, I think, a lot of them.

Dr. Patterson: And Dr. Barker?

Mrs. Lewis: Dr. Barker, yes. He also did some surgery.

Dr. Patterson: Who were some of the others who did surgery?

Mrs. Lewis: Dr. Duffy did the most I would say and Dr. Ashford.
There was a colored doctor, Dr. Littman.

Dr. Patterson: Did he operate at St. Luke's, the colored doctor?

Mrs. Lewis: No, he operated at Good Shepherd, Dr. Littman.

Dr. Patterson: My father operated.

Mrs. Lewis: Oh and Dr. Patterson did lots of operations.

Dr. Patterson: And Dr. Jones.

Mrs. Lewis: Dr. Jones and Dr. Barker did a small amount. I don't think Dr. Wadsworth ever operated, did he? I don't know for sure. I can't remember that.

Dr. Patterson: Dr. Wadsworth was a nice man. He operated occasionally.

Mrs. Lewis: Oh yes! He certainly was a nice man. He called me "Miss Chasis" and "Miss Chinesa." He would make all kinds of funny names out of my name Chinnis.

Dr. Patterson: Yeah, he was quite a jokester. Dr. Hollister was here too.

Mrs. Lewis: Oh yes, Dr. Hollister! I was about to forget him. He had quite a good practice here.

Dr. Patterson: That's Dr. William Hollister. He came here from missionary work, did he not?

Mrs. Lewis: That's true, he was a missionary.

Dr. Patterson: Did he do a lot of work at the hospital?

Mrs. Lewis: Not too much. Not as much as I'd say as the others.

Dr. Patterson: Dr. Gibbs?

Mrs. Lewis: I don't remember Dr. Gibbs.

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember the dentists?

Mrs. Lewis: Not right off hand I can't think of any dentist that was in New Bern. Dr. Civils, wasn't it?

Dr. Patterson: Dr. Civils was here, Dr. Charles Johnson, Dr. Hand.

Mrs. Lewis: Dr. Ashford and Dr. Charlie Johnson were in our wedding and Buck Blanford.

Dr. Patterson: I know that you were good friends with some of the ladies who worked in the hospital, not just the nurses, but the secretarial people, who were they?

Mrs. Lewis: Madie Bell Hay was in the office. I can't remember the other one. She had assistant. Madie Bell and I were good friends.

Dr. Patterson: What was Madie Bell like?

Mrs. Lewis: I think she was an old maid but she was very much in tune with the days. She wasn't a cranky old maid at all and she was well liked by all the hospital employees so far as I know.

Dr. Patterson: She was the secretary for both Dr. Jones and Dr. Patterson?

Mrs. Lewis: That's right.

Dr. Patterson: Now, getting back to those two doctors for just a minute, do you remember their offices, where they were located?

Mrs. Lewis: Well, of course Dr. Patterson was in the hospital and Dr. Barker had a part of his dwelling as his office, and I think

Dr. Wadsworth also. Didn't he have his office in his home?

Dr. Patterson: In his home. Dr. Jones was at the hospital.

Mrs. Lewis: Yes, Dr. Jones was at the hospital. Dr. Richard Duffy had an office near his home in a different little building.

Dr. Patterson: And Tiny McKee was a good friend of yours.

Mrs. Lewis: That's right, certainly was.

Dr. Patterson: What was her job in the hospital?

Mrs. Lewis: She mostly did private duty. She was well liked by everyone when they could get Tiny. Ann Humphrey was another nurse. She nursed Dr. Jones a lot. Do you remember Annie?

Dr. Patterson: Oh yes, very well.

Mrs. Lewis: That was her married name. I can't think of what her maiden name was. See, this has been a long time Dr. Patterson. I can't remember that far back. A lot of water has gone under the bridge since then.

Dr. Patterson: And Ida Pigott.

Mrs. Lewis: Yes. She was Dr. Ashford's nurse for a while.

Dr. Patterson: Did she become Superintendent of nurses?

