

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

HATTIE MURPHY COBB

INTERVIEW 208

This is Dorothy Bryan representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 200. I am interviewing Hattie Murphy Cobb, interview number 208. This interview is being conducted on May 27, 1993. We are at Cobb's Child Care Center, 603 Gaston Blvd.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Hattie, I would like to ask you some things about your personal history. Would you give me your full name please?

MRS. COBB: Yes. My full name is Hattie Murphy Cobb.

DOROTHY BRYAN: And what is the date of your birth?

MRS. COBB: The date is 3/17/24.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Okay. Who were your parents? Their names please.

MRS. COBB: My father was named Joseph Leon Murphy and my mother was named Martha A. Willie Murphy.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What about your brothers and sisters? How many did you have in the family?

MRS. COBB: There was nine of us at my father's death.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Do you remember the names? Could you name all of your brothers and sisters? (laughter)

MRS. COBB: I can name the living ones, but some of them died and I may not remember. My oldest brother Joseph Murphy, is deceased; my oldest sister is Ethel Ruth Fluellen; I am the third one; my younger sister is Janie Murphy Kenyear; my brothers are William Murphy, John Murphy, and the baby brother is Earl Murphy.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Thank you. Give me the name of your spouse and the date of marriage.

MRS. COBB: My husband's name is Charles Issac Cobb, and the date

of our marriage, "I try not to remember that all the time" is October the 2nd.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Do you remember the year?

MRS. COBB: 1949.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Well, we can come back and get that date. You have two children.

MRS. COBB: Um huh, I have two children.

DOROTHY BRYAN: All right. Give me the names of all of them if you like.

MRS. COBB: My daughter is Angelyn Cobb Dixon and my son is Charles I. Cobb, II. I also have two adopted children who are Jeff and Ricky, the second one.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Do these children all live in New Bern?

MRS. COBB: Yes they do.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Angelyn was born in 1950, right? (8/19/50)

MRS. COBB: Yes.

DOROTHY BRYAN: I'm not sure about Charles.

MRS. COBB: Charles was born eight years later (1/18/58).

DOROTHY BRYAN: '58?

MRS. COBB: I think it was '58.

DOROTHY BRYAN: All right. You have grandchildren also.

MRS. COBB: Yes I do. I have five grandchildren.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Would you list their names please?

MRS. COBB: Okay. They are Cheryl A. Dixon, Devontia Richardson who lives with mother, then I have Charles A.Z. Cobb and twin

granddaughters Zaklya and Zalekya Cobb.

DOROTHY BRYAN: The twins belong to...

MRS. COBB: Charles. Four of them belong to Charles.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Charles, and he's also known as "Chuck" probably.

MRS. COBB: Right.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Do you recall the date you came to New Bern?

MRS. COBB: Yes I do. I got married on October 2nd, or 3rd, one (1949). I think it's 3rd. Pardon me for going blank. At this age I go blank on things.

DOROTHY BRYAN: That's okay.

MRS. COBB: In 1949 and came to New Bern the next day after that, which was that Monday. I came to New Bern with my new husband.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Your husband was a native of New Bern.

MRS. COBB: Yes.

DOROTHY BRYAN: And you have lived in New Bern ever since.

MRS. COBB: Ever since, uh huh.

DOROTHY BRYAN: My next question is your reason for coming and you have already given me that reason. Where did you first live when you came to New Bern?

MRS. COBB: I lived at 9.. Cedar St.

MRS. COBB: 16, thank you for helping me, Mrs. Bryan. 916 Cedar Street.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Where else have you lived since you've been in New Bern?

MRS. COBB: I lived there for about a year and a half. My husband

had an old piece of a house across the street from the then present home. After our child was born, I always said that you're suppose to be in a house to yourself when you start having children, and I told him that we were going over there and fix up that old piece of house so we could go over there and start from there. Of course he didn't agree, but I won, as usual, so we went over there and patched it up the best we could until we were able to have it remodeled. So that was right across the street. From 916 we went to 915. We stayed there, oh, how many years? I'm bad on years. But we remodeled that and we lived there for several years I'm going to say. Then we built another home right on the corner from us there, 911 Cedar Street and that's where we're residing now.

