

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

VIRGINIA PERSON HOLLISTER
(MRS. JOHN TULL HOLLISTER, JR.)

INTERVIEW 427

This is Marea Kafer Foster representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 400. I am interviewing Virginia Person Hollister, Mrs. John Tull Hollister, Jr., interview number 427. This interview is being conducted on Monday the 1st of February 1993. We are in Mrs. Hollister's home at 515 East Front Street in New Bern.

MAREA K.FOSTER: Mrs. Hollister, this is a wonderful, wonderful pleasure for me to be here and also for Fred. I've been looking forward to it for a long time, so I'm glad we got to it.

MRS. HOLLISTER: I appreciate your coming and I appreciate your including me in this because I think it is a wonderful thing to do.

MKF: Thank you. Well, you have a lot to add to our oral history of New Bern. But first, I want you to give me your full name and your birthdate and birthplace.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Well, my full name is Virginia Tyson Person Hollister and I was born in Pikeville, North Carolina on October 15, 1906. So I'm one of the ancients.

MKF: Same age as my daddy.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Really?

MKF: Um huh. Daddy was born the 2nd of September 1906.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Isn't that something. I never realized that. I thought I was older than Shorty.

MKF: No, same age as daddy.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Anyway, my father was Dr. Edgar Cooper Person, Jr. He was a country doctor. And I said that I have certainly lived and had interesting happenings in my whole life, because when we were

real small daddy practiced medicine horse and buggy style. I guess my mother, who was Virginia Kennedy Tyson Person from Wilson, North Carolina, had the first car and she drove. I know that daddy's patients would say to him, "Doctor, if you don't keep Miss Jenny from driving so fast, she's gonna kill all your children."

MKF: (laughter) What kind of car was it, Mrs. Hollister?

MRS. HOLLISTER: A Ford.

MKF: A Ford.

MRS. HOLLISTER: He practiced medicine in a Ford for almost fifty years. He wouldn't have any other car. He said it would take him anywhere; across ditches, across fields. You know, because he went to see his patients.

MKF: Right.

MRS. HOLLISTER: He had office hours in the morning from seven until twelve and then he went to see his patients, even late at night.

MKF: I've never heard of a doctor having office hours at seven o'clock in the morning. From seven to twelve.

MRS. HOLLISTER: He did. Some of his patients came early so they could get back to their farms and do their work.

MKF: Well, Pikeville is a very, very small community and a lovely little community. Betsy lived there for a while and she just loved it in Pikeville.

MRS. HOLLISTER: It is. And now it has grown because so many of the military have come over there to retire. Anyway, it is, a nice place to grow up.

MKF: It certainly is.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Small. We had a nice life growing up.

MKF: Do you remember what your father charged for an office visit?

MRS. HOLLISTER: No. I don't remember anything about that.

MKF: I know you have a sister.

MRS. HOLLISTER: There were four in the family. There were three girls and one boy.

MKF: And will you give me their names?

MRS. HOLLISTER: My sisters are Frances Person Crouch, Helene Person Youse, who is deceased. We lost her two years ago. And Edgar Cooper Person, Jr., who was a very outstanding surgeon in New York City. He died when he was forty-three.

MKF: What a shame.

MRS. HOLLISTER: He had done so much in the medical profession. He even went to Ecuador and Quita in the oldest hospital there and operated in an amphitheater to show those young doctors his methods.

MKF: How wonderful. And what a shame he died.

MRS. HOLLISTER: In his short span of life he did a great deal. He really did. I graduated from high school when I was fifteen and I went to St. Mary's because that was traditional with our family. Most of our families had gone to St. Mary's College in Raleigh to school. I went there two years and then I finished at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro in two years and a summer school. I taught one year in the mountains at Spruce Pine and then I came here to teach.

MKF: Did you want to come to New Bern or were you asked to come to New Bern or did you hear about a position opening?

MRS. HOLLISTER: I was sort of interested in coming nearer home so I applied around different places and New Bern had an opening. Mr. H. B. Smith was superintendent. Mr. Smith wrote me a letter and said, "You're so young, I am taking the privilege of finding a place for you to stay and you will stay with Mr. and Mrs. Graham Barden and room with the principal of the school", which I did and loved it.

MKF: Now who was the principal?

MRS. HOLLISTER: The Principal was Helen Nicholson who later became Mrs. Patten.

MKF: Is that P A T T E N?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Um huh. She was principal for a long time. Pat Patten had a dairy and he sold milk to the school and that's how they came to know each other.

MKF: Was it called Patten's Dairy or another name?

MRS. HOLLISTER: I don't know what it was called. I don't know, but he lived across the river there. Then later on, they went to Raleigh to live. When she left, I became principal of the school for three years.

MKF: Well, now tell me, when you first started at Riverside, what grade did you teach?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Fifth. I have always taught fifth grade and loved it. It was interesting. The children were interested in what they were doing. The subject matter was interesting. The children,

the 10 year olds and the 9 year olds, are so anxious to please. Well, all children are dear to me really and truly.

MKF: I know that.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And I enjoyed it. Then I taught school until the year before, Jenny was born in August and school was out in June. Mr. Smith asked me to continue to finish that year, because he said it would be difficult to get a principal, you know, and I was a teaching principal. I didn't teach anymore until my husband died, when Jenny was ten years old.

MKF: And then you returned.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And then I returned to the profession. I went to teach at Brinson and I taught, let me see, seventeen years at Brinson. 'Cause I taught 35 years.

MKF: Altogether.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Altogether. Seventeen years at Riverside and one year in the mountains.

MKF: How 'bout that. Well, let me get you back to Riverside. Who were the other teachers there that you remember?

MRS. HOLLISTER: The first grade was Nell Pritchard. The second grade was Bonnie Claypoole at one time. Before Bonnie, it was Ferebee, wasn't it? What was her name?