Mrs. Lewis: Not that I remember. A Miss Bagley was Superintendent of nurses. She also was the operating room nurse.

Dr. Patterson: Alberta Bagley.

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah, Alberta Bagley. She married a McCosley. She was a mighty good nurse. You ought to get the names of the nurses that graduated from the nursing school.

Dr. Patterson: We do have it.

Mrs. Lewis: Marea Kafer was one and who else?

Dr. Patterson: Smitty Bartling.

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah, all of them good nurses.

Dr. Patterson: We do have those names and we will include them.

Let me ask you about the tennis court that was across the street.

Mrs. Lewis: I can barely remember that, but the doctors used to would run over there and play a little tennis.

Dr. Patterson: This was on the corner right across from St. Luke's where the Baptist church is now.

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah. That was soon done away with after I came here.

Dr. Patterson: I think you and I are the only ones who remember that tennis court. When you left the hospital and married Sherman and moved into his office, you were his office nurse. What was his practice like?

Mrs. Lewis: He was an Osteopath. I didn't know anything about it until I met him. He had quite a bit of bad backs mostly and sprained shoulders and just general practice I'd say for an Osteopath. After I got into this blood work a lot, I was doing these VDRL's, venereal disease. We had lots of marriage examinations. To get married they had to have a physical. When I did the blood work at the hospital, I'd send them over to him to get their physical if they wanted to come and they didn't have a regular doctor. So, he did a lot of that. When I first went to the hospital, we'd send all those test to Raleigh. Then when they introduced this method, not the Wassermann test, I

started doing them. So, we didn't send them to Raleigh, I did them in the lab. It was called the VDRL test, but it was different from the Wassermann. That was quite a lengthy complicated procedure, but this other was simpler.

Dr. Patterson: Did Sherman do any hospital work?

Mrs. Lewis: No. He was not allowed to practice in the hospital, no Osteopaths in North Carolina.

Dr. Patterson: That has changed now.

Mrs. Lewis: The law has changed.

Dr. Patterson: He was also doing some insurance work.

Mrs. Lewis: Yes, he had an insurance business. We sold that a number of years ago. He loved to play golf and so he didn't want to have too much work to do. I was more or less the watch dog around here. I catch the patients and try to hold them over until he got home from golf.

Dr. Patterson: Thelma, who came to do the hospital work when you left?

Mrs. Lewis: Teeny Burnette. Teeny Henderson married Stone Burnette. She came after I did and she's still lives in New Bern. You might want to interview her.

Dr. Patterson: I know Teeny. Did she stay there very long?

Mrs. Lewis: I don't remember exactly but not too long. I would say less than three or four years anyway.

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember who came after her?

Mrs. Lewis: No, I don't. She could probably tell you. She quit

to get married.

Dr. Patterson: It's really startling to think of the massive laboratory facilities available in hospitals now compared to what you had.

Mrs. Lewis: Oh yeah! I would be absolutely obsolete. I wouldn't know what to do. It's all done by machinery.

Dr. Patterson: Do you think that, still, the patients had good laboratory work in your day and it helped with the diagnosis?

Mrs. Lewis: I really do. I think it did a lot.

Dr. Patterson: Didn't need all these machines.

Mrs. Lewis: You didn't need all those, just part of the way you were taught to do these tests when you were in school. Now they have so many tests I couldn't tell you all they do do.

Dr. Patterson: Are you glad you went into laboratory work?

Mrs. Lewis: Oh I enjoyed it, yes! My older sisters were all school teachers and I'd hear them complain about their problems and discipline and that and I said I was not going to be a school teacher. So, I took this other route and I'm not sorry.

Dr. Patterson: Would you advise a young person these days to go into this area?

Mrs. Lewis: No. I tell them to go ahead and be a doctor. I wouldn't be working punching buttons and things like that. I don't think I would.

Dr. Patterson: I suppose the personal touch isn't there in the laboratory now?

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah.