DOROTHY BRYAN: So you've lived all of your married life on Cedar Street.

MRS. COBB: Right, all of it.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What did you do before you became involved with child care, Mrs. Cobb?

MRS. COBB: When I first came to New Bern, I started off trying to work at Cherry Point. As I was not able to finish college, I stopped that at Cherry Point and I began substitute teaching. I did that for several years and then I went to the drug store and worked awhile.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Where did you attend college?

MRS. COBB: In Washington, D.C.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Do you recall how long you were at the drug store, and this is Smith's Drug Store?

MRS. COBB: Smith's Drug Store, right. I would say about three or four years. Three anyway, I'm not sure. Just about three. Then I left there, I went to the grocery store and I clerked in there. During this time I was a foster parent. It became so strenuous working and keeping children and getting them to and from school, so then I decided I was just gonna stop and retire and just be a parent. So I began praying. I had built a home and I did not want to rent it, so I began praying asking God to show me what to do with my life, what would He have me to do with my life. Meanwhile, I kept right on doing what I was doing, being a mother to my foster kids, as my other children, one was in college and the other one was finishing high school leaving for college. So God spoke to me one morning at two o'clock. I'd almost forgotten that I'd been praying that prayer. He woke me up at two o'clock as plain as I'm speaking now and said, "Open a day care center."

I jumps up and says, "What?!" Then I thought right quick that I was always told not to question God. So after thinking about hearing the old folks always say don't ever question God, so immediately I said, "Yes, Lord." I said, "If this is what you want me to do, I'll do it."

I said, "If you lead off, I will follow you." So I woke my husband up. I said, "Charles! Charles! Wake up." He jumped up, "What is it?! What is it?!" I said, "God just spoke to me and said open a day care center!" He turned over and said, "Now I know you're a fool!", and he turned over and went on back to sleep. But I could not go to sleep. I just laid there and I pondered over it. So I just got on up and began making preparation to fix breakfast the next morning and

so forth and when day broke I had most of my work done. But as I started right out that morning, I said my prayers and all and asked as, "Lord, I'm stepping out on your faith this morning." So I stepped out and I went on to the Health Department and the Social Services Department to talk with them, not having knowledge of what to do. Every place I would go it seemed that things fell right in place. Everybody said, "Yes, I think that's beautiful. That's wonderful." I went ahead and I called all of the state people in and they went in and looked at the house and they said, "You don't have to do a thing to it. Let's go right ahead. It's beautiful. You want to turn it into a day care center - fine." This was at 724 Browns Avenue behind my house. So I went ahead and I wrote to the state for my license. They were like a little slow sending them to me, so I got in my car and drove to Raleigh and picked them up. In all total, I know I was in this day care business, was less time than a month; going and purchasing my chairs and cots and tables and everything. I said, well, Lord, this thing is moving so fast. I said, this has got to be God's will, and I went on into that. Within about six months I had a capacity then of twenty-four.

It was less time than six months I had overrun. So I said, well now, what am I going to do now? I guess I'm a person that's never willing to stop at anything. So I began wondering where could I get a larger building or what have you. I had bought a lot on the corner of Cedar Street. So I went right on down and I checked with the city about what size building I could build on that lot and began having that built up there. My idea was to close the small one and open the larger

one once I got it finished. When I got it finished, it was a capacity of forty-nine. By the time I got it open, it was filled. So, therefore, I had to stay in both locations. I stayed at that for about seven years. Yes, about seven years in that building. All total, it was about ten years in the both spots there. So then I began, I said, well, what am I gonna do, I've run out of space. I didn't like being in two locations. So I started praying, I said, "Lord, if you will please help me to find a piece of ground big enough that I can build a center large enough that we can go into one building", because I did not like being in two separate buildings; I wanted it to be all under one roof. So I set out to looking for a piece of ground. When I'd find a piece, it'd be so high in price, I said, "Lord, that's all right, you need not bother. This is too high." I'd turn that off and I'd go on and I said, "We'll just stay where we are". Parents just kept calling me about children and room and everything, and I said, "Well, Lord, I guess I'm on again. I'll start looking again."

