

INTERVIEWER: Good afternoon. It is about 3:30 p.m. on Monday, March 2, 2009. I'm sitting in the home of Mr. Luke Perkins Martin. I'm sitting here with Mr. Martin and his daughter, Ms. Fannie Martin Williams.

Mr. Luke, how are you doing today?

MR. MARTIN: Fine, doing fine.

INTERVIEWER: Fine. You look like you're in excellent shape; the Lord has been blessing you.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, He certainly has, for 92 years.

INTERVIEWER: 92 years. So you were born when and to whom? What were your parents' names?

MR. MARTIN: My parents were named Luke Perkins Martin (father) and Abbey Elizabeth Pender was my mother. That was her maiden name. I don't know what year they were married. He died in 1918, I think. I was not quite 2 years old. He's been dead about 90 years.

INTERVIEWER: So, what's your birth date?

MR. MARTIN: July 11, 1917.

INTERVIEWER: So, if the good Lord blesses you, you will be 92 this year.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, 92.

INTERVIEWER: You live here at this address. What is this address?

MR. MARTIN: 1804 Country Club Road.

INTERVIEWER: 1804 Country Club Road? Were you raised here also?

MR. MARTIN: Yes, off and on. I go and come you know. This is really home.

INTERVIEWER: This is your homestead. So this is where you were born?

MR. MARTIN: Born right here, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Right in the home that you're living in now?

MR. MARTIN: Yes, right here.

INTERVIEWER: You are a lucky man.

MR. MARTIN: We added this on. It wasn't but two rooms.

INTERVIEWER: What are some of your early memories of growing up here in this area? This is called the Pembroke community?

MR. MARTIN Yes, this is the Pembroke area.

INTERVIEWER: How large was your family? You have how many brothers and sisters?

MR. MARTIN: There were four boys.

INTERVIEWER: What were their names?

MR. MARTIN: The oldest one was George. The second one was Joseph, third one was Nathaniel and the fourth one was Luke, myself.

INTERVIEWER: All of you were born here?

MR. MARTIN: No, I was the only one born here.

INTERVIEWER: So you must have moved here.

MR. MARTIN We moved from South Front Street.

INTERVIEWER: I understand your father was a very famous United States Colored Troop soldier who fought in the Civil War. That's something to be really proud of.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, that's what I heard. Like I said, I was so young I don't remember my father.

INTERVIEWER: Did he get a stipend from the Government or anything like that? Did he retire from the military that you are aware of?

MR. MARTIN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So he joined when the colored troops were organized here in New Bern during the Civil War and he stayed in the military the whole time? Did he stay in after the Civil War?

MR. MARTIN: As far as I know, yes.

INTERVIEWER: How about during the Spanish-American War?

MR. MARTIN: I can't say right now. I can't pen-point that right now, but I believe he served in both wars.

INTERVIEWER: We were able to talk with Earl Hines. Remember, he came down this summer and brought some paperwork showing your father being a part of the Grand Army of the Republic, in Plymouth. He also talked about him being a part of one of the black regiments of the Spanish-American War.

MR. MARTIN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What do you remember about growing up here in New Bern? What are some of your early childhood memories?

MR. MARTIN: I could give you a history of those. I came up during the segregated times. You couldn't do this, you couldn't do that, you couldn't go here, you couldn't go there. There are so many things that we can do now that we couldn't do before. We couldn't go to the same schools that the whites went to. We had a little school over here, from Kindergarten to the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Everybody was in the same classroom.

INTERVIEWER: What was the name of that school?

MR. MARTIN: That was called the Little Mission. Our last supervisor was Dr. Mann's wife. I think her name was Dr. Clara Mann, I'm not for sure but she was our superintendent.

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Mann was a physician, wasn't he?

MR. MARTIN: He was, yes. He was one of the black doctors in that time. There was Dr. Fisher, Dr. Mann, and Dr. Martin. Then came Dr. Mumford. Littman and them came after. Those were the original black doctors from this section.

INTERVIEWER: So when you were growing up in the 1920's, there were at least 3 doctors here in town.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, they were the 3 black doctors in this town. They weren't permitted to work in the white hospitals.

INTERVIEWER: So, where did they serve you?

MR. MARTIN: They went from house to house. They had a little office.

INTERVIEWER: Where were the offices located?

MR. MARTIN: They were located on Queen Street, right beside Mr. White. That was Dr. Fisher's office. Dr. Mann's and Dr. Martin's office was in the front where Carolina Cleaners was upstairs. The drugstore was there. It was Canady's Drug Store.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Was that in the same building that's now Carolina Cleaners?

MR. MARTIN: No, there was a wooden building there. There was an upstairs in it at that time.

INTERVIEWER: Was that building burned during the fire of New Bern?

MR. MARTIN: No, I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER: So the fire didn't touch it.

MR. MARTIN: No, I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER: So, it was later demolished.

MR. MARTIN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What were some of the other things that went on? Were there any dentists in New Bern during that time? We're talking about the 1920's.