Dr. Patterson: You were very closely associated with patients in your day.

Mrs. Lewis: Yes, in contact with the patients and you'd begin to think about them and mourn them.

Dr. Patterson: When you came to New Bern, were many people travelling by air and airplanes?

Mrs. Lewis: No, I didn't hear much about it. I wouldn't think so.

Dr. Patterson: Did you do any air travelling in those days?

Mrs. Lewis: No, I never did.

Dr. Patterson: What were the automobiles like?

Mrs. Lewis: We had good automobiles. Sherman had a Chrysler coup when I met him, then we got a Oldsmobile. Very good automobiles I would say. But no air travel. I was quite up in years before I ever got in an airplane.

Dr. Patterson: Thelma, a big part of your life I know has been golf and the New Bern Country Club. Would you talk about that a little bit and how this all evolved and how Sherman got involved out at the club?

Mrs. Lewis: As I say, I met Sherman at the club through Dr. Charles Duffy and his wife Pickett. They took me out to this bridge party and Sherman was there. The club was so attractive at that time; small, with a big fireplace at one end and it had chairs and tables around the side, and we had some real nice parties out there. There was a

porch on the front with a swing. I remember the first night I met him, it wasn't the first night, but we went to a dance out there and I was tired and I said I'd been walking around all day and my feet were hurting me. So, we went out on the porch and sat in the swing and he says, "well, I'll make your feet feel better, you'll feel like dancing." So, he manipulated my feet around. Everybody was so friendly and nice to me and I had these friends that I knew before I came to New Bern. I knew Elizabeth Dunn and Eleanor and all those and it was just a grand place to go. It was in the early Forties. I was married at the time that we had so many parties out there and we were all on different committees. We'd plan the parties and we'd have dinners out there and I've just nothing but pleasant memories of the New Bern Golf and Country Club. My husband, Sherman, played a lot of golf.

So, I would be out to the New Bern Country Club often. I tried to play too, For some reason the 8th hole had two mounds about 180 or 200 yards from the tee. The mounds were called "Thelma's Mounds". There was a sign put there at one time. I do not know who started it, The golf course was revamped and the sign removed and not returned.

The young boys beginning to play golf would be elated when they could drive to "my mounds". They would tell in the pro shop of having a good drive on 8 saying, "I drove to Mrs. Lewis' boobs today." Quite an accomplishment to be able to do that! I was not offended by this but rather took it as a term of endearment. My only claim to fame!

Ha!

Dr. Patterson: You remember Mr. Miller?

Mrs. Lewis: Slightly.

Dr. Patterson: He was sort of the caretaker.

Mrs. Lewis: And Moses Green was out there just as a caretaker. He and his wife, I can't think of her name right now, were out there. And all the pros. We had different golf pros. We didn't keep one very long.

Dr. Patterson: Mr. Miner was the first one.

Mrs. Lewis: He was the first one. He owned the place at one time. He and his wife owned it and they sold it to the Board of Directors. If I can find it, I got a history of the New Bern Country Club.

Dr. Patterson: Now, you became a great golfer. How did that evolve?

Mrs. Lewis: I wasn't ever very great. I could just, as I say, break 100 and I was happy with that cause I'm not the real athletic type. My sister, Betty Chinnis Palmer, a widow, plays from about ten in the morning and stays until two, I think.

Dr. Patterson: She used to call you there from Wilmington?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes, that's right. She calls me about once a week. She's ten years younger than I. I had a sister ten years older and she's dead. Then, I had another sister, Lila Chinnis Reynolds. I had three sisters, two of them gone and Betty is living.

Dr. Patterson: Thelma, we were talking about your playing golf at the Country Club. You became a real golfer. How did Sherman get interested in golf?