So, to make a long story short, when I came upon this piece of ground here, I went and talked to the gentleman about it. The price of it was so high til I said, "Well, I'll let you know." So I went on home and I prayed over that and I said, "Lord, show me whether to launch out into that or not." He didn't show me whether or not to, so I went forth. When I got that, I said, well, I'll keep this for a year, the ground for a year, and then I'd build the building on it. Went on home and God spoke to me and says, "Don't wait. Go on to the bank."

I did. I got right up the next morning and went on over there to

the bank just to talk to the man to ask him what would be their procedures of it and if it was possible for me to get money to do this with. I went on over there and started talking with Mr. Thomas. He said, "Mrs. Cobb, you can get any amount of money you want." I said, "Don't tell me that." So he says, "But you can." Said, "The type person you are, you can get any amount that you want." Said, "Just get your blue print. Make your mind what you want and get your blue print and find out how much money it will take and come on back over." So I did. I came on and got the number of the print and got things rolling, went back and it was okayed. So we started building. In less time than four months we had it up and we've been in it ever since. This is our thirteenth year into day care. I call it "God's care", not mine. So it make me do extra to try to keep it going, because I don't want to do anything that's not pleasing in His sight. Each morning as we open our devotion, I remind Him that I'm in His care and I just ask Him to take care of us. In the first year we had run out of space in the building; so last summer we added another classroom.

DOROTHY BRYAN: So, what is your total enrollment?

MRS. COBB: Two hundred and twenty.

DOROTHY BRYAN: I'd like to back up on some things you said earlier. You mentioned that you had foster children, started out with foster children. You cared for them in your home?

MRS. COBB: I did.

DOROTHY BRYAN: How many did you have at the time?

MRS. COBB: At one time?

DOROTHY BRYAN: How many foster children?

MRS. COBB: All total?

DOROTHY BRYAN: Uh huh.

MRS. COBB: The last count, we have had 63 foster children. We had them from infancy - up. I have had as many as five babies in my house at the time, coming straight from the hospital to my home. We'd keep them until they were adopted. It was just a beautiful thing.

I have really enjoyed it. I have gone to church and I'd have six and seven children sprawled off on a pew. Everyone of them mine. They'd call me the "Lady in the Shoe."

DOROTHY BRYAN: Did you have any help with the children when you had that many at one time?

MRS. COBB: Not in my home. Not more than just my children that was there, other foster children. But I was always full of vim, vigor, and vitality, and I never seemed to need any help, so I would just care for them myself. Most of the time I would be working elsewhere also. I kept these children until my third year in day care. They were just bringing me so many they were about to fill my day care center up with foster children. That was about to take its toll with me, twenty-four hours a day with babies. So I decided that I would need to come out of the foster care and just stay into the day care.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Were you "Foster Parent of the Year" once?

MRS. COBB: Yes I was.

DOROTHY BRYAN: And what year was that, do you recall? Who gave the award?

MRS. COBB: The Civitan. I can't think exactly, my plaque is in the room somewhere. Those things, darling, I run so fast and do so many things, I don't guess I have room in my brains to store 'em all.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Now, when you moved to the two locations, you said that you had some at the first location. How did you determine which child would be at each location?

MRS. COBB: Whichever one had a spot, that's where I put them. We went from zero to five in both locations. But wherever there was a vacancy, then we would place a child there.

DOROTHY BRYAN: All right, now, you have told us already about the number of children. Once you got into the day care business officially, how many persons did you have in your employe at the very beginning?

MRS. COBB: At the very beginning I had five in employment. Course now, that was including myself.

DOROTHY BRYAN: How many do you have now about?

MRS. COBB: We have twenty-four now. That's excluding the family members.

DOROTHY BRYAN: I was about to say, you do have family members involved.

MRS. COBB: Right.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What role does each play?