MR. MARTIN: As far as I can remember, there weren't any black dentists at all in New Bern. The first dentist that I can remember is Sam Bryant. He's still living. And they had another black doctor named Sam Edwards, from James City. I think he's still living, but I think he's retired. He's living in Goldsboro. They were the only black dentists I know anything about. And you couldn't go to the white dentists. You could go to them, but they wouldn't wait on you. You went in a separate room.

INTERVIEWER: How about people who were bad off sick? Could you go to the hospital?

MR. MARTIN: No, there wasn't a hospital for them. That's the reason Good Shepherd was organized. Dr. R.I. Johnson down at St. Cyprian built Good Shepherd by donations from the public and churches. They built it with charity money. That's where Good Shepherd came in. They were dominant blacks. It operated until Craven County came in. Craven County didn't want that competition, so they closed Good Shepherd.

INTERVIEWER: During those times, if you were really ill, what about if you needed an operation? Did he operate on you in his office?

MR. MARTIN: The doctors then couldn't operate. They weren't licensed to operate. They were what you'd call a "Pill Doctor". They'd give you a pill, or a shot or something like that.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, a General Practitioner?

MR. MARTIN: Yes. If you had to find some white doctor, they might would operate on you if you were in bad shape. If they didn't operate on you, you know what the next thing was. You passed on.

INTERVIEWER: So, where did the white doctors operate on you?

MR. MARTIN: I guess they operated on you in the hospital, at St. Luke's. It's on the corner of George and Broad now. The building is.

INTERVIEWER: So, you could go to the hospital if you got a white doctor, if you were sick enough.

MR. MARTIN: Oh, yes. But you had to be segregated. You couldn't go in the main part of the hospital.

INTERVIEWER: You had to go in the back door of the hospital

MR. MARTIN: Yes, in the basement. Then you had to wait until they could get to you.

INTERVIEWER: So, the basement of St. Luke was the black area that they operated on you.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, that's where you went. You never went up into the main part of the hospital.

INTERVIEWER: That's interesting. How about businesses when you were very small? Were there any black businesses?

MR. MARTIN: Well, in the black section, they had a lot of black businesses. [ ] White had a business over in Duffyfield. They had a black business on Main Street.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of businesses were they?

MR. MARTIN: Grocery businesses. They had a lot. Every little neighborhood had a black business. We had a little store next door to us. There's one right down the street. But they didn't carry the things that you needed; you had to go to the main store. So when the A & P came in, then everybody was dedicated to the A&P. They were competitors for the black businesses. So they had to back up. That's what ran them out of business.

INTERVIEWER: So the A&P was like Wal-Mart?

MR. MARTIN: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Wal-Mart came in and ran all of the small businesses out.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, the A&P and Pender.

INTERVIEWER: Was Pender a grocery store?

MR. MARTIN: Pender was just like A&P.

INTERVIEWER: Which came first, Pender or A & P?

MR. MARTIN: A&P.

INTERVIEWER: A&P was the first large chain business.

MR. MARTIN: It was right there in Five Points.

INTERVIEWER: About what year did A&P come here?

MR. MARTIN: I don't know really what year, but it was in the 1930's.

INTERVIEWER: I remember growing up in the 1970's and it was still there. So, it had been there a long time.

MR. MARTIN: It was during the Depression time.

INTERVIEWER: Speaking about the Depression, what do you recall? What are some of the worst memories you have about the Depression? What are some of the better memories you have about the Depression?

MR. MARTIN: During the Depression time, you weren't permitted in certain places. We just weren't permitted to go. We couldn't be caught in the downtown section after a certain time in the night. In nighttime, if you were caught in the downtown section, you would be questioned. You had to have a good reason for being down there.

INTERVIEWER: And, if you didn't have a good reason, what would happen to you?

MR. MARTIN: Well, you'd be jailed, or questioned, or taken to trial, and if they found you guilty, you might give you time, and if they didn't find you guilty, they'd let you go.

INTERVIEWER: What would they charge you with?

MR. MARTIN: I don't really know. But you weren't supposed to be in that part of the section, in the downtown section after a certain time.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

MR. MARTIN: You had to stay in your territory and they had to stay in their territory. On Sundays, we used to walk down to the Neuse River, where the hotel used to be and when the sun would go down, you had to leave from down there.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do down at the Neuse River on Sundays?

MR. MARTIN: Just walking; that was our main thing, walking; for exercise. There wasn't anything else to do. The trolley was running, but you had to have money go ride the trolley, so you walked.

INTERVIEWER: Where did the trolley run?

MR. MARTIN: The trolley ran from downtown, out to National Avenue where the graveyard is, and after the graveyard, back here again. I think it was five cents to ride.

INTERVIEWER: What church did you belong to, early on?

MR. MARTIN: St. John's Missionary Baptist Church.

INTERVIEWER: That's located where?

MR. MARTIN: On Walt Bellamy Drive now. It was on South Front Street.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me a little about that. I understand your father was a prominent member of that congregation.

MR. MARTIN: I forget what number he was, but he was pastor there for quite a while

INTERVIEWER: So your father was a pastor too?

MR. MARTIN: Yes, he was a pastor at that church for a good while.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you recall what years those were?

MR. MARTIN: No, I don't remember.

INTERVIEWER: So, he was a pastor there before you were born

MR. MARTIN: He was a pastor during the time I was born.