FRED LATHAM: To me it was Mrs. Ferebee.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Yes, I know. I know. It will come to me in a minute. The third grade was Helen Nicholson, Helen Patten then. And the fourth grade was Lila Taylor. Lila Taylor taught out there

almost til she retired, cause she was one of the main ones who taught. The sixth grade was taught by Chadwick. Did she teach you? Blanche.

FRED LATHAM: Blanche, yes.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Blanche Chadwick.

MKF: Well, Mrs. Hollister, how many students were normally in your classroom?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Thirty-five.

MKF: Thirty-five. And they came from the Riverside area.

MRS. HOLLISTER: They came from Riverside, Woodrow, Sunnyside, and some were bused in, weren't they?

FRED LATHAM: Yes.

MRS. HOLLISTER: From the countryside you know. We had around 200 I would say, maybe more some years. Some years more than others.

MKF: And what time did school start in the morning?

MRS. HOLLISTER: School started in the mornings at eight thirty and the last bell rang at three thirty. Of course the teachers didn't leave then. Oftentimes I was out there until six o'clock catching up with, you know, working-office work and preparing things for the next day. You brought things home, too, because I stayed up at night grading papers. Sometimes I had 3 or 4 or 5 sets of papers to grade.

MKF: Now, there was no cafeteria.

MRS. HOLLISTER: There was no cafeteria. Children brought their lunches, and those who were near enough went home for lunch. But, Dr. Jones wife, Elvira, had charge of some social services that had to do with the schools and so she got fruit for the children, mostly

apples, and they would have that added to their lunches. You remember that, Fred?

FRED LATHAM: Um huh. I certainly do.

MKF: Did you give out pencils and tablets? I remember they did that when I went to Ghent School. We were issued two tablets a year and two pencils a year.

MRS. HOLLISTER: I think so.

MKF: And if I'm not mistaken we had to rent our books. We paid a book fee, we didn't buy.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Paid a book fee. They were not owned by the children. You paid a book fee and you received your books.

MKF: And there was no gymnasium.

MRS. HOLLISTER: No gym. We would take the children outside, you know, for calisthenics or something like that or play or something. There was no gym.

MKF: And no physical education teacher.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And no phys ed teacher, no. But, we did have music and we put on perfectly beautiful operettas. You remember it?

FRED LATHAM: Yes I do.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And we had a stage upstairs with rooms that the children could change their costumes in. The mothers got the costumes or made them themselves and they were beautiful. We put on some beautiful productions for the PTA! Remember?

FRED LATHAM: Um huh.

MKF: Your school at Riverside was a twin to the school I attended

in Ghent. I remember the large auditorium.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Right, the auditorium was large. And once a week we had a general assembly.

MKF: Yes, we did too.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And the children had opening exercises. We had prayers in the school that day and in the individual rooms if they so desired, because we felt, and I still feel, that it is necessary to start a day with something that is beneficial to all.

MKF: We did the same thing at Ghent. We started with a prayer and then the Pledge of Allegiance. Every day!

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's what we did every day. Then, not only that, but, we sang patriotic songs, we instilled in children a love of America and how important it was to honor your flag and honor your country and become worthwhile citizens of this wonderful land of ours.

MKF: I wish we were still doing that today.

MRS. HOLLISTER: It's a mistake.

MKF: I agree with that.

MRS. HOLLISTER: That was a great mistake. Everyone needs some superior being that they can get example from. I would like to read a poem that expresses my feeling about teaching. Would that be all right?

MKF: It would be perfectly fine.

MRS. HOLLISTER: It's called a "Teacher's Prayer" and it was written by James Metcalf. But it expresses my philosophy of teaching and what I have tried to do for my pupils through the years loving

every minute of it; the bad times, the good times, the fun times - all of it. We did have fun times, Fred.

FRED LATHAM: We sure did.

MRS. HOLLISTER: (Reads poem)

"I want to teach my students how to live this life on earth,
To face the struggles and the strife and improve their worth.

Not just the lesson in a book or how the rivers flow,
But how to choose the proper path wherever they may go.

To understand eternal truth and know the right from wrong,

And gather all the beauty of a flower and a song.

For if I help the world to grow in wisdom and in grace,
Then I shall feel that I have won and I have filled my place.

And so I ask your guidance, God, that I may do my part,

For character and confidence and happiness of heart."

MKF: Oh, that's lovely. That is just lovely.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And then after Jack, my husband, died, I went back to school because I had been out of school ten years and I did not feel it fair to those children not to have the very up-to-date best methods of teaching. So I went back to East Carolina for a summer session and then I had a fifth grade at Brinson. I enjoyed my years there. I really did. They were nice years and productive years, 'cause you grow with children. You really do. I feel like that they have given me more than I ever gave them. Then I took night courses from East Carolina. I went one year to the University of North Carolina

at Chapel Hill. I went one year to Columbia University to start on my Masters. I didn't finish. But my years at Brinson - we had a good school, a wonderful school, and cooperative parents there. And of course it was during the time that I was teaching at Brinson that the schools were integrated. We did not have a lot of trouble with integration. The children's attitude toward respect for authority, respect for teachers, respect and regard for their school and pride in it, had not fallen by the wayside. So I missed a lot of the things that are happening today in the schools, which to me is a tragedy.

I think it goes back to the home. And I know that, because we had the same situation. It takes two today to make a living. But character and self-discipline and respect have to be taught from the cradle.

MKF: Yes, they do.

MRS. HOLLISTER: The schools cannot do it all, and by example parents must help

MKF: Everything starts at home.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And to me, the tragedy of this country is that the family is not a close-related family as it was when I was growing up, when you were growing up, when you were growing up.

MKF: That's true.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And it has its affect on the children.

MKF: It is not a cohesive unit anymore.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Not anymore.

MKF: Well, Mrs. Hollister, talking about this, and again I want to go back to Riverside, did you have a PTA?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Yes! We had an active PTA!