MRS. COBB: My daughter is the Kindergarten teacher. She was teaching before I went into day care, and so after I started she decided

that she wanted to come and work with me. I told her that I could not and would not be able to afford her, because she had just gotten her Masters. She was teaching then in Maryland. So I told her, I said, "You stay there, honey, because we can't afford you." She says, "Mama, you need me." So the next year she took a leave of absence and came and she says, "I'm gonna work with you one year and if you don't need me, then I can go back to my job." So she came. As she said, I don't know what I would have done without her. So she's been here ever since. Chuck finished college in Maryland and took up accounting. He relocated to California and got himself a job with an accounting firm. He stayed there until he married a girl formerly from here. When he married he went back to California with his wife. He planned to work there two years and he was coming home. I didn't believe that and wasn't worrying about it. So long as he was happy and doing well, that was sufficient. He began calling me telling me, "Mama, you need me." "I do not need you, you stay there with your family!" "But, mama, I know you need me!" So anyway, they decided they were going to move back home. He came in and his idea was to open a business of his own. I told him, I said, "Son, it's not easy opening a business. You stand on the outside and you think mama had an easy task." I said, "But this was God's business. He opened this up with me." I said, "Now, don't think you can go out here and jump in it like that. If you think so you better start saying your prayers and asking Him to show you the right way." Well, anyway, he came on home and he wasn't successful enough to get into a business, which

was understandable. So I said, "Well, you just as well come on in here and work with us until you find a business, you know, make up your mind what you're going to do." So, he's in here and I found out that I really needed him with all this paper work and everything that the government requires of you. So, therefore, he's in here now on the business level. And of course, he's the driver, transports the children some, along with the rest of us, and we're all in here together now.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Where did your children attend college?

MRS. COBB: My daughter, Angelyn, attended college in Raleigh, N.C. at St. Augustine, whichever way they call it. They pronounce it differently. My son attended Morgan State in Baltimore, MD.

DOROTHY BRYAN: So both of your children have fitted in very well with your program.

MRS. COBB: They really have. As a matter of fact, it's incorporated. I incorporated in the beginning and it looks like it has just fitted in well.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Being incorporated, I would imagine that there would be a lot of paperwork.

MRS. COBB: Uh huh. Yes indeed!

DOROTHY BRYAN: Do you have an after school program?

MRS. COBB: Yes I do. We have an after school program and a summer camp program also.

DOROTHY BRYAN: How does the summer camp program work?

MRS. COBB: Well, we try to find as many things interesting and

educational for the six and up children, which requires a whole lot of getting together. We try to keep enough going to keep them entertained and happy as well as educational. We have skating, movies, bowling, horseback riding, we go on field trips, and we have swimming.

Anything that we can find, you know, that's educational for them, we have this going, plus what we do on site, arts and crafts at the center and so forth, which makes them have quite an enjoyable stay.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What about the after school program? How does it work?

MRS. COBB: Okay. We pick up children from the different schools. Sometime the buses bring them in. They get in, then we give them a snack. Then the teacher first helps them with their homework. After they finish their homework, they do arts and crafts and different things here at the center along with going out and playing. They stay until their parents come in to pick them up in the afternoon.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Do you have very many children? Approximately, how many in the after school program?

MRS. COBB: We have about thirty-two children in the after school program.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What about the summer program? How does that usually run?

MRS. COBB: It runs at an all time high. Many times we have to turn some away, but we always have a full program. During last summer we had about fifty-two children in the summer program, plus our regular grades.

DOROTHY BRYAN: How has this program changed over the years that you have been involved? I heard you mention that you have so much paperwork. Do you have more of that than you did before?

MRS. COBB: It gets larger and larger all the time. We've been a non-profit organization. As we started with a minimum amount of work, concerning paperwork. When you go into a non-profit organization, you have a lot of government papers. Every little loop hole that you plan to do or you do do, you got to have it documented.

I thought then that it was, you know, wasn't so bad and I guess it was because I had help on it at that time. Then when my daughter got here, she did a lot of that. We are also with the food program and that calls for a lot of work. We were also certified and that calls for a lot of work. Each year they add on more and more and it really, the paperwork never ceases. The state purchases care from us; and therefore, that requires a certain amount of work, paperwork for every child that we have. So, therefore, the paperwork never ends. It never ends.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Usually it doesn't when you're involved with the federal government.

MRS. COBB: That's true.

DOROTHY BRYAN: I know no two days are ever alike, but generally, what time does the day begin, when does it end, and what is it like in between?

