

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

WILLIAM ARCHIBALD SHERRATT

INTERVIEW 417

This is Marea Kafer Foster representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 400. I am interviewing William Sherratt, interview number 417. This interview is being conducted on Tuesday, June 30, 1992. We are at 604 West Wilson Creek Dr. in New Bern, Mr. Sherratt's home.

Marea Kafer: Mr. Sherratt, if you'll give me your full name, birth date, birth place, all those nice things.

Mr. Sherratt: My full name is William Archibald Sherratt. I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in Women's Hospital. My father was William Sherratt with no middle initial. My mother was Rachel Dew Sherratt. They were both naturalized citizens of Canada. I have investigated in genealogical outlook their backgrounds and their former homes in Canada. My wife's name is Evelyn McCullers Sherratt. I have two sons; William Edward Sherratt and Thomas Archibald Sherratt. William lives in Raleigh, and Thomas lives in Durham.

MF: What a shame that they don't live near you.

Mr. Sherratt: Sometimes, it's close enough.

MF: I know exactly what you mean. You're right; especially, when they come with the grandchildren.

MR. Sherratt: I have one grandchild, Kim Sherratt Hines. She was married this last year, and she will have been married one year this summer. Kim lives in Cary and is just finishing up in the Wake Technical School on computer technology. She will have her certificate in August.

MF: That will be very nice. Now tell me, when did you come to

New Bern?

Mr. Sherratt: We moved in this house in October of 1959. I built it with a contractor here in town. In this period of time, we were living near Swansboro. At this particular period of time when we moved here, I was working as an engineer at Camp LeJeune. We had a decision to make, because of the schools for the boys, that we would either go possibly towards Wilmington, if I stayed at Camp LeJeune, or we would come this direction. The choice was made. Because a position came open in Cherry Point, that made us come to the New Bern; that is, search in the New Bern area for property. I bought this piece of property and own two lots on the curve here. At the time, there was only one house on this road and it was a dirt road. A very deep rut dirt road, sand road. In fact, we got a letter from the post office department out of Atlanta that said that if the road was not improved that they would stop the postal service to the mail boxes because the road was approaching being impassable.

MF: That's hard to believe in this day and age, isn't it?

Mr. Sherratt: Yes. At that time when we moved in, James Chance was building his home; that is, the one on this side, and others had started building. So, it's starting to open up now. There was one small house here down the street that was owned by a friend of ours that was a veteran. He had a VA loan. And finding this out, we knew that his deed said with the VA loan, required that the road be kept in good condition. So, we thought maybe we would work on that. Unfortunately, this gentleman worked at city hall, and I forget what

position he had, but he had a heart attack and he passed on; so, we couldn't follow that through. By this time, we wrote the owner of the area that owned all the land here. The west side of this street was all woodland.

MF: Who owned it? Do you remember? I know the Coddington's from Charlotte owned...

Mr. Sherratt: Yes, that's who it was. He was from Charlotte.

MF: Is that who it was, Dabney Coddington, Sr.?

Mr. Sherratt: Yes, it was the Coddington area. So, several people along here started talking about getting the road paved. Mrs. Chance; of course, James was in the paving business, and Mrs. Chance and a bunch of people got together and they got up a petition. Then, the owners got together and they got all the signatures with the exception of two. The reasoning being that; I was one of them, they had planned on stopping the paving down at the end of the road here but not tying it into the development on the far end. So, that was one of the things that held back paving; and that was settled. Then, the proposition that was put forth on the petition was that if it would cost, and I forget what the amount was, I believe it was three dollars a front foot or something like this, and we had 200 front feet; but it said "that if you didn't pay this on time, that the group had a lien on your property." So, this type of thing got to me, and this is why I did not sign the petition. I called my attorney and I said, "now, here is what I've got; they want me to sign it, and I have not signed it. What my question is to you, who do I sue if they don't do what

they say they're going to do?" Because the petition said "that the road would be built to the specifications of the highway department and would be accepted by the highway department." Well, having worked with the highway department before, nobody tells them what they're gonna accept. So I said, "I want to know if they don't accept it, who do I sue to get my money back?" My attorney said, "Just hold it, I'll talk with you later." He called me in about a week and said, "I got a piece of paper for you to sign." I said, "what is it?" He says, "it's an agreement with a company here in town that has control over this land that will remit all the money you put into it if they don't get approval." So, that was it. As far as I know, I was the only one that got anything like that. Anyway, they went ahead and paved it, and it worked fine. I was just feeling that I ought to dig my heels in, that's all.