MKF: Okay. So they gave you lots of support.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Lots of support! We had a very active PTA; interested in community things, interested in that school. I had all the support I needed. And we did from the very beginning when I first went there.

MKF: Riverside was part of the New Bern City Schools.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Riverside was a part of the New Bern City Schools.

MKF: And your supplies and everything were furnished by the city.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Furnished by the city. Right.

MKF: And you were paid by city or state or however that went.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Right.

MKF: At that time, did you make home visits? Were home visits necessary in the Riverside School?

MRS. HOLLISTER: We did make some home visits but they were not required. If anything happened out of the ordinary, I went to see the mothers and fathers to talk to them and to tell them what I thought, with their help, we could do to help that child.

MKF: But you had such good parent support that you saw parents often.

MRS. HOLLISTER: We saw them. You know, they came to school. They came to school when there were things put on for the school; assembly programs and different things. They were there, except those who lived far away and could not get there.

MKF: Right. Now what about discipline of your students? How

did you discipline students?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Well, we were allowed to punish the children. We were allowed to punish the children. And if need be, I paddled them.

MKF: Was this a paddling on the hand or a paddling on the behind?

MRS. HOLLISTER: On their rear.

MKF: On their rear.

MRS. HOLLISTER: With one of those little paddles that you get, the ping pong paddle.

MKF: I see. Okay.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Not hard, but just to let children know. And sometimes one blow to their rear can settle things down in a hurry.

MKF: Yes it can. (laughter)

MRS. HOLLISTER: It clears the atmosphere.

MKF: It certainly does. (laughter)

MRS. HOLLISTER: And I do not think that people who love children and love teaching are going to hurt any child. You think too much of your responsibility to help children. You feel too strongly the love that you have for all children.

MKF: What offenses would have to occur before you would send a child to the principal; or before, when you were a principal, what would have to happen before a teacher would send a child to you?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Well, disrupting classes, you know, fighting on the school green.

MKF: Okay. And at that time, did you suspend children from school?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Now, we didn't do that at Riverside. If that had to be done, I took it to the superintendent.

MKF: Who was Mr. Smith.

MRS. HOLLISTER: I took it to Mr. Smith and discussed it with him, and then he decided what should be done.

MKF: I see. Was there a truant officer at that time, or if children were late, was it up to the teacher to contact the parents to find out why?

MRS. HOLLISTER: At that time I don't believe we had a truant officer. We did not. The teachers, you know, found out. Most of the time if the children were sick, they would call us and tell us if the children were sick. Now I know my children in the fifth grade, and they used to tease me about it. See, a lot of them could go home for lunch.

MKF: Like Fred could be going practically across the street.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Yes. And then on the way back they'd take a side trip and maybe take a swim in the river. (laughter)

MKF: (laughter) Did you ever do that, Fred?

FRED LATHAM: HMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!!

MRS. HOLLISTER: So when I found out about it, I got after my children about it. I said, "You know, you are my responsibility and I don't want anything to happen to you. So, I think it would be better for you to wait until after school and you get home with your mothers and fathers before you do that." And they said, "Well, you're just chicken as far as we're concerned." I said, "That's true." (laughter)

MKF: (laughter) Well, if they're suppose to be in your classroom and they aren't and something happens...

MRS. HOLLISTER: I know.

MKF: Yes, it's a big responsibility.

MRS. HOLLISTER: It's a big responsibility.

MKF: Now, for needy children, I'm sure all the children didn't come from families like Fred's or mine or your's.

MRS. HOLLISTER: No. The needy children, those who had clothes that were too small, would help us with those and sometimes we would share, you know, lunches, things like that for children who needed it. And then I think there was some things, apples I know were furnished to children who didn't bring any lunches, and sometimes the children who did bring lunches shared with those children. So it was teaching children, a really nice thing to do, to share with others.

MKF: Did you find that you at times had to buy clothes or things for children?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Oh sure. I didn't mind that. Not at all.

MKF: How did the parents react when you'd go to their homes...

MRS. HOLLISTER: Did that?

MKF: Uh huh, with these clothes or whatever it happened to be?

MRS. HOLLISTER: I never let them know, you know. I said so and so's child has grown out of these clothes and they're perfectly good and it's nice for someone to have them to wear.

MKF: So teachers did a lot of that.

MRS. HOLLISTER: They did and they didn't mind it. Everyone of

us.

MKF: Margaret Willis has said the same thing.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Everyone of us did the same thing. And, if my children needed supplies and they didn't have them, I bought them. I bought books.

MKF: Yes.

MRS. HOLLISTER: If they needed some particular thing that I thought the whole class, you know, needed, and the money was not available, I bought it. I didn't think anything about it. The children needed it so I bought it.

MKF: So you bought it. Now, Mrs. Hollister, what year did you come to New Bern?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Now that I don't know really. I think I came in 1929.

MKF: So at that time there were eleven grades in school, weren't there, in 1929? And how long was your school year? Was it eight months or nine months?

MRS. HOLLISTER: It was nine months. We had nine months. But I was teaching here during the Depression.

MKF: How did the Depression affect the schools as far as supplies and things?

MRS. HOLLISTER: The supplies were limited. We stayed after school, all of us, and helped with rationing sugar, gasoline. You know the booklets and everything that were given out at that time? The teachers helped do it.

MKF: During the Depression?

MRS. HOLLISTER: During the Depression when things were rationed.

MKF: I didn't know things were during the Depression.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Yes they were, cause we stayed and helped. Sugar was rationed, gasoline was rationed. Because I know that I rode the bus home to Pikeville, and I felt like I should have an interest in the bus company. (laughter) I taught school for seventeen years before I had a car, almost. Then my father gave me the down payment on the car and I paid the other by the month. I'll have to tell you this because it's funny to me, he wanted me to be a lawyer and he brought these law books home for me to read. I came home and I said, "Daddy, I have a chance for a teaching job", and he said, "You really want to teach, don't you?" I said, "I always have wanted to teach." He said, "Well, if that's what you want, do it and do a good job, but you'll starve to death. But know that you can always come home." (laughter)

MKF: Daddy's are wonderful like that, aren't they?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Aren't they. And, honey, I went home. I didn't get a summer job. I went home and stayed home every summer.