INTERVIEWER: He died as the pastor of the church?

MR. MARTIN: I don't know if he died as pastor of the church, but he died during the pastorage of the church. I don't really remember, but I know I was born before he died, because I remember the time he carried the church, but I can't place how he looked from his pictures.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall what he died of?

MR. MARTIN: I really don't know.

INTERVIEWER: He was pretty old when he died, wasn't he?

MR. MARTIN: He was in his 80's when he died. I don't know if it was 81 or 82

INTERVIEWER: So you at 92, longevity is a part of your genes.

MR. MARTIN: Well, I would say so at 92.

INTERVIEWER: I heard that he was a very prominent member of the church and that he helped to build the church. Is that right?

MR. MARTIN: No, he didn't help build this church. But he was a pastor. Stallings was the one that started this structure.

INTERVIEWER: What year was that church built, St. John?

MR. MARTIN: It was in the late 1930's.

INTERVIEWER: Were you part of the rebuilding of the church?

MR. MARTIN: No, I wasn't part of the rebuilding. I was part of the upkeep after it was built. I have done a lot of working around here. While I was doing it, it was voluntary. Now, it's a little different. Everybody that has a hand in it, has to get paid. That's what kept up the church. A few of the members got together and did what they had to do, because there was no money. The church went up for sale twice, and they redeemed it somehow. The man that built the church, gave them the arches. "You are struggling", he said, "having a hard time. Every dollar you pay on this church, I'll give you a dollar on your debt". That's how we paid for the church. At that time, the church cost \$75,000.

INTERVIEWER: That was a lot of money at that time. You must have had a very prominent congregation at that time.

MR. MARTIN: Most of the churches in New Bern came through St. John. Mt. Calvary, church on Middle Street (Star of Zion). Guilfied is an old church but it didn't come through there. First Baptist is one of the oldest establishments in New Bern. It didn't get destroyed during the fire, either. The rest of the churches were destroyed during the fire. The fire was in 1922.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember anything about the fire?

MR. MARTIN: Nothing but hearsay. I don't remember the day but I remember the rumors.

INTERVIEWER: So you didn't see smoke or anything?

MR. MARTIN: Not way out here; most of the fire was in that part of the town. Most of the black people that got burned out couldn't rebuild. I don't know why they couldn't rebuild, but they couldn't rebuild. St. Peter's got burned; that's why they moved. Rue Chapel got destroyed when the housing project came in. They moved over on Roundtree Street. They used to be on Elm Street.

INTERVIEWER: So your earlier memories of Christmas and holidays, what do you remember about that?

MR. MARTIN: That was a great day, Christmas, and holidays. Thanksgiving, Christmas, 30<sup>th</sup> of May, and 4<sup>th</sup> of July were great days for us. They were called our days.

INTERVIEWER: How did you celebrate?

MR. MARTIN: We marched, had bands, marched out to the soldiers' cemetery. It was just a great day. They were selling lemonade on the side, for \$.05, was a big piece of money in those days. It was a just a great day.

INTERVIEWER: So the 30<sup>th</sup> of May, you marched out to the soldiers' cemetery. Is that what you mean, National Cemetery?

MR. MARTIN: Yes, on National Avenue.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you march out there?

MR. MARTIN: Just to hear speeches. We'd march down there and back.

INTERVIEWER: Did whites gather there too? Was it integrated?

MR. MARTIN: Most of them were blacks, the 30<sup>th</sup> of May and 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

INTERVIEWER: So the whites didn't celebrate?

MR. MARTIN: Not that much.

INTERVIEWER: You're talking about the 1920's and 1930's on up?

MR. MARTIN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So, there were black soldiers buried at the National Cemetery? Is that why you went out there?

MR. MARTIN: Oh, yes. Black soldiers are buried out there.

INTERVIEWER: Is your father buried out there?

MR. MARTIN: My father is buried out there. My brother is buried out there. I have a son who is buried out there.

INTERVIEWER: And they were all veterans?

MR. MARTIN: They were all veterans.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember which war each one of them fought in? I know your father fought in the Civil War and the Spanish-American War. What about your brother? What was his name, the one that was buried out there?

MR. MARTIN: My brother, Nathaniel, was in World War II. My son was in the Vietnam War.

INTERVIEWER: What was his name?

MR. MARTIN: Frederick Martin. I think I got mother, father, brother and son out there.

INTERVIEWER: I remember Frederick in High School; sounds like you had a very patriotic family. How do you feel about that, about having to fight in the military when you really had such a hard time here in America, fighting for freedom overseas and other places and in many ways, freedom was limited here in America?

MR. MARTIN: Well, when I came out of school, I didn't finish school, but when I did come out of school, I tried to join the Navy. But I was too young. And, if I joined the Navy, my parents would have to sign for me. My mother would not sign for me. So I tried to join, and they told me I couldn't join because I was too young. Even in the CC Camp, they wouldn't let me join because she was drawing some kind of collateral from the government. That was enough to take care of us, so they wouldn't let me join that. So when the world war did break out, I tried my best not to go because they were trying to get me to go. I wouldn't go because they didn't let me go when I wanted to. Finally, I wound up getting a job for the city of New Bern; they kept getting furloughed. That's why I didn't get to go. My oldest brother didn't get to go; he died before the war started.