MF: I don't blame you. At this time Trent Woods was not incorporated, was it?

Mr. Sherratt: No. Later on, and I forget the year that Trent Woods went into the water business. The first section went in with, I think, a federal grant of some kind. This piped water on the East side of Wilson creek. Now, there was already water down Trent Woods Drive to several of the larger homes on the river. There was water down there, but there was no water in our area. When Trent Woods got this grant, and they had some money that was excess to their cost, they said, "maybe something could be worked out over here." So, we started another petition and got everybody to sign that whatever it

would cost, and I forget what that was, that they would extend the water to the West side. We got everybody to sign with the exception of one piece of property that would not sign. They said, "they approved putting a main in on Wilson Creek Drive." Then the people on the other side of the street said, "What are we going to do?", so, they get a petition. That's what ended up that they ran the main from the end of West Wilson Creek, on the other side of the road, all the way down to the main that went up on Trent Woods Drive. So, we got city water, and it was a great help.

MF: I'm sure. Very nice. I want to get into your experience and your knowledge of the library. When did you become involved with the library?

Mr. Sherratt: That goes way back. They tell me I've been chairman for twenty-six years. Actually, I don't know the date that I got involved, but I do remember Connie Rabon. Do you know her?

MF: Yes, and I'm trying to remember, with the health department, wasn't she?

Mr. Sherratt: Yes. She was an elderly lady. I got to know her and she was the one that jumped on me. She said, "I want you to agree to work at the library", and she said, "I'm going to work with Livingston Stallings and get you appointed." Livingston Stallings was the one that appointed me as the representative from the county to the library board. Now the way the library board was set up; I think back at that time, there were three appointees from the county and three from the city; because it is a dual operation, city and county, and used to

be fifty percent split down the middle for everything. As I recall, at that time, there were three appointees from the county and three appointees from the city. The library policy was that there would be an appointee from each board; one elected official from the board of commissioners to serve with the library board, and one from the city. So, I was appointed to the board. When I got on it, that's when we were still on New Street in the John Wright Stanly House. That's when things started to pop. Of course Elinor was there, and she knew the whole story; and Mrs. Whitehurst, who was a wonderful lady. She was the vice-chairman at that time. I don't recall the names of all the people on the board at that time.

MF: Was that Mrs. Emmet Whitehurst?

Mr. Sherratt: Yes. She was vice-chairman. From that, we rocked along. That was about the time, whenever it was when they were first started, that the library got a letter from the United States Postal Service. It said, "we are very desirous of getting space for a parking area for the United States Post Office Federal Building there on the corner of New and Middle Street and that we would like to buy your property." At that time, the federal government was still funding monies for library construction. There was still federal monies available. The post office department let us know that if we didn't agree to sell, that they would use legal means to acquire the property. So, that's when we went into the business of planning a new library. The only catch being, what do we do with the one at the John Wright Stanly House? That's when we got the Tryon Palace Commission and Miss

Gertrude to thinking about the John Wright Stanly House, and they did agree to move it. If we sold the property to the United States Post Office Commission, they did agree to move it without cost to us. So there we were with, I think, it was a \$42,000 amount of money for the parking lot. No cost to move the John Wright Stanly House. It was going to be moved. The city and the county agreed to split the cost over the funding that the government gave us. Elinor would be able to give you the information on what the federal government funded. I recall that we did get \$42,000 from the Post Office Department. The federal government did give us a grant of a certain amount of money. They did increase it after we got started because they had some left over that other libraries did not use, so they increased what we got. Anyway, the cost of the building at Johnson Street was about \$320,000.