MKF: Because you were only paid for eight months.

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's right. We were paid for the time we were here and so I went home every summer and loved it and enjoyed it.

MKF: Now tell me, how long did you live with the Barden's?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Four years.

MKF: And then where did you go?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Then I lived with different friends. I lived with Mrs. Davenport one year. You remember her?

FRED LATHAM: Yes I do.

MRS. HOLLISTER: She had all of the teachers. You see, in Riverside, the people in Riverside took the teachers in for lunches.

Mrs. Davenport had a rooming house and she had lunches. Mrs. Reagan, right next door to the school, fed us for many years. Mrs. Herrington fed us for many years. They were lovely to us. They really were.

And when we couldn't find anyone, we took our lunches to school like the children did. But most of the time the people of Riverside took us in and gave lunches to six teachers.

MKF: Wasn't that nice?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Wasn't that lovely? I'll always have a grateful heart, a big heart, that goes out to Riverside. I love it to this day.

MKF: It's just a nice, nice place to live and grow up.

MRS. HOLLISTER: It's the nicest place to grow up. The nicest place to live and for children to grow up in. Don't you agree with me?

FRED LATHAM: I agree with you. Very fine.

MKF: For the record, Fred grew up in Riverside on National Avenue. Well, Mrs. Hollister, let me ask you, when did you meet Mr. Hollister?

MRS. HOLLISTER: He was a lawyer. He was in Washington, D.C. and he was with the United States Government with the farm program as a lawyer.

MKF: I didn't know he was a lawyer.

MRS. HOLLISTER: He was a lawyer. He never gave up his, what do I want to say, he never gave that up really. He always belonged to the legal profession and all that. But his mother wrote him that his father was ill and that he should come home and so he came home to take over Hollister and Cox and put it on its feet again.

MKF: Now what type business was that?

MRS. HOLLISTER: That was the coal yard. That was coal. Mr. Hollister, Sr. sold coal. He and this friend of his went into coal business way, way long time ago, Percy Cox. That's why it was called Hollister and Cox. Percy Cox died, so Mr. Hollister, Sr. continued and the business was going down because he was ill, so Jack came home. Jack was a better salesman. He was a wonderful salesman. So he put that business back on its feet.

MKF: Did they sell anything besides coal?

MRS. HOLLISTER: When he came back home he started a little paper business of his own.

MKF: He sold paper bags.

MRS. HOLLISTER: He sold all kinds of paper products to grocery stores and to all kinds of things.

MKF: That's when I first met Mr. Hollister, when he sold paper bags to daddy at the bakery.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Uh huh. But he sold rolls of paper. He sold all kinds of paper products; paper cups, paper something. And he did it, when he went in the business we were married, he said, "I'm thinking

about it because I think we need something that will not be dependent on the weather." The paper business is just as dependent on the weather as the coal business.

MKF: Now where was his office?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Hollister and Cox was at the lower part of Craven Street.

MKF: Down on the river?

MRS. HOLLISTER: It was not on the river. You know where Bengel had their sheet metal works down there? It was, let me see, where the Sheraton is now, is what up about a block. Wasn't it, Fred?

FRED LATHAM: It was on Craven Street and the block that goes into the Sheraton area now on the right. About the second or third building on the right.

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's right.

FRED LATHAM: It was an old flemish bond.

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's right.

FRED LATHAM: Old, old building.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And there was a spur track that brought the coal, you know, through there which the city took up after Hollister and Cox was closed. Because, after Jack died I could not, you know, carry on with that. I had no knowledge of anything about down there. Now his little paper business, I did. I kept books for him.

MKF: Now was his paper business located at the coal yard?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Right in the same office. But I kept the paper business books. Janet Hollister and Miss Albritton, Addie Lou

Albritton, who was there forever, kept the books about the coal business and dealt with that entirely.

MKF: Now Janet was Jack's sister.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Janet was Jack's sister.

MKF: And he had another sister.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Sophie Bagg, and Curtis Bagg was his brother-in-law, and Jack Bagg's mother and father.

MKF: Right. Now what was Jack's (Mr. Hollister, Jr.) mother's name?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Sophie Jones Hollister.

MKF: I just wanted that in for the record. And when were you all married?

MRS. HOLLISTER: We were married in 1944 in St. Stevens Episcopal Church in Goldsboro. That's where I was affiliated most of my life.

But there was a little mission church built practically in our backyard at home, and then of course, we went there to the little mission church.

Except sometimes, we would still go to St. Stevens. But that's where I grew up, in St. Stevens Episcopal Church in Goldsboro.

MKF: And after you all were married, you came to live in this lovely home, the Hollister Home.

MRS. HOLLISTER: I came here and lived with Jack, lived with all of them here. No, we had an apartment out on Neuse Boulevard at first. You know those apartments?

MKF: Oh, the New Bernian. At that time they were the New Bernian Apartments.

MRS. HOLLISTER: They were the New Bernian Apartments.

MKF: Now the Carolina Club Apartments.

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's right. We had one of the first apartments out there. We lived out there until Miss Sophie died. We were married in August and she died in December. Janet and Mary Jones lived here with Mr. Hollister, Sr. until Janet got married, her first marriage. She married Tom Nelson from Washington, North Carolina. Her second marriage was to Brad Bradshaw from Wilmington, North Carolina. Then she left, and Mary Jones went back to California cause she was in the Red Cross.

MKF: This is the Mary Jones that Eleanor Carr has told me so much about, her Aunt Mary Jones.