Mrs. Lewis: I think he played some before I met him. He was playing tennis a lot, but then I wanted him to play golf rather than tennis and so he started going out to the club. I think he had a few golf clubs and he took a lesson or two from Ellis Maples who was a pro. He just liked it and was pretty good at it. I think if he had been younger, he would probably have turned pro because he had such a determination to win. He was so competitive. He was the club champion I think five times. So, I more or less had to get interested in it because he was. I had to get out there too. I really believe had I not played golf when my back was hurting me then I wouldn't be as lame as I am today. I think golf did me harm because I had so much arthritis in my spine.

Dr. Patterson: When did you stop playing golf?

Mrs. Lewis: It was in December 1987 that I had this operation on my back and since then I hadn't been able to play at all.

Dr. Patterson: Do you ride around in the cart?

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah, I often do that. I go out with some of my friends and I still belong to the Golf Association. I think I was the first president of that. I helped organize that, and I go to the meetings once a month and keep up with what their doing. But I can't play anymore.

Dr. Patterson: Sherman was not only a champion golfer, he was a champion tennis player. He was champion of the club as I recall.

Mrs. Lewis: He was. I think he was pretty good at tennis but he quit playing tennis soon after we were married and took up golf

and he played practically every day and he was good. He loved it.

Dr. Patterson: Thelma, when you came to New Bern, the World War was just getting really started and you were here throughout that time.

Do you remember those years in New Bern when the war was going on and after the war? What happened to New Bern during that time?

Mrs. Lewis: Oh! New Bern just jumped in population on account of Cherry Point. I think it was started along in 1941. I remember hearing over the old Wells-Gardner radio that Pearl Harbor attack.

I remember right where I was sitting in that room in there. I can't tell you all the things that happened. The beginning of Cherry Point the town was flooded. People wanted a place to live. I even rented rooms over next door the house we have over there. I didn't rent it out as apartments, I rented it out as rooms. People wanted a place to stay and we were real busy. Dr. Patterson: Were these Marines?

Mrs. Lewis: They were construction workers that worked on building it. It has certainly meant a lot to New Bern to have Cherry Point. We got to meet a lot of the Generals and Officers. It was fun to be friends with them and be entertained by them. They live it up in such a way that we've never been exactly used to and we liked it.

Dr. Patterson: Do you recall the arrangement my father had with the building of Camp LeJeune in Jacksonville? He took care of all the workman's compensation cases. They now and then brought them up here by ambulance.

Mrs. Lewis: The CC Camps, yeah. I remember the CC boys that

so many of them had their appendix taken out. Do you remember that?

Dr. Patterson: That was Camp Patterson on the Morehead road.

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah. I remember they'd bring them up here in ambulances to be examined by Dr. Patterson. He had some connection with the big bosses down there I think.

Dr. Patterson: I think he had a contract to do the workman's compensation work.

Mrs. Lewis: I did many white blood counts on these young boys that were working in those camps down there. That was about all we did in the laboratory work was just a CBC, complete blood count.

Dr. Patterson: Was there any effect felt after the war was over? What happened to New Bern in the aftermath of the World War?

Mrs. Lewis: Several of them lost their jobs but everything seemed to go along pretty smoothly. I think, the best I can remember. It was quite a change. It jarred us back a little bit.

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember any change in the black population in New Bern after the war or during the war? Did it shift, did they leave or come?

Mrs. Lewis: It seems to me they came. We have over fifty percent right now, don't we?

Dr. Patterson: Yes. There was an influx of blacks at that time?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes, I think so.

Dr. Patterson: In some communities I'm told they left and went North.

Mrs. Lewis: Some did but they came back to New Bern. They had

to go up North for a while because they heard it was so much better up there but they found out. So, we have plenty of black communities and they've gotten lots of the big jobs in the city now.

Dr. Patterson: What has happened over the years in New Bern about racial relations? Have you noticed any change from the time you came til now?

Mrs. Lewis: I think people are more tolerant and they've accepted that we're going to have to learn to get along together, I think so.

I never was particularly prejudiced because we had so many black people around my home that raised me back when my mother was sick. I've always gotten along well with blacks. Of course, there's all kinds.

Dr. Patterson: Did Sherman treat black people?