MF: That was a lot of money for that time.

Mr. Sherratt: Yes. It was built on the corner of the street where the Pure Oil filling station was. I remember very clearly, and some places a picture, of the old Pure Oil sign. That was cleared out. I do recall that when we dedicated the area, that it was snowing.

MF: How about that. It doesn't snow often in New Bern.

Mr. Sherratt: It was snowing and Elinor has all the dates on this. But anyway, that was the original place. John Peterson did design the original building, and Trader Construction Company was the contractor on that building.

MF: What are the duties of the Library Board, other than

constructing a new library?

Mr. Sherratt: The first place, we do have a policy and carried it through. I have mentioned it many times since, and on my retirement when I had some words to say, that I always, I would like to see a member of the city Board of Aldermen on the Library Board and the County Commissioner on the Library Board. By this method, they can keep track of what we are doing, what business we are attending to; and it is their representative on our board that can tell them anything they want that goes on, because we do make a monthly report to them by virtue of minutes of the meetings. And, the local Library Board, does provide representatives to the Regional Library Board. A lot of people don't understand that Mrs. Hawkins is the Regional Librarian and also the librarian of the New Bern Craven County Public Library as such. The regional board is furnished three members of the board of trustees of the New Bern Craven County Public Library. So, we are sitting on the New Bern Craven County Library Board and also the regional library, which is a combination of representatives from Pamlico County, Carteret County, and Craven County. So, we are functioning on both. Now, we carry on the business, and approve expenditures of the funds that are involved with the local library. That is, the Library Board approved it. They also submit the annual budget that is presented to both the city and the county each year. The Library Board works up that budget and approves it and expends the money. This mostly consists of every day cost of operating the library and the salaries of the local library people. The Regional Library people are paid by state funds. The

books that go into our library are purchased through state funds. So, the budget consists mostly of maintenance and operation of this building and the salaries of the local people.

MF: Does the city still contribute?

Mr. Sherratt: I don't recall but it was maybe three years ago they indicated to us that they would have to cut back on their contribution to the library. Now originally, everything was cut down the middle; fifty percent city, fifty percent county. The city says, "this is going to have to quit because we can't afford to contribute that much", so they passed their resolution. We fought it there in front of the City Board of Aldermen being afraid that they would completely cut out the function. They agreed that they would cut back a certain amount each year down to a maximum of, and I forget what that is right now, but something like \$85,000. Of course, this was before we started building this addition. That was for operating of the \$320,000 portion. So, they have done this. The slack has been taken up by the County Board of Commissioners. The County Board of Commissioners has in each case approved our budget. They are in the process of approving our latest budget. We have gone from a budget that has somewhat increased this year because of the extension of the building. We have doubled the size of the original building and gone from 11,000 to 24,000 square feet. It might be well that you know how this came about.

MF: Yes, I'd like it for the record. But before you tell me that, I want to ask you before I forget it, since we are a Regional

Library, do Carteret County, and Pamlico County contribute?

Mr. Sherratt: In operating their own buildings and their own local function, the contribution is to distribute the books locally that are purchased by region for all branches. As far as sending us monies to contribute to our building, no. Carteret operates the library in Beaufort. They furnish the building. They furnish the Bookmobile. They operate the building. They maintain the building.

The branch out at Newport, same way. The City of Newport furnishes that. They furnish the building. They maintain the building. They operate the building. Out at the Bogue Banks library, which is new, same thing. So, the counties operate their own building. They pay for the maintenance of the building. They pay for the upkeep for that building. We furnish books, but that is by state monies. So, we're not talking about New Bern or Craven County furnishing books for Carteret or Pamlico. The state is furnishing the books. We distribute the books to these branches.

MF: Does the federal government help you anymore, as far as books are concerned?