INTERVIEWER: So what did you do with the city of New Bern during the war? What job did you take?

MR. MARTIN: I worked as a lineman; I was trained as a lineman with the city. I worked for them for 5 years.

INTERVIEWER: You worked 5 years? You worked as an electric lineman? That's interesting. I didn't think they had black people working as linemen.

MR. MARTIN: All of the linemen were black

INTERVIEWER: All the linemen? That's interesting.

MR. MARTIN: The foremen were white but the linemen were black

INTERVIEWER: Why was that? Was it dangerous work?

MR. MARTIN: Oh, yes, that's the reason I quit. We asked for a raise and they said they couldn't do it. So I said that if I couldn't get a raise, to find someone else to do the work because I couldn't do it for that amount of money. They said well, go to the Army. I said I'm going to die anyway, so why not die where I can get something for it? I couldn't get social security here in the city.

INTERVIEWER: Did any of the white employees get social security?

MR. MARTIN: No, nobody did.

INTERVIEWER: So the city of New Bern didn't have any benefits? Did the city have a lot of blacks in the other departments, too?

MR. MARTIN: Most of the city employees were black.

INTERVIEWER: It's not like it is today. They've got benefits today so most of them are white.

MR. MARTIN: You had street sweepers and people that picked up the trash, so most of them were black.

INTERVIEWER: No whites? That's interesting. Most of them today, 80% or 90% are white. What other work did you do? When did you graduate from high school? Oh, you said you didn't finish high school.

MR. MARTIN: I didn't finish high school

INTERVIEWER: This was about 1940, 1941, that the war broke out.

MR. MARTIN: The war broke out in 1941 and finished in 1945.

INTERVIEWER: So, about the time you stopped working with the city, the war was just about over.

MR. MARTIN: Yes. That's one reason I didn't go. I went to Ft. Bragg and passed the test. They told me they would notify me, but they never notified me so I didn't go. I was glad when V-J Day came. I will never forget, it was 1945.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any celebrations when the war was over? What was happening in the black community? Was there large celebrations.

MR. MARTIN: Nothing extra. They were glad that it was over. Black people had a hard time trying to pass the test to get into the Army. If they had any defect, they couldn't pass the test, until the war got bad. Then they took anything; anything that came up, they would put in the Army. Because they needed everybody to defend the country. Negroes were not considered citizens anyway, at that time.

INTERVIEWER: So were the standards higher, for blacks to get into Service? Were the tests harder, were the physicals exam harder, because they didn't want blacks in the Service?

MR. MARTIN: That was all over the United States. The Navy couldn't put but so much black in the Navy. The man told me you couldn't put but about 30% in the Navy. There weren't any officers at all. You had to be a shoeshine boy or cook, or something like that.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

MR. MARTIN: The Marine Corps was the same way. They didn't have any blacks in the Marine Corps until Joe Louis came. Joe Louis was the cause of blacks being in the Marine Corps. It was the white Army

INTERVIEWER: That's interesting. How many children do you have?

MR. MARTIN: I have 4 now. I had 7 altogether.

INTERVIEWER: What are their names?

MR. MARTIN: Robert, Elsie, William Perkin, Nathaniel, Frederick, Fannie, and Isaac. I think that's seven.

INTERVIEWER: Isaac was my classmate.

MR. MARTIN: Frederick got killed in Viet Nam. Isaac died later. He was the youngest.

INTERVIEWER: What year were you married? What was your wife's name?

MR. MARTIN: My wife's name was Inez Elizabeth Fisher.

INTERVIEWER: Where was she from

MR. MARTIN: Right here in New Bern. We got married in 1937.

INTERVIEWER: So how old were you when you got married?

MR. MARTIN: About 19. I've been married a long time.

INTERVIEWER: So your wife is deceased?

MR. MARTIN: She died in 1995.

INTERVIEWER: We talked a little about the Depression, about the hospital being built, and how rough it was during the Depression. What was your first job as a young man when you stopped going to school? Once you stopped going to school, did you have to support yourself?

MR. MARTIN: Oh, yes. We had to support the family. Everything went to the family. Everything went to the kitty. My mother was in charge.

INTERVIEWER: What did your mother do?

MR. MARTIN: She did a little housework, things like that. She drew a pension from her husband. She didn't have to have a special job. But she had odd jobs, substitute teacher for schools. At that time you didn't have to be license to be a substitute.

INTERVIEWER: What was your first job working, that you recall/

MR. MARTIN: My first job was a helper. I liked to plaster so I took up that. That's where it all came from. I was a mortar tender for a plasterer.

INTERVIEWER: So this plastering was building walls?

MR. MARTIN: Yes, like you have sheetrock now. Before sheetrock, there was plastering. That's what I would do. I started out and was traded over to the masonry work. I went to school to be a mason.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you go to school to become a brick mason?

MR. MARTIN: Right over here in New Bern over here at West Street.

INTERVIEWER: Were you a student at West Street?

MR. MARTIN: Yes

INTERVIEWER: So they had a class like industrial arts?