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's right. And she was a wonderful person. A wonderful person! So no one was here to come. Janet was living in Washington. Sophie and Curt had their own home and they did not want to leave. Jack said we would come down here. Well, Miss Sophie had always said to me, "I want you and Jack to come here and live with us and we'll make an apartment upstairs", and that's what they did. They made an apartment upstairs, a two bedroom apartment. Jack and I came down here to live with Pop until he died, and then we bought the house from Janet and Sophie. The apartment has been wonderful, because after Jack's death I had friends living with me only. First ones who lived with me were Ken, your neighbors out there, Kenny and...isn't that awful. You know who I'm talking about.

FRED LATHAM: I think so. About where did they live in Riverside?

MRS. HOLLISTER: The Hudnell's. Lived right next door to Agnes and Hap. Hilton Hudnell.

FRED LATHAM: Hilton and Jean.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Hilton and Jean lived here and little Kenny lived here when he was little. The three of them lived here until their house out there in Trent Woods was built and enjoyed it. I loved that little boy. He used to say when they moved out there, said, "Mama, let's go back to Virginia's and live." (laughter) Wasn't that cute? And then I had Dot Hoskins who was music director in the whole of Craven County, and her father lived there for several years. And then my dear friend, Annie Kinsey Whitford, lived there twenty-two years. So I've been fortunate.

MKF: You were living at Miss Annie's when she lived on Craven Street when I first met you.

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's right.

MKF: And you were upstairs in that large front room.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Front room.

MKF: And I think you were sharing a room with...

MRS. HOLLISTER: Two other girls.

MKF: Uh huh. And one was...

MRS. HOLLISTER: Virginia Cowper.

MKF: Virginia Cowper who now lives in Kinston. I remember that.

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's right. And we loved living with Annie. It really was. She really had the joy of living.

MKF: She certainly did.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And gave of herself.

MKF: She certainly did.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And I miss her like everything.

MKF: I know you do. We'll have to find you a nice person for upstairs.

MRS. HOLLISTER: You know, I'm not going to rent the upstairs. I'm gonna fix that apartment for my grandchildren.

MKF: Yes.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Holly is 17 and Tyson will be 14 and Cooper will be 12. I can't believe it.

MKF: Time does fly.

MRS. HOLLISTER: They're growing up.

MKF: Um huh. Well, Mrs. Hollister, I want to get you back in the school business. When you taught at Brinson...

MRS. HOLLISTER: I had fifth grade.

MKF: Fifth grade. That was a county school, is that right?

MRS. HOLLISTER: And that was Craven County.

MKF: Craven County. And New Bern City Schools and Craven County were separate.

MRS. HOLLISTER: They were not together. Bob Pugh was Superintendent of Craven County Schools and he was a wonderful superintendent.

MKF: Who were some of the people you taught with over there?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Well, when I first went over there, Mr. Vinci was in school. He was the principal of the school.

MKF: How do you spell that?

MRS. HOLLISTER: V i n c i. He was Italian.

MKF: Oh, okay.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Bill Rivenbark was over there, and Jimmy Shine was over there, and Helen Shine.

MKF: Well, they must have been just fresh out of school.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Not at that time. I'm talking about during the time that I was there because I can't remember year from year who was there.

MKF: I see.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Let me see. Another principal was, Celia Willis who was principal over there many years. An excellent principal.

MKF: Were you ever principal at Brinson?

MRS. HOLLISTER: No. Mr. Woodard was principal over there. At that time there were seven grades over at Brinson when I first went over there. Mr. LeGette was principal over there.

MKF: How do you spell his name?

MRS. HOLLISTER: L e G e t t e. I said Mr. Woodard, Mr. Vinci, Mr. LeGette, and Celia.

MKF: Mrs. Hollister, do you remember if the county teachers and the New Bern City School teachers were paid the same or were the county teachers paid better?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Now that I do not know. I don't know about that.

MKF: Okay. I wondered if there was any difference in the pay schedule.

MRS. HOLLISTER: I don't know.

MKF: Working for the City of New Bern, as you did at Riverside, did you have a retirement plan? I mean, were you under the city. Well, the city didn't have a retirement plan then.

MRS. HOLLISTER: No.

MKF: Were you under the state?

MRS. HOLLISTER: State retirement plan.

MKF: The state retirement plan. At Brinson Memorial did you find, because that's more rural, or was at that time in that area, more children that needed help with clothes, food, things like that?

MRS. HOLLISTER: No. About the same I would say. And of course after the children were integrated, there was more needed.

MKF: Talking about integration, did you feel that when integration came about that the black students had had as good an education as the whites? Do you feel that they were on a par with the white children?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Now, that, I think, goes back to the home, because a lot of the black children didn't have in their homes books, newspapers, things that so many of the other children did have that would give them a broader view and a broader sense of world knowledge and what was going on. Some of those children, some of them had very little. So we had to bring those children up to the other children. It was an uphill struggle but it was done. It was accomplished.

MKF: Mr. Booker has told us in his interviews that when he was at West Street School that they never received any new books, they

got the used books from the New Bern City Schools, and that a lot of the children came, even way back then in the thirties when he came, from a single parent home and were disadvantaged children. So I just wondered how it affected...did you have to, in school, lower your grading level to accommodate the integration or could you keep your grading level as it was when it was all white?

MRS. HOLLISTER: I tried to keep the grading level as it was, because I think that that is a mistake. You should pull people up to a higher level, not go down to their level. I'm very firm on that regard. And I think a mistake has been made in textbooks, because some of the textbooks that I used when I first went to Brinson were so much better than the textbooks when I retired.

MKF: We were told, or I was told, at the high school when integration came about, they had to lower their grading for about three years before the students could catch up and then they put it back up where it was. Which I agree with you, I think it's wrong.

MRS. HOLLISTER: But anyway, I know, to give those children in high school that that was necessary. Because, you see, in the fifth grade I wouldn't have to do that, even in the first grade. Because Lottie Pugh was teaching in the first grade. Agnes Ey was in the third grade, you know, out there.