Mr. Sherratt: In effect, no. Grants are made for specific items for purchase of the specific items. We have to write a grant to get it, like a fax machine. A grant had to be written to get the fax machine, and we use it. So, there's things like this, yes. As far as the government saying, there is a construction grant available, no. That is no longer so. There are monies that are available for construction but it is very small in relationship and is turned loose for everybody

to fight for, and it's very small when it gets to our level and is awarded. So very seldom do we work for that type of thing because it's not available.

MF: You were going to tell me about constructing the new library that you just dedicated a few....., and I interrupted you because I wanted to clarify the finances.

Mr. Sherratt: Before we get off the regional business; there are three members of the local committee, including myself, that seat on the Regional Board. We furnish direction to Mrs. Hawkins, as the Regional Director, to the operation of these counties and the librarians at these different libraries. Pamlico County is operated in the school there and a regional employee is operating the library down there. Carteret has a Regional Librarian there and down in Beaufort. So, those are under the direction, but their salaries and so forth are paid by them. The region has five professional librarians with their offices in our library downtown. They work with all branches as advisors for their particular area; Children's Librarian, Adult Librarian, and there's a librarian that distributes all the books to the branches. She goes out and determines who gets what books and keeps inventory of that material. Those are regional employees. So, there is Elinor and the five that are regional employees, and their salaries are paid through the region. We don't contribute anything to that as a local function.

MF: Are those five people degree librarians?

Mr. Sherratt: Yes, they must be. They are what we classify

"professional librarians". Elinor, of course, is also. Elinor, about five years ago, came up to me and says, "Bill, we need another library. We need more room." I says, "I don't think we do." I fought this but not strongly. She said, "We got to have more room. These regional people are crawling all over each other and the records and so forth are getting jumbled up. We just don't have enough room." So, I finally agreed that maybe this was a good idea. There was a meeting that was being put together out at the ARC building at the hospital. It was a meeting with the Board of Aldermen and Craven County Commissioners combined. We got on the agenda to put the proposition to them that we wanted permission to be able to pursue the expansion of the library. They questioned some things and then gave us permission, both city and the county, to pursue the idea of expansion. Elinor and I got to talking about the problem and talking with the local board, and we asked each other what'll we do now? We decided that we would call on about thirty people in town that were more or less, what I would say prominent, or business people or managers or whatever, and meet in the old auditorium in the old building and talk this thing over. So, we did. We had this group, and there were about thirty there. We told them that we wanted to expand the building, and we wanted to get their ideas on how we were going to do it. They thrashed it out. Dale Millns was one of the ones in the middle of the whole thing, and of course, Bob Stallings. I don't know whether David was there or not.

MF: You're talking about David Ward?

Mr. Sherratt: Yes. I don't know whether David was at that meeting or not. I kind of think he was. Anyway, somebody said, "well, you'd would be whistling in the dark if you went bond issue." We're talking about 1.5 million as the figure then. They said, "people wouldn't go for a bond issue, so that's out. We'll have to support her. The city and the county by themselves would not go for it, and so you're going to have to make the effort yourself." Well, how are we going to do that? They said, "the best thing we know of at this time is get a professional fund raiser, where we can get one that would agree to do it and at a feasible cost to come in and circulate the area and give us a report if it was feasible to raise \$2,000,000 by local means to build this building." After that report came in, we could go over it and determine whether we would pursue to initiate a contract to formally present and raise money for \$2,000,000. That report was made.

This gentleman came in and he did go to a lot of places and talk to a lot of people and estimated how much could be raised. He gave a report that, yes, it was feasible, to go ahead and sign a contract and to make the effort to raise the money. We did. We got permission from the city and the county to go ahead and sign the contract. They agreed that we could do it. We went ahead and signed the contract and the Fund Raiser did come in and set up an office in the old Clark building and started circuit riding. A little over a million dollars was raised through this operation.

MF: That's wonderful.

Mr. Sherratt: A little over a million dollars from

individuals, companies, groups, and everything else; some of which, there are some companies in town that did not contribute. I never did find why, and I couldn't name them and I wouldn't name them anyway.