MR. MARTIN: Oh, yes. Mr. Hale, he came here from Wilmington. It's been about 10 years since he died.

INTERVIEWER: He was the masonry teacher?

MR. MARTIN: Yes, he was the first masonry teacher.

INTERVIEWER: Was he black or white?

MR. MARTIN: He was black; we didn't have any white teachers.

INTERVIEWER: What other industrial arts were taught at West Street?

MR. MARTIN: Well there wasn't anything else taught at West Street. Masonry was taught to the boys and there was a good carpentry class. The girls were taught home economics: sewing, etc.

INTERVIEWER: What were some of the other students in the class?

MR. MARTIN: I can't remember. I was one of the first in the class at that time.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any black brick masons in New Bern?

MR. MARTIN: Well, brick masons were like anything else; they were segregated. You couldn't work certain places. When I did get out on the job, you had to work on the back. You couldn't work on the front because that was the particular part of the work. By working on the back we worked out way up to the front. At the time when I became a professional mason, certain parts of the wall I had to work on, in the back, because I was black.

INTERVIEWER: So, it wasn't because of your skills ...

MR. MARTIN: Oh, no.

INTERVIEWER: So there was a difference in the way you were paid?

MR. MARTIN: Well, yes. You were paid according to what you were doing. I worked for the government down in Camp Davis (just before you get to Wilmington) and the government wasn't paying but \$1.25 per hour for masons then. But wages and hours were so low. They weren't but \$.15, \$.30 per hour. The government was paying \$1.25 and that was good money at that time.

INTERVIEWER: Did you work at Cherry Point?

MR. MARTIN: No, I couldn't get a job at Cherry Point.

INTERVIEWER: Why couldn't you get a job at Cherry Point?

MR. MARTIN: Because of who you were.

INTERVIEWER: They didn't allow black masons down there?

MR. MARTIN: No, I went down there to get a job. The man looked at me and said "you're a mason, huh? Well, we're filled up and are not hiring any more". Not having transportation back and forth and go when I wanted, I had to wait to get a ride back. While I was standing there, these white fellows came up and they signed up for brick masons and they hired them. So, I could ask questions. I said "why did you hire them and not me?" They told me they were filled up; "we'll sign you up for a laborer". I said I didn't come here for a laborer, I was a skilled man. They wouldn't hire me so I did get a chance to get in there, but I never did get a pay check from there. I got fired before I got a paycheck for something I didn't do.

Since then, I did a lot of construction work. I worked on the power plant, sewer lines, contracted them out. But when you got to do that, lately, you had to be licensed, had to have insurance. I was lucky to get all of that, that's why they had to turn the job over to us. The last job I had, I worked on the power plant down there. I had to make a bid for it. I figured I had bid a good price so that I could make something out of it. But the foreman that I went to, he said I couldn't do it for that price. He said, "I'll tell you what to do. You go back and double this and bring it back to me. It has to come by me and I'll see that you get your job". And I did. But the catch in it was that they wouldn't pay for the first week. I had a crew then. I had a crew of six. They would hold about 10% of your money until the job was finished. That's in case you would walk off the job before it was finished. That way, they had some money to pay someone to finish the job. When I did finish the job, I had made more money then than I ever did. I had no idea that I had made that much money. That 10% was \$2,000. But I was playing a game to do the work. But we got along good.

I've been to the base 3 or 4 times. But you had to have your license and insurance for all of your men. You had to pay a certain price for each man: the mortar tender had a price, the laborers had a price; the brick mason had a price. They would have someone to come along and check on you. They wouldn't come to me and ask what I was paying the men; they'd go to the men and ask them what do you do, what is your pay and if it wasn't right I had to pay each salary. I had to pay them back. That's why you had to be careful about what you did.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall about what year that was?

MR. MARTIN: I think it was in the late 1940's, or early 1950's.

INTERVIEWER: So you were making a good salary during that time?

MR. MARTIN: Oh, yes. I was; but I started out working for the government for \$1.25 an hour. That was good money. When I went into construction business, I was making \$.10 an hour. When I was working with the man, he said I was working so good that he raised it to \$.15 an hour. I was getting more per hour than the common laborer. Carpenters were \$.35 an hour. For 10 hours, that was \$3.50 a day. They were making good money. I was making \$1.50 a day.

INTERVIEWER: While growing up, what were some of the clubs and social events that went on, as a teenager and as a young adult? You mentioned walking down to the Neuse River. I assume that you were walking with your girlfriend or your wife Sunday afternoon.

MR. MARTIN: Some of the places we were playing ball, baseball.

INTERVIEWER: Where was baseball played?

MR. MARTIN: Right here in this community. See, we couldn't go into the white park. It was right out here but we couldn't play in it. There was a white park out here we couldn't go in that. But as integration came along, we went there. We couldn't go into the grandstands during integration time.

INTERVIEWER: Where were the white parks located?

MR. MARTIN: On George Street.

INTERVIEWER: Caper Park? Caper Park was a white park?

MR. MARTIN: They all started off white. During my school time, we built Caper Park. You remember it used to be blocks. That's where we practiced our work, free of charge.

INTERVIEWER: So that was the white park?