MKF: Oh, I certainly do know Agnes. Uh huh.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And Peggy - what's Peggy's married name now? Lives right across the street from the school and still lives there.

FRED LATHAM: Holton.

MRS. HOLLISTER: She was Peggy Holton, that's right.

FRED LATHAM: She was Pigott.

MRS. HOLLISTER: She was Peggy Pigott, and now what's her married name.

FRED LATHAM: I'm trying to think what it is.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Is it Williams?

FRED LATHAM: I don't remember.

MRS. HOLLISTER: 'Cause she's been married since I left Brinson.

FRED LATHAM: She was married to Carl Edward Pigott and he died.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Right. I taught him in the fifth grade. Bright, bright, bright! And he never found himself, Fred. He never did. That breaks your heart.

MKF: Yes. Talking about that, did exceptionally bright children stand out? Were they quiet and it just showed up in their work assignments or was it in their personality?

MRS. HOLLISTER: In some. Now some had, you know, an outgoing personality, because I taught a lot of bright children. Oh my I taught a lot of bright children!! And some of the parents would come to me and say, "Do you think she can skip a grade?", and I said, "Scholastically, yes. I would not advise it, because emotionally, no."

MKF: Right.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And it's bad for children when they are pushed ahead, you know, and associating with children older when they are

really not emotionally equipped to handle situations that arise. So I said I'd rather they be way beyond and let me give them extra work to do, and I did.

MKF: That was going to be my next question, did you give extra work.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Yes! Extra projects, extra things that they could do, that would make them, you know, feel like that they had something to challenge them rather than just being in an ordinary group.

MKF: Well, Mrs. Hollister, when you were teaching at Riverside and also in the early days of Brinson, did you have summer school for students who flunked?

MRS. HOLLISTER: I never taught the summer school. We did have summer sessions, but I never taught the summer sessions.

MKF: I knew we had it at Ghent School and I just wondered.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Right.

MKF: And they still had it at Brinson?

MRS. HOLLISTER: They had it at Brinson.

MKF: Do they still have summer school now or has it been discontinued?

MRS. HOLLISTER: I don't know. I don't know whether they do or not, whether it's discontinued or not.

MKF: I just wondered. As I remember it, if you flunked, if a student flunked, then you had to go to summer school if you wanted to go up with you grade.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Right. Right. And make up that work.

MKF: And make up.

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's right.

MKF: Do you happen to remember if parents had to pay for that summer school or was it free?

MRS. HOLLISTER: I don't remember.

MKF: I didn't remember either.

MRS. HOLLISTER: I don't remember. But I think that they had to pay because I think there were certain teachers in the school who did it for summer work.

MKF: Right. Yes, 'cause you were paid for the eight months.

MRS. HOLLISTER: You were paid for the eight months and a lot of teachers had to find work for summer to make up for missing.

MKF: That's right. Will Pittman used to paint the school buildings he told me. (laughter)

MRS. HOLLISTER: Well, it's true.

MKF: Yes, he did.

MRS. HOLLISTER: You needed to find a summer job if you had no place to go. Fortunately I could go home.

MKF: You didn't have to worry. Well, let me ask you about World War II? What was New Bern like during the second world war?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Busy. People trying to help out. And of course the servicemen were close by, and everything was done. There was a USO down on Union Point where the clubhouse was and they had dances for the boys at the clubhouse and they would come. And, you know, we all dated. I declare, they used to say, "Annie's house was the

dating bureau." (laughter)

MKF: (laughter) I'm not surprised.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And we all had lots of fun. I know Genevieve's mother would go down all the time. Genevieve Tolson, Genevieve Dunn's... Huh?

FRED LATHAM: Florabelle.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Florabelle. Loved to dance! Young enough, and she would dance. And they would all serve things for those boys, you know, and try to help them and do things to help them before they went abroad.

MKF: Was there rationing during the war?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Yes. I told you. We helped out with it. Sugar was rationed and gas was rationed. I still had to ride the bus, you know, because I had to get out to school.

MKF: Right. I remember black-out curtains. I do remember that. Or, all the blinds had to be closed and the draperies closed. No lights could show.

MRS. HOLLISTER: The blinds had to be closed. No lights.

MKF: Of course I was young then but I do remember things were rationed.

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's right.

MKF: But it really didn't effect me as a child. I grew up in it, in the Depression and the war, so I didn't know anything different.

MRS. HOLLISTER: I know.

MKF: I didn't know any other way of life.

MRS. HOLLISTER: I know when we were little growing up, when we were little and the first world war came along, you know the Red Cross had you doing, had the young people doing things. We would go downtown and all meet and roll bandages and do things for the Red Cross, as a child.

MKF: Did they do that here in New Bern?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Now, I don't know about that here in New Bern.

MKF: Did the Red Cross have young people involved during the second world war here in New Bern? Do you remember?

MRS. HOLLISTER: I don't remember that. I'm sure they did. I'm sure they did.

MKF: I know we had war bonds.

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's right.

MKF: At Ghent School we had stamp day once a week during the war. Stamps were ten cents each and you could take in a dime or fifty cents or a dollar. We'd give it to our teacher, the teacher would buy our savings stamps and give them to us and we'd lick 'em and put 'em in a book.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Right.

MKF: This is true?

MRS. HOLLISTER: It's true. You didn't dream it. That's true.

MKF: And I can remember asking daddy for a dollar a week so I could have ten stamps.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Isn't that something.

MKF: Um huh. And then when I filled my book, he kept them.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Right.

MKF: It had to be eighteen dollars and something that eventually matured into a twenty-five dollar bond.

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's right. You filled the book.

FRED LATHAM: \$25.75.

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's right. That's what it was.

MKF: I'm so glad that I brought this up to you so you can corroborate that.

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's true. Honey, a lot of things, a lot of things, a lot of interesting things, have happened in my lifetime. Really.