MF: Elinor mentioned this when I interviewed her, and she did say, "some people who had pledged, so to speak, had moved, and some business that had pledged, had folded."

Mr. Sherratt: I think the biggest thing in the whole business was that we have gotten all the pledges with the exception of a very minute amount of money that has not yet come in. We fully expect it to come in. We fully expect to have one hundred percent of the pledges, which is unusual in itself. We've gotten in something like 97.3 percent.

MF: That's wonderful.

Mr. Sherratt: It's one of those things that's very unusual. The city and the county have underwritten the rest of the cost of the building. We have gotten some sizeable grants. We have gotten some sizeable contributions. One of which, Tryon Palace Commission has been quite wonderful, the monies that they have given us for the Kellenberger Room.

MF: I think that comes from the Kellenberger Historical Foundation. They gave us a grant for this program we are working on now.

Mr. Sherratt: This is how the building was built. We got John Peterson. We had several problems. One of which was getting the approval of the expansion of the building on the site because of the

moving of the historical house there next door to us. That was quite a battle.

MF: I remember that. That was my grandmother's house.

Mr. Sherratt: Is that right?

MF: Uh huh.

Mr. Sherratt: We originally started with attempting to buy five properties. It was the three on Johnson Street, and the two on Hancock Street. Because of all the fuss that we had, we backed off on two properties.

MF: It's too bad you didn't get one of them that looks so bad. I mean it's awful looking.

Mr. Sherratt: I opened my big mouth at one meeting. People kept on talking about, "You'll ruin this streetscape. You gotta maintain the streetscape." I said, "What about the streetscape as it is now?"

MF: I know. It's terrible in one part.

Mr. Sherratt: They said, "That will improve. That will be fixed!"

MF: Well, so far, it has not been fixed.

Mr. Sherratt: I don't think it will ever be.

MF: And it probably won't.

Mr. Sherratt: That word "streetscape" got to me.

MF: It would to me to when you consider what's there.

Mr. Sherratt: The sum total of building that building, it turned out real well. We didn't run into a lot of big problems. We ran into a possible pollution problem, and that was solved. We had a problem

of the historical investigation of the area, which we were required to spend money that we had not budgeted for, to discover what was underground. We had to have an archeological dig of that whole property.

MF: I remember that.

Mr. Sherratt: We were required to do that, and we didn't count on that. The oil tank had to come out. There was a spillage and we had to take care of that, which was not budgeted for, but it was required by EPA that it be treated. There were five wells around the building now that are test wells. They were tested and proved that there was no pollution and they have been sealed and we have gotten the approval for the condition of the ground water. No problem. This has been done and solved.

MF: You had problems I never even thought about.

Mr. Sherratt: Oh yes. We had other problems that involved inspections and so forth that come up all the time. We had some material that had to be removed by law, asbestos type material that had to be removed in the old building. Going back a little bit, we initiated the use of a copy machine in that library back in the old one. That same machine was still working when we moved into the new portion.

MF: It sure was.

Mr. Sherratt: We set the price at ten cents a copy. I think that started a lot of these copy machines in town, because we did it.

Because we were involved with money, petty cash and so forth, we have always had a security system in that building. I don't know whether

you know that or not.

MF: Yeah, I knew that.

Mr. Sherratt: We had a security system in the old building. When we moved to the temporary location down at Heilig-Meyers, we put in a security system down there because we were broken into six times before we had the security system in the old building.

MF: Oh my, now that I didn't know about.

Mr. Sherratt: Oh yes. I used to kid Elinor, "Maybe you ought to buy your adding machine by the dozen because it is being stolen so much." She had about two or three stolen. On one occasion in the old history room in the far corner; the windows are approximately about twelve inches wide and about fourteen to maybe sixteen inches high each pane, they're multiple panes, one was broken out and someone came in through that hole.

MF: Some child, I bet.

Mr. Sherratt: And stole whatever was stolen on that particular trip. We decided that because they were going after the money in the copy machine, which they did get one time; they tore the copy machine up and our maintenance contract replaced the dime change unit on it, so the proceeds of the copy machine paid for the security system.