MR. MARTIN: That was the white park.

INTERVIEWER: When I was growing up, it was the black park.

MR. MARTIN: Well, you came up later. You couldn't even sit in the stands. They had something in there called the "Buzzard Roost" where we stood.

INTERVIEWER: Where was the "Buzzard Roost"?

MR. MARTIN: Over against the fence. People in the houses, they would put stands up in the back yard to see, but people in the stand back of the ball park, you couldn't go in there. Do you remember Stanley White?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

MR. MARTIN: Things began to get better when he came along.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me something about Stanley White. How did things get better because of Stanley White?

MR. MARTIN: I don't know. Times were changing. Stanley Turner was head of the park at that time. The Coastal Plains Leagues had gone out; Stanley White was over the recreation department. He got killed. He came in one time to turn on the lights and was electrocuted. I was working for the city at that time.

INTERVIEWER: You were a lineman then?

MR. MARTIN: Yes. He got shocked; pushed the switch up and it wasn't grounded and he was killed.

INTERVIEWER: Stanley White was killed when, in the late 1960's?

MR. MARTIN: I think so. I remember well when he was killed.

INTERVIEWER: Going back, those were some of the social events. What did you do Christmas?

MR. MARTIN: Christmas was a big day. You got an apple and an orange. You would put them in a sock on the mantle. And you would get a piece of candy. That was a big thing then. They didn't have all of these different things, toys, like they do now. Most of the family would get together and have a meal.

INTERVIEWER: What did you eat?

MR. MARTIN: What I went for were pies and cakes. Sometimes, we'd have something, like a turkey. Now and then, we'd have a turkey. We'd have a chicken, and sometimes we'd have a ham. Everybody in the neighborhood would come and eat that didn't have, not only for your family, but for the whole neighborhood. We'd have a good time.

INTERVIEWER: Share the food?

MR. MARTIN: Yes, sharing was a good thing. At the churches, it was the same thing. Everybody would bring something and we would eat outside. It was a great thing. We would go on picnics; get a mule and wagon and everybody would get on the wagon and go out in the woods and have a good time. Everybody would take a basket, go out in the woods, have a good time, shout, and come on back.

INTERVIEWER: How about growing up in the church? What were some of the experiences that you remember in the church: choirs, preachers, etc?

MR. MARTIN: We had to go to church. We had to be at church at 9:30; we'd stay for service at 11:00. At 2:00 we had to go to Sunday School again. After Sunday School, we had something like BYPU.

INTERVIEWER: What was BYPU?

MR. MARTIN: It was something like bible study for the kids. There weren't any ball games. We had to go to church. Then at 7:00 they had night service. Sometimes at 11:00, we'd just be getting back home. We spent all day Sunday in church.

INTERVIEWER: All day Sunday in church, from 9:00 in the morning.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, we had 4 or 5 services, Sunday school, morning service, evening service, 2:00 Sunday school, and night service. So your whole day was taken up. We had to go. Now, if you didn't go to Sunday school, your home privileges were taken from you. You would be punished by your parents somehow.

INTERVIEWER: So they took out ball games on Sundays?

MR. MARTIN: No ball games on Sundays.

INTERVIEWER: Movies?

MR. MARTIN: No movies on Sunday; nothing but church. After a while, in later years, you could go to ball games, and movies, and places like that. I couldn't leave home without their permission. I couldn't go play with the rest of the children without getting permission. At a certain time, I had to be back home. Your mother would call your time. They would say, "well, you can go, but a so-and-so time you'd better be here." Nine times out of ten you would be there. There wasn't any question about it. You would be back because another time coming, you would want to go back again. We had that fear of them; that's why we minded them like we did.

INTERVIEWER: Mr. Luke, a lot of people are interested, and I am interested in knowing how New Bern developed. I know you've seen a lot of changes in your 91 years that you have lived in New Bern. We've heard of some of the important things that occurred here in New Bern such as the lumber mills

MR. MARTIN: There were 5 sawmills in New Bern. That's why everybody came to New Bern then, so they could get a job at a sawmill: Rollin Lumber Company, Hyde Lumber Company, Neuse Lumber Company. There was a lumber company in James City. I've forgotten it's name. Neuse Lumber Company, I think, was down on George Street. I think that's where we got a loan to build this house, the Neuse Lumber Company. My mother went down and she got a \$500 loan to build this house. She got enough lumber to put this house up. That was \$500. There weren't any bathrooms or anything like that, or lights, just the house. But she paid for it. I found a letter in the back from the owner thanking us for being such a loyal black customer. They said we were the most loyal black customer they had. I've got it in the back somewhere.

INTERVIEWER: So your mother always believed in paying the bills ... paying them on time?

MR. MARTIN: We had insurance with Ike Smith.

INTERVIEWER: Who was he?

MR. MARTIN: Smith Rental Company. Remember when Howard Lewis used to work for Smith Rental Company? Back where the barber shop is now?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, the insurance company there on Queen Street. He had a big insurance company, didn't he?

MR. MARTIN: Yes. Well, that's the only insurance company you could buy from. White people didn't want to insure you. So he had a black insurance

INTERVIEWER: He had insurance with North Carolina Mutual, didn't he?