MRS. COBB: Mrs. Bryan, I'm gonna tell you the truth! It never ends I don't think. I try to stay in bed until about four or five

o'clock in the morning. I told you that God spoke to me at two o'clock in the morning. I am always awake at that time of the morning thinking about what I should do and praying and thanking God for the things He's done. I've never been a great sleeper. My day begins every morning at four o'clock, and most time at two o'clock, my eyes are open about every hour on the hour. I look at my clock and I can tell you what time it is. Usually I'll keep my paper and pencil and Bible on my bed and I just leave my light on, and when I think of something I want to do I just get up and sketch it down. My daughter's clock goes off at five o'clock in the morning because we open up at five-thirty, so to be ready at six.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What time are you over here? You're here by five-thirty?

MRS. COBB: By five-thirty this morning.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Now, what time do the children start coming in?

MRS. COBB: At five-thirty some of them.

DOROTHY BRYAN: At five-thirty!

MRS. COBB: If the parents has to be to their jobs at six. We have two parents that's standing here waiting for us at five-thirty in the morning that works at the hospital. They have to be there at six o'clock in the morning to start the breakfast. They're here waiting for us at five-thirty in the morning. So from then it just goes right on through the day.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Is there any specific routine that you follow daily with the children?

MRS. COBB: Well, it is a daily routine. You come in and first in the morning we designate two rooms and we just take care of the children there. Because when we come in, there's about four personnel that gets on duty in the morning. They come in at six and six-thirty.

One will be in the nursery and the other ones will be located in the toddler area, other children will go to the older children's classroom and let them look at videos, play the radio for the smaller ones, music, and entertain them until time for breakfast. The other teachers are coming in. As they come in, each child goes to their own classrooms.

About seven-thirty, we start taking children to the public schools.

We come back from delivering them to school, breakfast is being served here. Breakfast usually ends up about nine or nine-thirty. Everybody would be in their classrooms then when we serve breakfast. Following breakfast, it's devotional time, exercise, and then different things that we do. Every classroom has a lesson plan and it includes inside and outdoor activities. They go for walks and they do their work.

Lunch time starts about quarter to twelve. We try to get it started by quarter to twelve. For the smaller children we start about eleven-thirty, because they begin getting sleepy. After lunch and clean up, it's nap time. They go down for a nap about twelve-thirty or quarter to one until two-thirty. They have a snack between two-thirty and three pm. Then they'll start doing different activities. Our personnel then go to the schools and pick up children and return to the center. From that, after we get them all in, then we start dispersing and taking them home. It just goes on all through

the day.

DOROTHY BRYAN: About what time does the last child leave for home?

MRS. COBB: Sometimes the last one gets away about seven o'clock. If anything happens that a parent is late, it'll be seven-thirty. I have been known to have to take some home with me, cause after those hours, this place is growing on me and I feel like I want to change spots. So, if there's any left, I give the parent a call and say you can pick them up from my home.

DOROTHY BRYAN: I know at one time you also had babysitting hours at night. Do you still do that?

MRS. COBB: I am trying to do away with that. Doctor's orders! I'm getting so young now, so he thinks it's time for a person at this tender age of 69 to start taking it a little bit easier. So I do a little of it, but try not to do very much of it now.

DOROTHY BRYAN: We've talked about the business from the standpoint of activity. Would you describe your building and equipment that you have and the annex?

MRS. COBB: Oh my! Being me, I think it's a lovely building. Now we have nine classrooms in it and a kitchen. Our rooms are set up with tables, chairs, cubbies, cabinets, and sinks. Each classroom has its own bathroom. We have a beautiful hallway. Everything is child appropriate. Maybe it's prejudice, but I just think we have a beautiful facility now.

DOROTHY BRYAN: I think you do too. You have a large area outside

for play space.

MRS. COBB: Beautiful playground. It surrounds the building on the sides. Just the front is out. And each side has play equipment. Each room has a door going out to the playgrounds. I think the playgrounds are set up beautifully. The children just seems to enjoy it and I enjoy seeing them enjoy it.

DOROTHY BRYAN: And the parents, I'm sure, feel the same way.

MRS. COBB: Yes, they do. They say as much.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Have you anything else concerning the business that you would like to speak of that I have not thought to ask about?