MF: I think the copy machine is a wonderful addition to the library. I use it all the time.

Mr. Sherratt: We have extended the use of the copy machine. We were able to make a deal with the copy machine dealer to replace the old one with a new one, which is much better, and we've added two

machines in the library proper. One back in the Kellenberger Room and one in Hayden's office. Now, we have a security system in the new building, which was put in as part of the construction of the building. Of course, the extension of this building was planned for access for disabled. The original building was not able to accommodate the disabled because the doors weren't wide enough and a few things like that. The toilet rooms were not adjustable for access to disabled.

We had been pressed that one time to change everything, which would have cost us about \$20,000 to make the changes just to take care of wheelchairs. So, this one was completely planned based on a state requirement for access for disabled. The building, of course, is a public building. It must have access and exits that will take care of the public. That is a requirement of the fire inspectors. The reason we have two doors in the auditorium, besides the main entrance from the interior of the building, is for exit; as we have space for 180 people, and they have to get out. All of the requirements did occur and were required by fire and regulations, and so forth. The library is entirely covered by a sprinkler system.

MF: Oh that's wonderful. I didn't know that.

Mr. Sherratt: It is required by state law, and by this requirement, the building has a sprinkler system. What I'm getting to is, beside the security function to detect a break-in, this same system will report the fire. In other words, if the sprinkler system goes off, there will be a security function that will also report it.

Eventually, it will go into the 911 system and either a break-in will

be reported or a fire reported, but it will be through the security system. So, this was figured in. I'm a little nut on some of this security business because we have had incidence where we have had to had help from the police in the library. We do have two panic buttons in the library. They are not general knowledge, but we have two. The ladies have instruction, and I'll take the responsibility of it, that if there is a problem that they cannot easily handle, push the security button and call the police, without any question, just push it. There is one in the large library room and there's one at the front desk. So, they are available to them. I feel that the ladies are given the protection that they need because they are working at night and daytime. We do have a system on the security system, now whereby, a central office will pass the word on a fire or a break-in.

At the same time, they will call representatives that are appointed and have agreed to do it, from the library, that hold the keys to the building. They are called at their home place, and they have agreed to go down to the library. The police are called at the same time, and the people that go down, representative of the library, will not unlock the door until the police are there. They will unlock the door, and the police will go in first, and the library representative will stay outside until they are given the "all clear". They go in and they secure the security system so it will not go off again, and the police take care of the situation. So, we have to have a representative there to unlock the door. The police do not break-in to find out.

They meet that representative down at the library. We do have three

people that are appointed. I at one time was one of them that had to go down and unlock for the police. The board of trustees figured that we have covered the security of the building, fire and otherwise, by these means.

MF: I think you have, and it's very important.

Mr. Sherratt: The board felt it was necessary to go this direction.

MF: I agree with you. It is, in this day and age, unfortunately.

Mr. Sherratt: We do have incidences which are problem incidences. The younger patrons, they are not teenagers, they're now the younger patrons, that are sometimes giving us problems. In other words, they are using the library to date instead of using it as a library and that gives problems. Sometimes we have called the police to come and break it up. I don't feel the ladies at the library should have to act as policeman and go over and do this or do that and warn these people. They do have a system whereby they give a person a warning, and then if they don't comply and it becomes obstreperous, they call the police. If it is necessary to call the police, they give them an option of stopping whatever they're doing or being expelled from the library. If that doesn't take, then, they call the police and let the policeman expel them. They give them a period of time in which they can't use the library.

MF: I know what you're talking about because I worked at the library for two or three years a number of years ago, and I remember occasions like this.

Mr. Sherratt: I didn't know we didn't have unbreakable glass in the old building until we had an incidence where a girl got mad at somebody in the library and was told she would have to leave. She started to go out and she got mad and she hit the window with her fist, and it was a breakable window. That's when we found out that you're suppose to have unbreakable glass up to a certain point in all the windows in the building. I didn't know this then, but I do now!