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah, a few. He didn't have many.

Dr. Patterson: Did you have a separate waiting area for them?

Mrs. Lewis: No, they'd all sit together. Sherman's practice was, he had lots of, I think, high class patients. He didn't have many of the low poverty people. He seemed to appeal to the upper class.

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember any particular problems about integration during the Sixties, during the Civil Rights laws?

Mrs. Lewis: Not particular. I think it went over pretty smooth in New Bern, more so than other cities or states.

Dr. Patterson: When Martin Luther King was assassinated, was there trouble here?

Mrs. Lewis: I think they had a few parades. Nothing of any consequence that stuck in my memory. It seemed to of made it pretty

good. I used to work over at the Good Shepherd Hospital in the lab when they didn't have anyone over there.

Dr. Patterson: Was this after you left St. Luke's?

Mrs. Lewis: Well, I worked there some when I was at St. Luke's. I helped them equip the lab. They didn't have anything to work with over there at one time. I went over there quite a bit. I liked Mr. Faison. He was a nice fellow.

Dr. Patterson: Yes, he's a real gentleman.

Mrs. Lewis: Yes, he certainly was. I used to eat lunch with him over there.

Dr. Patterson: Did you work at Kafer Hospital too?

Mrs. Lewis: They had x-ray equipment over there for therapy and I had a big operation in 1958 and I was diagnosed as having a malignant tumor on my left ovary. Anyway, I was sent to Dr. Kafer's Hospital to take therapy. I had twenty-six x-ray treatments at the Kafer hospital, x-ray therapy over my abdomen in 1958.

Dr. Patterson: Dr. Bell gave them?

Mrs. Lewis: It was Dr. Bell. He was here, but he used the equipment in Kafer Hospital. It was recommended that it was all right to use. It was as good as any at Duke.

Dr. Patterson: I think my brother, Simmons, did the operation on you.

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah, Simmons operated on me. Weren't you there too?

Dr. Patterson: I helped. I was the assistant. We did the

operation together. I remember that.

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah, and I was sent over there for treatment. That's the most I remember about Kafer Hospital, that I took x-ray therapy there.

Dr. Patterson: But you never did any work there?

Mrs. Lewis: Never worked there, no.

Dr. Patterson: When you were working in the x-ray department at St. Luke's, when you were the x-ray department, did you take any safety precautions?

Mrs. Lewis: No, never did.

Dr. Patterson: Did you know anything about radiation danger?

Mrs. Lewis: I had read about it and heard about it through the association I had with the x-ray salesman, but I never wore any lead aprons or stood behind a screen or anything.

Dr. Patterson: Did you wear a radiation button?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes, I did. I had one of those in my pocket.

Dr. Patterson: And you sent that off every now and then?

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah and develop it and see if there was anything on it. They never said anything about it. So, I don't know whether I picked up any rays or not but I never did find it on this little thing I'd wear in my pocket around my belt around my waist.

Dr. Patterson: Do you have any particular memories of New Bern that we haven't talked about that you'd like to talk about?

Mrs. Lewis: Well, I can't think of anything now except I love it here. I expect to stay here until I die. I'm not going to any

retirement home if I can help it. I'm now eighty years old, was eighty on the first day of June. You are seventy-five, is that right?

Dr. Patterson: Yes, I'm seventy-five. And over the years you've had a happy life in New Bern and you're glad you came to this town?

Mrs. Lewis: I think so. Yes, I am. New Bern is a kind place to live. I think by the number of retirees we've had come here that it's proven that it must be! The town has some really nice retirees. They don't come here in trailers. We have some wealthy people that have come here to retire; nice, refined people, I think.

Dr. Patterson: I didn't ask you, Thelma, where you received your laboratory training.

Mrs. Lewis: Mostly at Woman's College in Greensboro. We were sent over to the hospitals there to work.

Dr. Patterson: You were looking for this training at that time?