MRS. COBB: Mrs. Bryan, I think you've done a beautiful job about covering it all. I won't go into the financial part. I'll just say that if you have God with you all things are possible. Because day care sounds like an easy word, but it is not. It's a hard road to travel. So you have to have God in front of you to do it. There's a lot of need for it now. There's a lot of need for day care. There's a lot of people that would really like to go into it but it is an expensive thing. But it's a beautiful thing. It's hard work. If you're not afraid of work, and a lot of problems, I think it's a beautiful thing. It's a rewarding thing. I can look back and just enjoy. I love all these children. You would think that they were all mine, which they are! When they come in that door they're mine, and I love them all. The staff, I have a beautiful staff. I really think they're very devoted and they love the children, and we just have a wonderful time.

DOROTHY BRYAN: There was one thing that came across my mind just a minute ago. How do you handle childhood diseases? Do you have many children coming down with those childhood diseases, chicken pox?

MRS. COBB: We have been very fortunate. I don't know whether it's the immunizations that they get or what. When we first entered into it, I found that we had quite a few cases of the measles and chicken pox and things like that. But now we don't have as many cases. But what we do about that, you watch them and when you see that they're starting, you notify the parent they have to be out until it clears up. A lot of times parents thinks it's just a rash or something like that and they'll send them on, and by the time they get to you they're really broken out. You get on that phone right quickly and call their parents. We have a special place, in the classroom that we have designated for the sick. If it gets to that point, it's like chicken pox and that so forth. I don't trust the sickly, we take them into the office and hold them until the parent can get here.

DOROTHY BRYAN: So you really haven't had an epidemic.

MRS. COBB: No indeed!

DOROTHY BRYAN: Because in the public school, so often you can go in a classroom and maybe half the class is out from measles or chicken pox.

MRS. COBB: That's very true. We had that this year. It's called schellgosis, an infection; I can't even pronounce the name of it right.

The school system thought they would have to close there were so many children with it. We never even had five cases to even start here.

DOROTHY BRYAN: That's very good.

MRS. COBB: It was very good! But I was doing some real praying. I said, "Well, Lord, if we have to close up, what are we gonna do?" I even went to the bank and there was one teller in there where everybody else was sick. We never became sick, any of the staff. God just blessed us!

DOROTHY BRYAN: That's wonderful and very unusual. You said you came to New Bern in 1949 the day after you were married, which means you've been here as long as you've been married. How has New Bern and your life changed over the years?

MRS. COBB: New Bern has really changed, right in the area that I'm living. Because I remember when I came to New Bern, coming from the country so to speak and supposedly coming to the city, I was stunned when I got here. The houses were so dilapidated. No paved streets.

I moved out here and I said, "Lord, where have I come to?! I better go back out there in the country where I came from", because we were living right beside the highway, so we did have paved highways. I said this place is worse than home, but I said, well, I'm here. But I remember making this prayer when I came here. I stood up in the house which is now 911 Cedar Street. And if it rained, the frogs was all over the place. They were croaking so you couldn't even sleep.

And the place was infested with rats. I said, "Well, Lord, where have I come to?!" There was a pond right on the corner of Cedar Street there where I built my center, the second center, and they were using that for dumping trash, you know, and filling in. They would dump

garbage and everything in there and the rats were everywhere. Before the sun would go down good, you'd hear the rats under the house cutting, coming through up into the house. It'd be nothing to see one about as big as a cat run across the floor. I wasn't afraid of rats, but I don't like to live with them! My husband's godmother, who was just as sweet as she could be, she was scared to death of them. She'd jump up in the chair, hollering and screaming. I had to go to the city and ask them what were they going to do about the rats. They came up and set out rabbit boxes and come and empty them twice a day. This so-called city was just that run down. And if it would come a big rain, you almost have to row a boat to get back on the part behind the house going over to the next street. I remember standing up on that porch one night and I said, "Lord, if I've got to live here, I've got to change this place." I said, "I can't live in any place like this." I said, "I'm gonna fix up all these places if I live here." And you know God has let me do that.

DOROTHY BRYAN: He did. You started out at Charle's home.

MRS. COBB: Right.

DOROTHY BRYAN: And then you have two beside...

MRS. COBB: Two beside his, one on each side. Then I bought the property on the corner where we built our home. I bought the lot behind me where I built the first center. And I bought the lot where they were filling in, where I built my second center.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Well, that one block is all yours.

MRS. COBB: Right.