MF: At the time the library on Johnson Street was first constructed, that I don't believe, was the law. It is now. I found that out when someone broke through the window in my house.

Mr. Sherratt: When we got a hold of our friend Bill Haire, he says, "oh yeah, you're suppose to have unbreakable glass." I don't know how much that cost, but it was something we hadn't figured on. We had to replace the glass and everything. You get a real fast education.

MF: Yes you do. Yes you do. Well, you have given me wonderful information and you may know the answers to some of these questions.

Dorothy DeWeerdts did the research on the library for Memories of New Bern, and she came up with a few questions that she thought were very interesting. One was in 1938, the WPA supplied book menders. Do you know anything about any WPA involvement with the library?

Mr. Sherratt: No details. I have heard that they were involved, but I don't know what it was.

MF: Did you ever hear anyone speak of Frances Jones Howerton, Miss Fannie, who was the librarian for thirty-eight years? I'm getting

little bits and pieces from different people. Mr.

Sherratt: I've heard the name. I have a feeling that there is a big picture of her around in the library.

MF: There is. Hayden told me this.

Mr. Sherratt: I think I could recognize it if it were shown to me. Yes. I know where it was in the Heilig-Meyers building. I know it's still there but I don't know where it is.

MF: I was trying to get sort of a history of her for the tape. Do you know anything about the negro library that was opened on West Street? I think that was still in operation.

Mr. Sherratt: It was still in operation. I know that for a period of time Elinor Hawkins used to go over there and assist them in the operation. I don't remember details of how it was operated. I do know that we inherited a very, very fine member of the board of trustees from that library.

MF: Who was that?

Mr. Sherratt: I believe Mrs. E. M. Dudley, a present trustee, was active with that library.

MF: Elinor may have told me. I know she talked about Mrs. Sadie Lowe who had worked at the library on West Street.

Mr. Sherratt: Sadie Lowe was the one who had operated the West Street library. Elinor used to go over and help her.

MF: She was working in the New Bern Public Library when I worked there. She was a very nice lady, and very, very nice to work with.

Mr. Sherratt, are there any rare books in the library now? Elinor

told me about one that they found.

Mr. Sherratt: There are. They have been locked up in the vault as far as I know, the vault that was over to city hall. Elinor of course, is the one that is aware of this. I am not personally aware of what books are in this category.

MF: This is something that very few people know about, but Dorothy ran across this bit of information. Do you know anything about the Mary Hendren Vance Memorial Fund for book purchases?

Mr. Sherratt: No mam.

MF: Hilda was vaguely familiar with it, but we haven't been able to get a lot of information on it.

Mr. Sherratt: On something of this nature, all I can refer to would be Elinor because she has been the strong person in the push and everything else that happened with that library. We call back and forth what we think and so on and so forth, and Elinor and I get along fine. When push comes to shove, I will ask Elinor Hawkins, because she knows what she's doing!

MF: Hilda indicated to me that she thought this Memorial Fund was no longer in existence, that it was something established a long time ago.

Mr. Sherratt: I am not aware of it. I think I would of have either heard it or seen it in what paper that goes past me to bring it to my attention.

MF: I think so too.

Mr. Sherratt: I expect somebody like Mrs. Whitehurst would know

all about it; some of the old hands that were around, like somebody that may have been in the old Women's Library Association.

MF: I think Caroline Ashford, and we're going to interview her. So, that's a question I can ask her.

Mr. Sherratt: Yes. Some of those people who would know these names where I don't. Of course actually, I've only been here thirty-three years.

MF: I know, you haven't been here long enough to know it all.

Mr. Sherratt: I don't know nothing! That girl, the girl that I married, knows more about this town than I'll ever know.

MF: She knows all the history. She's a very good DAR member. Is there anything else you would like to say about the library?

Mr. Sherratt: This library has turned out to be more than we actually expected, for this reason; that when we had this meeting that I spoke of, of advisement from people in town that came in and first started our idea of getting a professional fund raiser, at that particular point, I haven't mentioned before, they said, "Now look, whatever you do in your planning, go first class because if you don't, you'll be back to us in another fifteen years, and we don't want that!"