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah, and I went over to Duke for six weeks one summer and took some training in it, but I got it at school in Greensboro. We were taught some of these procedures plus they had a course in that. We would either take the teacher's training course or you could take this and my degree was in Chemistry and Biology. In 1932 I graduated from the Woman's College, the University of North Carolina it was called at that time. O. Max Gardner, I think, was the Governor.

Dr. Patterson: Where did Sherman train?

Mrs. Lewis: He went to Philadelphia School of Osteopathy.

Dr. Patterson: That's a well recognized school.

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah. I think he went two years to Syracuse University

before he went over there.

Dr. Patterson: You told me that the nursing dormitory, the place where nurses lived, was across the street from St. Luke's. It was right next to H. G. Waldrop.

Mrs. Lewis: No. It was next door to where John R. Taylor lived, old home. Mrs. Vendrie bought it, I think, after it was discontinued as a nursing home.

Dr. Patterson: Is that where the nursing students lived or where the nurses who were working at the hospital lived?

Mrs. Lewis: It was those that were working at the hospital. I had a private room up front and it was next door to John R. Taylor's house. I remember so well seeing Jimmy Hodges and Lib, Elizabeth Taylor, they were courting at the time, and they would park out in front of the house, and it would be just below my window. I got on to a lot of their doings out there. Jimmy was quite a mess. I know Mr. Taylor would say to them one morning, I was up in my room and I heard Mr. Taylor say, "Alice, keep those children quiet, I'm trying to improve my mind!"

Dr. Patterson: Well, he tried to improve himself all the time.

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah, he was quite a fellow.

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember any other people who lived in that building when you there?

Mrs. Lewis: No, I can't remember their names. It's been so long ago.

Dr. Patterson: Did you stay there until you got married?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes.

Dr. Patterson: Did you all move to this house right away?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes. Sherman was living here when we got married.

In fact, he bought the house in November 1939 for \$5,500 fully furnished. I still have some furnishing here that was here when I came. That sofa in there and some of those chairs. He bought it from Mrs. Bordeleau who lived with Mrs. Hibbard at the time, Mrs. Celie Hibbard. She moved down the street here. New Bern had a class C baseball league. Kinston, Wilson, Rocky Mount baseball players lived in the house. Sherman was a trainer, We went to all the games at Kafer Park, rooting for New Bern.

Dr. Patterson: Mr. Bordeleau was a music teacher?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes. I got a table in there that was his music stand that I have a lamp on now. So, lots of the things that were here when I came here in January 1940 are still in use. Isn't that something?

Of course we built a room on upstairs and a lot of money has been spent on the house, but now when you think about that price, it sounds ridiculous.

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember, Thelma, the people who lived next door to you right behind your house, the Caroon's?

Mrs. Lewis: They moved shortly after I moved here. Charlie Taylor bought it, who used to own the Traveller's Hotel. Was that the name of it down here by the station?

Dr. Patterson: I think so. I'm not sure.

Mrs. Lewis: Charlie Taylor.

Dr. Patterson: But the Caroon's didn't stay there long after you?

Mrs. Lewis: No.

Dr. Patterson: The reason I asked, Billy Caroon who lived there was one of my best friends and I used to come here all the time and see him.

Mrs. Lewis: I don't remember the Caroon's, but I think they did live here for a while but I never got to know them. The only ones I remember living there was Charlie Taylor, Bessie Alford.

Dr. Patterson: As you look around now and see the present day doctors and the relationship between them and their patients and you look back and see how it was in the earlier days, do you see any difference?

Mrs. Lewis: Oh yeah, everything changes. It's different.

Dr. Patterson: What is the difference in patient-doctor relationships?

Mrs. Lewis: Such a difference. The doctors, seem to me, you're just a number. There's no personal relationship. They don't seem to have any personal interest in you. They're only thinking about getting their work done, making money, and retiring I guess.

Dr. Patterson: What was it like in the earlier days?