DOROTHY BRYAN: So that was one way of solving the problem.

MRS. COBB: And the city did pour the streets, at last, after I stayed on their backs. The city said they were unable to pour any sidewalks.

DOROTHY BRYAN: So you poured...

MRS. COBB: I went forth and poured my sidewalks.

DOROTHY BRYAN: I noticed that.

MRS. COBB: You know, down from the other center. I went down to the city and I told them, I said, "I have opened a day care center and I have to put planks down for my parents to walk from the yard out to the street to their cars." And I said, "I'm a tax paying person and I don't see why it has to be!" They said, "Well, Mrs. Cobb, we don't have any funds for sidewalks." So I told them, I said, "Well, I'll tell you what. I'm gonna pour them and you're not going up on my taxes either!" He says, "Well, you know, if you pour it, it would increase your property and it would mean that we went up on tax value."

I said, "Oh no!" He said, "Well, let us think about it." I said, "You better think fast cause I am embarrassed when my parents come in here and have to walk a mud plank to get in and out." So they got right busy. They came up with this plan, they didn't have any money, but they would go in with me if, and made me this offer, they would furnish the labor and I would furnish the cement. I only have to furnish the cement. So I said, "Well, you let me know how much it is cause I want it done now." So they said, "Well, it'll take you a little time, you know, to get your cement." "You find out what it is and

let me know!" He did. I said, "Now, don't wait. Do it now." They went on back and they figured and in a couple of days they called me and told me how much it would cost for the cement. At that time he told me it would take nine hundred and some dollars for the cement to pour that short block there, but they would furnish the labor. I could pay for it, you know, any kind of way, but I would have to have it paid for before they did the work. I said okay. He said, "Just as soon as it's paid for you let me know and we will start work."

I went right back home, got my little saving box and went straight back downtown and counted them out that nine hundred and some dollars.

I said, "Call that city man and tell him that I said it is paid and I want my sidewalk!" They almost had a heart attack. He calls me, "Mrs. Cobb, you done paid for it already?" I said, "I want my sidewalk."

"It was about a piece we'll get to just as soon as I can." I said, "All right. You told me as soon as I paid for it, you'd do it." "But we didn't know it was gonna be so soon." I said, "Well, it's long overdue!" So sure enough, it wasn't quite a week they came up and they started working on it. So they poured that sidewalk. Now they're putting down some on the rest of that neighborhood.

DOROTHY BRYAN: I noticed that. And that's long overdue.

MRS. COBB: Long overdue!

DOROTHY BRYAN: Okay. I have one other thing that I would like to discuss with you. You've already told us what religion means to you and so forth, but I still will ask, what church do you attend?

MRS. COBB: I attend St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church here in New

Bern.

DOROTHY BRYAN: How long have you been a member?

MRS. COBB: I'd been married about a year before I joined there.

DOROTHY BRYAN: So that means you joined about 1950.

MRS. COBB: Um huh.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What has been your involvement with the church?

MRS. COBB: Well, I have been affiliated with most everything except the preaching. I have worked on the different boards; the Woman's Auxiliary, and... I can't recall anything...

DOROTHY BRYAN: Weren't you a member of the Vstry?

MRS. COBB: The Vestry, that's what I was trying to think; the Vestry and the Sunday School, and the altar guild, I'm trying to think of what else was there.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Did you mention the choir?

MRS. COBB: Oh yeah! I didn't mention that. (laughter)

DOROTHY BRYAN: I know that you've been involved in the choir for a long time.

MRS. COBB: Yes, and I'm still in the choir. I enjoy working in the church.

DOROTHY BRYAN: For the number of years that you have been there, I'd say at least 43 years, has the church changed much over the years?