MR. MARTIN: Yes, North Carolina Mutual, that's right.

INTERVIEWER: That is the country's largest black insurance company, in Durham.

MR. MARTIN: We've come a long ways; still got a long ways to go.

INTERVIEWER: You were telling me a story about Pepsi-Cola.

MR. MARTIN: Now, Sam Blackman, that was George Blackman's daddy. That was Miss Mumford's daddy. George Blackman and Miss Mumford are sister and brother. Dr. Mumford married Miss Mumford. We called her Miss Mumford but she was a Blackman. Me and Sam was just like that. When he found out I was my father's son, he said, "Boy, I know you. When are you going to start preaching?" I said "You haven't called me yet." They always joked me about that. I didn't know it, but they knew each other real good. But they said when he discovered Pepsi-Cola, he was working for Bantam's Drug store.

INTERVIEWER: Who was working for Bantam's?

MR. MARTIN: Sam Blackman was working for him, working in the office back there.

INTERVIEWER: What was he doing?

MR. MARTIN: Oh, I don't know, maintenance man.

INTERVIEWER: Bantam made a drink and put it on the counter, but it didn't sell good.

MR. MARTIN: So, Sam was back in the back and he stirred up Pepsi-Cola.

INTERVIEWER: How did he do that?

MR. MARTIN: I don't know how he did it, but being back there, he could do mostly what he wanted to do. But when he put it on the counter, it sold, and that's where Pepsi-Cola came in.

INTERVIEWER: You mean this black man is the one who really invented Pepsi-Cola?

MR. MARTIN: A black man made Pepsi-Cola, Sam Blackman, George Blackman's daddy. Now, what he did, he stayed there until he retired. I remember when he retired.

INTERVIEWER: Where did he retire from?

MR. MARTIN: Down there just working at Bantam's Drug Store, doing maintenance. Bantam had a son; he was said to be retarded, but he wasn't retarded. When he'd see me on the street, he wanted to talk with me at length. He and Johnny Dunn were buddies. That was the bank man. Johnny Dunn, Bank of New Bern, Dunn Bank. It was run by the Dunns. They got to drinking and he shot at the bank man. That's the last I knew of him.

INTERVIEWER: So who told the story of Sam Blackman mixing up the recipe of Pepsi-Cola to make it sell?

MR. MARTIN: I think I got that from Sam myself.

INTERVIEWER: Sam told you that himself?

MR. MARTIN: Yes, you can see the sign right now: New Bern, the home of Pepsi-Cola. They never said who made it. What Sam did when his children were in school, I imagine he would go to those Bantams and get some money to pay their tuition. And that's the way they got their schooling.

INTERVIEWER: So Sam Blackman's children went to college?

MR. MARTIN: Yes, they went to college through Pepsi-Cola. Bantam, the owner of Pepsi-Cola, rented a drug store and Sam Blackman was the maintenance man, cleaning up around there in the back and he had the privilege to do these things, and he mixed up this drink. It's just like all this old stuff that was made up, like Aunt Jemima's cakes, black people made that, but they didn't get credit for it. You understand what I'm talking about? They didn't get a bit of credit.

INTERVIEWER: How about Moore's barbecue?

MR. MARTIN: Moore's was just a prejudiced man, anyway. I don't know why. I know his son who runs it now, there just as much difference between him and his daddy as there is in chalk and cheese. Moore didn't care too much about blacks; but all his help was black. He owned the first store in Five Points and the blacks ran it for him. But you couldn't go upstairs in his place. You had to go around the back to get what you want. When Weyerhaeuser built out here, Moore built a place right across from it. But he didn't want any blacks in there. But Weyerhaeuser told him he couldn't do that. We'll buy you out before you do that. So they bought the building right across the street. That was segregating people and Weyerhaeuser didn't want that. They wanted us to help us to like right. They give a good benefit, no matter who you are.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know of any other instances like the Pepsi-Cola story that needs to be told, that people would be interested in, where black people, where it wasn't publicized, that they had a hand in helping build or create businesses for white people?

MR. MARTIN: Well, you take the center on George Street, the mason work, we built that, free of charge. During the [ ] time, our class went over there and laid all the blocks in. He was their supervisor and that's why it's in there like it is today. Everything isn't right in there. But we got training from that.

INTERVIEWER: The senior citizens building?

MR. MARTIN: The senior citizens building. Of course, they've done a lot of improvement to it since then.

INTERVIEWER: The black class of West Street built that?

MR. MARTIN: Yes, the black class of West Street.

INTERVIEWER: What other projects did you help build at West Street?

MR. MARTIN: I don't know. I know that when people would come along and hire us to do some work for them, they'd always come to our class. I was always one of those who they picked out to go to work for them. My policy was to try to satisfy the people, not for what I was getting, because I wasn't getting anything. If they wanted to pay, they paid. If they didn't, they didn't. Everything they paid was all right. The man knew I would do good work, so he would recommend me to go. We had a good time back there. There wasn't any money at that time to amount to much, not like it is today.

INTERVIEWER: So, as we wrap up this interview, Mr. Martin, it's been a pleasure talking to you. You've been working in the construction field all your life?