Mrs. Lewis: Oh...the earlier days they really took some interest in you. You felt like they were akin to you. They wanted you to get well so much. Now, there's none of that feeling as I can see it. The doctor wouldn't come to the house to see Sherman at all and I felt

so bad about that. He never came here to see him.

Dr. Patterson: Was this recently?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes! Dr. Baggett, don't get me in bad with the doctors. He never came to the house to see Sherman, he wanted to see him. I know it was so different in years past.

Dr. Patterson: You talked about the relationship, what do you think the feeling of the public is about doctors now compared to doctors then?

Mrs. Lewis: Well, I think most people feel as I do that it's just a matter of professionalism. They don't show any compassion as we used to, they don't seem to. That's the feeling I get.

Dr. Patterson: As you look back in your career as a laboratory person, x-ray person, do you have any particular moments when something really great happened? Some cases that you remember specifically?

Mrs. Lewis: I can't think of any.

Dr. Patterson: Any great disappointments in your career?

Mrs. Lewis: Well, sure. I wanted to be able to do more than I was doing. I tried to do too many things, I think. I tried to be a professional person and then I wanted to play golf and socialize too and you can't do but so much.

Dr. Patterson: I think as I look back that you have been a success in every one of those areas.

Mrs. Lewis: I appreciate those kind words.

Dr. Patterson: I can remember how much my father and his generation of doctors thought about you and the work you were doing.

I remember that quite well.

Mrs. Lewis: I know if they'd ask me if I could do a certain test and I probably didn't know much about it right then but I made sure that I got the books out and learn how to do it before the time came.

I was interested in the work anyway. I thought diagnosis was so important in treating people and they never had anyone to help the doctors. They more or less had to diagnose from their common sense and I thought that diagnosis was so important that I wanted to help them find out what was wrong.

Dr. Patterson: You have been right here in this house looking across at the school green for all these years. You've seen that block change.

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah. Now we have a museum over there and now we have modern apartments made out of the old school building.

Dr. Patterson: How many buildings do you remember over there, Thelma, when you first came here?

Mrs. Lewis: Oh gosh. That I can't remember. They tore down one building I know of.

Dr. Patterson: There was one next to the Academy building on the west side.

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah, they used that for a lunch room at one time. Seems there was another building right in front, wasn't there? I mean next to where the museum is, wasn't there some other building there?

Dr. Patterson: There was one next to it, I think. Then you

remember the high school building. Do you remember the Pepsi-Cola factory across the street there? I forget what year that was torn down.

Mrs. Lewis: No, I don't remember it. I had been visiting here several times, as I said, when I was in school and I remembered some things. But after I came here to work, to live, I can't remember.

Dr. Patterson: What changes have occurred in this neighborhood around your house as the years have gone by?

Mrs. Lewis: Oh! There used to be a Colonial Store over there. What was there before the Colonial Store, do you remember?

Dr. Patterson: No. That was a big grocery store?

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah. Oh, the Stanly, William Stanly building (John Wright Stanly House) where the library was located, you remember that?

Dr. Patterson: Yes.

Mrs. Lewis: They moved that.

Dr. Patterson: That's up in the Tryon Palace area.

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah. They used to have some apartments up at the top of that and the library in the bottom of the Stanly Building. I remember when they moved it. I could reach out the window and it came so near hitting my house that I could touch the building when they turned the corner.

Dr. Patterson: You're glad it didn't get any closer.

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah, it couldn't of gotten any closer than that without causing trouble.

Dr. Patterson: Has the atmosphere of this area changed?

Mrs. Lewis: I think our community has improved through the years. Robert L. Stallings remodeled the Bell Building, four beautiful apartments. We have those buildings over there, and the apartment building, and I think it has changed some but for the better. I know I used to feel like that we didn't have many neighbors. The Mitchell's have always lived there and the Guions.

Dr. Patterson: That's Johnny Mitchell?

Mrs. Lewis: Johnny Mitchell and his son Johnny Jr. lives down the street, and John Guion's house. They moved the Bray house over there where the Henson's live and that's been quite an improvement. Yeah, I've been right here all these fifty-two years.