MKF: Well, tell us some of them.

MRS. HOLLISTER: For instance, travel by plane, you know, automobiles, roadways done, TV, improvement in all means and manner of communication. It's just been wonderful to live through it and see it.

MKF: It's been an exciting time to live.

MRS. HOLLISTER: An exciting time to live.

MKF: Yes, it really has.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Even the trains. The trains used to come through Pikeville, long cars, and they were all in there and they're all electric - burning coal.

MKF: And then, they burned wood. Well, Mrs. Hollister, is there anything else you would like to tell us about schools, about teaching school at Riverside or Brinson Memorial?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Well, I'll always feel this way about the school situation - it's a wonderful profession, but it's like anything in life, you get out of it what you put in it. And I have certainly been grateful for my years in the school systems. They really have been enjoyable and beneficial to me, because I think children give to you more than you give to them. You hope not. You hope you're going to teach some to live a good life and a worthwhile life and a happy life.

MKF: Teaching is a very noble profession. I've always felt that.

MRS. HOLLISTER: I think you really and truly have to love to teach. I really do.

MKF: And you have to love children.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Um huh. I really do.

MKF: You certainly don't go into it for the salary.

MRS. HOLLISTER: No. No, you don't.

MKF: (laughter) Not at all.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And yet today, they do real well.

MKF: Yes they do.

MRS. HOLLISTER: They really do. They do real well today. And they deserve it because there are many long hours. And you do not leave your work behind when you leave the school, you take it with you. Ask Annie. Because, she had a little dressing room connected to the bedroom and the other girls would get up early, of course they would for they were secretaries and they had to go down to Cherry Point and they had to go out to the hospital, and I would be grading papers at one o'clock at night.

MKF: I remember that little dressing room.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And I would sit in there when they were in bed with the lights off and grade papers until I finished because the children had to have those papers the next day or they would have forgotten the correction. And there were plenty of them to grade.

MKF: (laughter) In all subjects. Well, now let me ask you about New Bern. What was New Bern like when you came in 1929?

MRS. HOLLISTER: It was like Williamsburg used to be. It was lovely and quaint. And, you know, mother brought me down here with my grandfather, Papa. Papa was a character.

MKF: And what was his name?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Benjamin Hawkins Tyson. He was fifteen years old and on a hunting trip in Charleston, South Carolina when he heard the first shot fired over Fort Sumter.

MKF: Oh really?!

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's right. He was fifteen years old, six feet-three. So he was always a rebel. (laughter) He was always an inventor. So, he told a story about his age and joined right down there. Went through the whole war. His mother and father were dead. He had a guardian who took care of him. His mother and father had, they were not wealthy but they were comfortably fixed. So he went through the four years of the war with his manservant, Uncle Ned, who stayed right by him. And of course when the war was over he had nothing. Every bit of the money, the Confederate money, was not worth two cents with a hole in it. And he said he didn't know who looked worse, Uncle

Ned or himself. Then Papa went into the real estate business. Then he married Virginia Lee Kennedy from Washington, North Carolina and they lived in Wilson for awhile. It was when I came to New Bern that I learned that my ancestors were, from both sides of the house, members of the Provincial Congress here.

MKF: Oh, how interesting!

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's right. One was Steven Lee and one was William Person, and both were in the Congress here. And of course Thomas Person, daddy was a direct descendent from him, gave Governor Tryon a fit in the western part of the state. You know he was a rebel too. The Persons were rebels. They thought. They did their own thinking. They made their own decisions and they were not influenced by anyone.

MKF: Well, now, you were talking about your mother bringing you to New Bern to teach school.

MRS. HOLLISTER: I was telling you about my grandfather.

MKF: And your grandfather.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And he had two dear friends here in New Bern that I met that day. One was Senator Simmons and the other was Mr. Charlie Stith. They were younger than Papa, but he was friends of their's, and I met those two men. And isn't it funny that I was friends with, and Sis's daddy, Mr. Foy. Not her granddaddy. Mr. Foy, her daddy, was a friend of Papa's, a young friend.

MKF: Now he was Mr. Claude Foy, wasn't he?

MRS. HOLLISTER: That was Mr. Claude Foy. That's right.

MKF: It's a small world.

MRS. HOLLISTER: It's a small world. And Sis and I have been friends ever since. Bay and I have been friends ever since, 'cause I was in school with Teeny. I was in school with Florie. Florie and I roomed together at Hattie's. We've been friends every since.

MKF: Now, Teeny you're talking about is Bay McCotter's sister and Florie is Florie Gibbs Dill.

MRS. HOLLISTER: That's right.

MKF: And where was Florie living when you lived with her?

MRS. HOLLISTER: At Hattie's.

MKF: Oh, at Hattie's.

MRS. HOLLISTER: We roomed together at Hattie's.

MKF: I meant to ask you where was Hattie living?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Hattie was living in her home.

MKF: And this is the Dill Home.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And this is the Dill Home on Pollock Street.

MKF: The corner of Pollock and...

MRS. HOLLISTER: The corner of Pollock and Hancock. And Tom was in the fifth grade when I lived with Hattie. The cutest boy that ever was, except my children, to school. (laughter)

MKF: And Hattie Dill taught school for many, many years.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Many years. And she taught at Eleanor Marshall.

MKF: Uh huh, she did. She was a good friend of mother's.

MRS. HOLLISTER: A good friend!

MKF: Um huh. She certainly was.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And a good friend of mine.

MKF: Well, Mrs. Hollister, how has New Bern changed?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Oh my. Well, it has changed, it has grown. And of course it has many retirees who have certainly brought their expertise and a lot to New Bern. A lot of good things and a lot of things that... You know, when a town grows, there's a lot of changes. When I first came to New Bern everybody knew everybody else. You knew everybody.

FRED LATHAM: Right.

MRS. HOLLISTER: You didn't see a stranger on the street and it was just a close community. And when places grow, that closeness is no more.