MRS. COBB: Yes it has changed. When I first went there, the church was really in full bloom. There was quite a few members there; in fact, there was a large membership. The members started dying, but, you know, they do die. The Episcopal church is not a church that

people join as frequently as other churches. They died down quite a bit and naturally the church went down a lot. But after we began going down so far, as usual I'm always wanting things fixed up and looking right, so I asked them to let's try to renovate. Of course they began to think that since we were such a small number in members that we wouldn't be able to do it. I said, "But God is able. He said where two or three are joined together, in His name He will grant their request." I said, "So let's do it!" So after a long drawn out membership involvement, you know, with the Vestry and everything, and by the church being in the historical district, there's a lot of things that you have to go through for that. But anyway, after we followed through with it and all, plus it was not leaking but raining in the church, it needed so much work done to it, so I kept praying, "Lord, please let us fix this church." So I sponsored the first kick-off dinner for the restoration of the church. We did a beautiful job on that project, and from there we started out, wondering where in the world we will do next. So finally we got together and we were able to get a loan. I was on the Vestry at that time to restore the church. We decided to sell dinners and something and so forth to keep these payments going on this "loan", but God would have it. They had a sale for the Good Shepherd Hospital and we were able to get enough money off of that to take care of the loan. We have a treasurer, Mr. O. T. Faison, he's a money making man on monies. He invested this money and we were able to, with the interest and all that we got off of that money, we could make our payments on the loan.

DOROTHY BRYAN: That's wonderful.

MRS. COBB: We finished that restoration and had money still left afterwards. So, we got our church back looking good, and of course we're still working on it now. But, it has really changed. Things have really changed. We still have a small membership, but our membership is not much over fifty.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Who were some of the people that were there when you first joined? Some of the older citizens.

MRS. COBB: Oh boy. Okay. Mr. and Mrs. John Powell.

DOROTHY BRYAN: She was the organist for a number of years.

MRS. COBB: Right. Mr. and Mrs., we call her Par John.

DOROTHY BRYAN: John Richardson.

MRS. COBB: Richardson's, they were there. Mr. and Mrs. Jones.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Fred Jones. He had a farm.

MRS. COBB: His family, right. The Robert Boley's were there. Mrs. Boley was there when I came. Oh boy, so many people.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Were Mrs. Carrie Fisher and Dr. Fisher there at the time?

MRS. COBB: Yes, they were there. Names don't come to me too fast. The picture's there, but the name. That's all in getting old, though.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Okay. Mrs. I. H. Smith was still living, Anna Day Smith.

MRS. COBB: Yes, indeed.

DOROTHY BRYAN: But was her husband alive when you joined? Do you remember?

MRS. COBB: Her husband was not alive when I went there. The Rhone's where there. Charlotte...

DOROTHY BRYAN: Okay.

MRS. COBB: Miss Charlotte Rhone and Miss Carrie Rhone. She's a Carrie too. Was she a Rhone? That was Miss Charlotte's sister.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Yes. She married a Smith. One of those sisters, Carrie I think, married a Smith. But there was another one that was still a Rhone. I cannot think of her name.

MRS. COBB: I can't think of it right now either. I guess we remember Miss Charlotte so much because she was head of the welfare department at that time and she was affiliated with so many things. And there's so many more that I could call. The pictures right in my face, but I can't get the names out right now. But they were a very large membership there then of, what you would say the high class people. You know what I mean? (laughter)

DOROTHY BRYAN: Outstanding citizens.

MRS. COBB: And I was just a little pea in shell so much so til some of my girlfriends that I knew they told me, "I don't know how you got in that church, cause they don't have no poor folks in there!" And said, "Cobb, you can't afford to be in that church." I said, "Well, you can bet I'm in there. They got a poor one in there now."

DOROTHY BRYAN: Your husband was already a member of that church, right?

MRS. COBB: Yes he was.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Okay. Well, that was good enough reason to join.

MRS. COBB: Right. That was my reason for joining because I was a Methodist. But since I was changing towns I decided I would go on with my husband because there's not too much difference in the Methodist church and the Episcopal church, so I could very easily join. When I was going to school in Washington, D.C., I attended church at John Wesley. That was a higher Methodist church, which is Episcopal anyway, and so I could very easily adapt to it. I've really enjoyed it.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Well, is there any other topic that we have not covered that you would like to talk about?

MRS. COBB: Well, I can't think of anything now, other than I will say I thank God for everything that He has let me do and I will always give Him the praise for what I have. I have nothing, everything belongs to Him and I thank Him for entrusting it in my hand.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Well, I'd certainly like to thank you. I've enjoyed talking with you, Hattie.

MRS. COBB: Thank you.

DOROTHY BRYAN: When the transcript comes back I'll let you see it.

MRS. COBB: All right, and thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