Dr. Patterson: And you've watched the trains go by?

Mrs. Lewis: Oh yeah. They'd shake the walls and the pictures would hang.

Dr. Patterson: What was the train activity like during the war years?

Mrs. Lewis: We saw everything that went to Cherry Point by rail came by here. I've seen lots of scrap metal. In fact, I used to hear them say, we were shipping it to the Japanese to shoot back at the Americans. They had all this junked up metal, you know, car loads of that. I've never seen so much tank cars pass by here.

Dr. Patterson: During the war, were they carrying a lot of supplies down to Cherry Point?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes! A lot of them came right down this railroad track right by my house.

Dr. Patterson: Did they run troop trains through here too?

Mrs. Lewis: I can remember a few troop trains going by here, but mostly it's been tanks of gas for the airplanes and different tanks going down, the tanks themselves.

Dr. Patterson: Thelma, let me get back to St. Luke's for just a minute. Do you remember the Sisters?

Mrs. Lewis: Oh yes! After I was married a year, they called me and asked me to work over there part day. I went at one o'clock and worked til five or six o'clock and did that for three or four years.

I don't see how I got it all in trying to get my golf in and work here and work for the Sisters.

Dr. Patterson: Were you the only lab technician then?

Mrs. Lewis: No, they had others then. They had two or three more. They had a x-ray technician.

Dr. Patterson: Do you remember who they were?

Mrs. Lewis: No, I can't remember their names. I remember one fellow named Harry Baker that was in the lab at St. Luke's and a Miss Powell and I think a Miss Ipock. They had at least three. But I used to go over there at one o'clock and stay till five or six.

Dr. Patterson: What year was this?

Mrs. Lewis: It was probably in the late Fifties or early Sixties, worked half days for three or four years. I would do a little of everything, I mean I'm just a handy man, but a lot of times I was drawing blood for transfusions. They'd come in to donate, you know, to put in the blood bank and I had a lot of that to do, but it was mostly

just blood tests.

Dr. Patterson: Did you enjoy it?

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah, I liked it. I liked to go over there.

Dr. Patterson: You liked the Sisters?

Mrs. Lewis: Yes. Sister Frances was the boss of the lab. She was good. I didn't know any of the other Sisters very well but Sister Frances was great. Yeah, I worked half a day over there for several years. I know I've worked it long enough I can spend my money and I bought me some stock with it. I still got it. I call it my blood money. Some ICA and it's been real good stock.

Dr. Patterson: Yeah, I've got some of that too.

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah, we've got quite a bit. Sherman had some in his name and about everything else was in my name. I had to have that changed over. It pays good dividends.

Dr. Patterson: Now, you never worked at the new County Hospital?

Mrs. Lewis: Yeah, I worked over there a while in the afternoons. After they closed St. Luke's, I went over there. It was at the time they made the change, whatever date that was.

Dr. Patterson: It was 1962 or 1963.

Mrs. Lewis: I knew it was in the early Sixties.

Dr. Patterson: How long did you do that?

Mrs. Lewis: A year or so until I got tired of it.

Dr. Patterson: Did you have any trouble adjusting to the new way of doing things?

Mrs. Lewis: Well, it was all different, yeah. But I enjoyed

going over there. I would go at one and often not get home until six.

Looking after the insurance business, he never had a secretary for that, I did that too. Like I said I did too many things to of done anything real good. I tried to do it all but I was young and health was good then. I couldn't do it anymore. I enjoyed going to the new hospital but it was different than it was at St. Luke's.

Dr. Patterson: Oh I know it must of been quite a change.

Mrs. Lewis: They still have a lot of machinery over at the new hospital, Craven County. I would always go if they'd ask me and then Sherman would call me.

Dr. Patterson: We've had a good time. I've enjoyed this and you have told me a lot of things, Thelma, and I do thank you for letting me talk to you.

END OF INTERVIEW