MKF: I miss that.

MRS. HOLLISTER: I miss it. I miss it terribly.

MKF: I do too. It was wonderful to walk down the street, and you always saw someone you knew.

MRS. HOLLISTER: You always saw everybody. You didn't see anybody, really, that you didn't know.

MKF: That's right.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And it was just wonderful. But now, three-fourths of the people in church you don't know. It's unfortunate. It's just boomed like a mushroom! Exploded.

MKF: It certainly has. (laughter) I want it to quit growing. I'm one of these selfish ones that want it to quit growing. I can't help it, I just feel that way. I want to ask you before I forget it

and I've written it down so I wouldn't, your daughter, Jenny, when was she born and what is her full name?

MRS. HOLLISTER: Her name is Virginia Tyson Hollister, now Carter. She was named for mother and me. She was an anniversary present. She was born on our wedding anniversary.

MKF: How nice!

MRS. HOLLISTER: So, we never had a wedding anniversary, it was always Jenny's birthday. (laughter)

MKF: (laughter) Well, that's okay.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And Jack adored her! And she adored him! We never had anymore children. I lost one and we never had anymore, which I regretted. I wanted to adopt a child, but the Hollister's, honey, wouldn't allow it, so I never did. And I said, "It is not just borning a child, it's being with them and rearing them."

MKF: Right. You're absolutely right.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Because I felt like all the children that I taught were one-third mine, and I told them that. I said, "You're one-third mine; your daddy, your mother, and me." (laughter)

MKF: Well, you invested a lot of yourself and your time in them. But you're absolutely right about adoption, giving birth does not make you a parent. And I speak from one who knows this because I have a natural child and I have an adopted child.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And you don't know the difference.

MKF: And I don't know the difference, no. You certainly don't.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And I just wanted to adopt a little boy for Jack.

But Mr. Hollister, Sr. said, "You couldn't have given him anything. He's always loved girls." Well, honey, I used to say to Miss Octavia Dunn, I said, "Miss Octavia, I borned Jenny, but she looks like her daddy, she adores her daddy. I'm just so much extra baggage."
(laughter)

MKF: (laughter) He couldn't have done it, you know, without you. You had to be in there too.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Miss Octavia said, "Well, they change in looks, you know."

MKF: But, she still looks like Mr. Hollister I think.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Exactly!

MKF: She really does.

MRS. HOLLISTER: She really and truly does. She is her daddy all over. And just as sweet as he ever was.

MKF: Yes. I remember him so well coming in the bakery.

MRS. HOLLISTER: And had the keenest sense of humor, quiet humor, you know. We had the best time together.

MKF: (laughter) Well, marriage should be fun. Well, Mrs. Hollister, is there anything else that you would like to talk about.

MRS. HOLLISTER: The schools?

MKF: The schools or townlife or friends, activities.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Except, that friends are wonderful and you can't live this life without them.

MKF: That's right.

MRS. HOLLISTER: They mean so much to me. And family.

MKF: I know your church means a lot to you also.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Yes, a great deal.

MKF: Christ Episcopal Church.

MRS. HOLLISTER: Um huh.

MKF: Well, Fred, can you think of anything I should ask or anything you would like to ask?

MRS. HOLLISTER: I want to give you all a co-cola or tea or orange juice or something. What about it? Would you like one?

MKF: Was there anything that you would like to ask, Fred?

FRED LATHAM: You want to ask me anything? Anything else that you can remember about "Little Russia."

MRS. HOLLISTER: "Little Russia" of Riverside. (laughter) Oh lord.

MKF: Fred Latham, for our people who will be listening to this tape or reading the transcript, was a student of Mrs. Hollister's and he got his one and only spanking in school...

MRS. HOLLISTER: From me.

MKF: from Mrs. Hollister. And I think both of you should tell us about that.

MRS. HOLLISTER: I don't remember it, Fred. I know you do.

FRED LATHAM: I remember it.

MRS. HOLLISTER: I know you do. (laughter)

FRED LATHAM: The problem happened out on the...

MRS. HOLLISTER: School yard.

FRED LATHAM: School yard. I was in the fifth grade, so I was

a big boy and these two kids in the second grade were nagging me for something. I can't remember what it was now, but they kept sort of "Yah, yah, yahhing" me and following me around like little puppy dogs, following me around and trying to go around to the big boys side. All of a sudden I got fed up with it and I turned around and whacked both of them with one whip and they started crying. They went back in to the teachers and told on me, and the next thing I know I was, when the recess was over, I was asked to come out of the room by one Miss Virginia Person and she listened to them and she heard that one side. So then she decided, well, we're going home to see your daddy.

He was still at home. This was Dr. Latham. He didn't even come downstairs. Well, we went in the front of the house and my mama opened the door and Virginia explained the problem. My mother, she immediately called upstairs to my father and he came to the head of the stairs and says, "Virginia! You don't have to come over here. You go ahead and take on and you whip him! If he needs it, you whip him!" So she proceeded to take me back to school and back in the fifth grade room and asked me, "All right, now, you lean over that desk", and I did, and then she took her ping pong paddle and she paddled me pretty good.

And I remember it to this day!

MRS. HOLLISTER: I bet you do. (laughter) Bless your heart.
I declare.

MKF: (laughter) Oh! I love that. Well, I think that's a perfect place to end this interview. Mrs. Hollister, I want to thank you so much for letting us come. I have looked forward to this and I have

thoroughly enjoyed it. Well, you're such a sweet, lovely lady and I love you so much anyway, but this has been, really, just a wonderful afternoon for me and for Fred too. Thank you.

MRS. HOLLISTER: I'm so delighted that you could come and delighted that I could be a part of this, because I think what you are doing is really necessary for New Bern.

MKF: We think so too.

MRS. HOLLISTER: I really do. I think it's wonderful. Now, may I get you a coca-cola?

END OF INTERVIEW