MR. MARTIN: All my life.

INTERVIEWER: 70 or 80 years.

MR. MARTIN: All my life.

INTERVIEWER: What are some of the projects that you worked on that you're most proud of?

MR. MARTIN: I'm proud of all of them. There aren't too many buildings downtown that I haven't worked on.

INTERVIEWER: What are some of the more important buildings that you've worked on?

MR. MARTIN: The courthouse and Tryon Palace (I worked there for about 3 years). Mr. Riggins and his wife were architects. I was a supervisor and checked out everything. There was an instance when they weren't putting in mortar right; they were using dry mortar instead of wet mortar. I called it to Mr. Riggins' attention. He told me that the building was supposed to look like it was 100 years old. And, if I continued to go the way I was going, it was going to look like it was

built yesterday. We wanted it to look like it was 100 years old. We did most of all the work.

INTERVIEWER: I have several pictures. How about the Sudan Temple?

MR. MARTIN: No, I didn't work on it.

INTERVIEWER: Did you work on Smith's Drug Store?

MR. MARTIN: I built Smith's Drug Store from the ground up. I built Dr. Littman's office. He said no one could do the work but me. Littman was a lifesaver for me and my family. My mother and wife became ill, and he healed each one of them. When he came to see my mother, he told me she had cancer but cautioned me not to tell her; that way, she would have it easier. When Dr. Littman went into the Reserves, he had Dr. Best to take his place. When my mother became ill again, I called on him and he was surprised that she was still living. But she had to go to the hospital that time. I didn't have to pay Dr. Littman; he wouldn't take any money. He cared for all of my children, mother, wife, and me. What more do you want? He was a God-sent man.

INTERVIEWER: This speaks a lot about you, too. He must have thought a lot of you.

MR. MARTIN: Somebody paved the way before me. I just had to walk down the road.

INTERVIEWER: What year did your mother die?

MR. MARTIN: In 1967. I had a brother that died in 1967. I had a son to die in 1968. He died in February 1968 in Viet Nam, February 29, 1968.

INTERVIEWER: Didn't you used to teach around here?

MR. MARTIN: I taught in Bayboro about 10 or 15 years, or more.

INTERVIEWER: What was the name of the school?

MR. MARTIN: Pamlico High School. I went to Stonewall when it was segregated.

INTERVIEWER: What did you teach?

MR. MARTIN: Shop work, basically.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have some good students down there? Do you remember any students?

MR. MARTIN: Oh, yes, I remember them all. When they come up to me, they ask me if I remember them, and I say yes, I remember their favor, but I don't remember their names. I got a lot of them and some of them tell me now that they wish they had listened to me. I enjoyed it.

INTERVIEWER: So, as we close this interview up, I know in 2009, this year we have seen the election of a black President and I guess you've seen things you never thought would happen.

MR. MARTIN: I've seen things I never thought I'd see, I've heard things I never thought I'd hear, and I've got things I never thought I'd get. I don't know what more you'd want in life.

INTERVIEWER: What are you most thankful for?

MR. MARTIN: I'm thankful for a good healthy life, and my mind. My mind is just as good today as it was yesterday and the day before. The body is deteriorating.

INTERVIEWER: In ending this interview, what is your advice to young people today? What advise would you give them?

MR. MARTIN: Try to treat everybody as if they are somebody because everybody is somebody. When I was in school, I took classes in Raleigh, and East Carolina and Appalachian and I was up there grumbling about my students not doing as well as they should do. A man looked at me and said, let me tell you one thing: if you get just one student to do what's right, then you've done the job. If he gets one, that's still you doing a good job. You are not going to get everybody to do everything at one time. There's one thing about it: if they know as much as you know, you couldn't teach them anyway. What you're teaching them is what they don't know. That's what you're trying to do, teach them to go the right way. What you need to do is to go back and work with them and those that will go, take

and go with them. Those that don't go, leave them for the time being. If they want to catch up, they'll catch up.

INTERVIEWER: As we end this interview, what's your favorite song?

MR. MARTIN: Favorite song? I like them all. I don't have a special song. But I tell you one thing, you've got to do right some time; you aren't going to do right all the time. You've got to go by your mind. What I'm saying is I can't condemn you to save my life, and see myself clear. What you're trying to do, I've done it. The Lord has blessed me and seen me through my faults, and has given me my needs. He gives you what you need. If you don't watch out, I'll give you a little bit more than what you need. That means that I need to help someone else, because I've got more than I what I need to start off with. That's my philosophy. What little bit I've got, I'm going to try to hand it off to someone else. It's up to you to take it. I've done my share. I've done my best to give it to you. The world doesn't owe you anything. You owe the world. The world was here when you came here and it will be here when you're gone. So you need to pay for your being in the world. I thank God for blessing me to have made it this far. Another thing, I don't let anything get me angry.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I thank you, Mr. Luke Martin, for this interview. I appreciate all of the information you have shared with us. This information is going to be archived at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as well as the library here, so that generations to come will know some of the things you have lived through this life and they will have a better understanding of the city of New Bern and our community and the people who lived and have made it what it is. I thank you for this privilege for interviewing you. This is Bernard George.