"So, whatever you do, go first class!" We took the attitude that when we planned this thing and put it together, and everything we would do, would be first class. We have done that. We have gone first class because we felt that the public needed it and wanted it and these gentlemen had come by and given us the word, "Go ahead, first class", and that was a real fine excuse to go first class!

MF: When you were doing the fund raising, did you think about future expansion, or will the library downtown stay the size it is and you have maybe satellite around that?

Mr. Sherratt: That will be, I think, the answer. I don't know. For sake of argument, where could we go?

MF: No way but up.

Mr. Sherratt: Yes. This building was not designed for up. That was the reason we didn't go up on this one, because the foundations are not designed for a two-story structure, they are designed for a one-story structure. This comment that some people made, "I don't see why you don't put a second floor on it." It's not feasible structurally, mechanically, or anything else. Anyway, it gives a lot of problem to the staff to be going up and down.

MF: It gives a lot of security problems.

Mr. Sherratt: So, that was not considered. The other thing is, that the original feeling by the city and the county, mostly the city, was that you don't have enough parking space. You've got to have more off street parking because there's too many people parking in the street and blocking the traffic and making problems. The old building only had, I think it was, thirteen spaces for automobiles in their parking.

MF: And the staff took those.

Mr. Sherratt: Right. So, this one, we're figuring on seventy-three spaces.

MF: And you know, when I go down there, most of them are full.

Mr. Sherratt: Yes. So, now, we do have a written permission

from the Shriners that the overage of our parking can go into their lot. We have that provision with them. They've been very fine and cooperative with us. We are going to have to do something with the landscaping. That's going to come up. I personally am not taking an active role in the operational library. If I am here available, if they have a problem that I may be able to assist with, okay; otherwise, I have other problems.

MF: You have retired?

Mr. Sherratt: That's a fair statement.

MF: You've done an excellent job.

Mr. Sherratt: Mrs. Ward is perfectly capable of handling the job as chairman. She can do the same thing. I don't know anything about running the library. That's why we have Elinor Hawkins. Now, replacing Elinor Hawkins, that is another problem. But, that's something else! It'll be done. We're in the processing right now, but what comes out, I can't tell. This I will say, we have had perfect cooperation from the County Board of Commissioners in the operation of this library. The city has given all the cooperation they could.

In the construction of this library, the city has furnished people to assist and to help in the movements that we've made in moving. It hasn't been mentioned in what I've said, but the public has got to realize that we moved 80 to 120,000 books four times! The last time the teeny beepers and the bar codes had to be put on every book before they could be functional. We are now computerizing the whole operation. We hope that we will have access to the system by individuals

later on. We don't know when that's going to come. We are going to have finally, years immediately in the future, we're going to have connection by computer with all the branch libraries.

MF: That will be wonderful.

Mr. Sherratt: They'll be able to contact us, and we'll be able to contact them. We now can go in by computer to the state library.

MF: Isn't that fantastic?

Mr. Sherratt: It works out. I use the computer myself when I'm down here, and I put my genealogy on it. I kid the ladies and I say, "Hey, when am I going to be able to contact the library on my computer?"

"You are not going to be able to." "Why not?" "Because we're not going to give you the code."

MF: Mr. Sherratt, I want to thank you on behalf of Memories of New Bern for participating in our oral history program. As you well know, the library really is a "sponsor" of ours.

Mr. Sherratt: Oh, we know that.

MF: We're very, very grateful to your library.

Mr. Sherratt: Anything the library can do to furnish space or whatever, we're happy to do it. I know that because before I did this little retirement bit, I made sure that that went through. MF:

We do appreciate it more than you'll ever know.

Mr. Sherratt: That's great and we need this type of thing.

MF: Yes, we do, and it's been a lot of fun for me to do it. So, thank you very much.

Mr. Sherratt: You're quite welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW