

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

JOHN RANDOLPH PARKER III

INTERVIEW 1029

This is Dr. Joseph Patterson representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is one thousand (1000). I am interviewing J. R. Parker, P-a-r-k-e-r at his residence in Arapahoe, North Carolina. The number of the interview is 1029. The date is January 7, 1993.

Well, J. R., it's nice to see you again and to be here sitting with you on the Neuse River near Arapahoe. As I look out, I don't see the river. It's so much fog out there, but I know it's there.

Let's start out, J.R., with my just asking you some questions about yourself. What is your full name?

J. R. PARKER: John Randolph Parker, III.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: When were you born?

J. R. PARKER: August 14, 1916.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And where were you born?

J. R. PARKER: In New Bern. Dr. Gibbs attended my mother. Whether I was in the hospital or home, I'm not sure. I think I was at home which was on Neuse Road.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You lived on Neuse Road. Now where is that location in relation to where things are in New Bern today.

J. R. PARKER: Well, the property is where the old Nichol's Discount Store is still located, and it's just west of that new health center or social, state social center closer to town by a hundred yards, a hundred feet, something of that sort.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Your house was right there?

J. R. PARKER: Uh huh.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And you all had all the land around there?

J. R. PARKER: We had twenty acres there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What was that area like in those days?

J. R. PARKER: Farm land. Farm land from about, you know where the Crockett farm was right there where 17 and 70 separate now. Well, from there on west it was farm land, small farms.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Many houses out there?

J. R. PARKER: Uh huh, yeah. Just the further away from town you went, the fewer, and I think, then, as a general rule the farms became larger.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Now that is old Highway 70 to Kinston.

J. R. PARKER: Uh huh. Yeah, yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Is that correct? Did you spend all your young years in that area.

J. R. PARKER: Yes. Yes.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: That's where you lived. Spent your boyhood. Who were your parents?

J. R. PARKER: My mother was Azilee Taylor from Harlowe.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: How do you spell that?

J. R. PARKER: A-z-i-l double e, and I have never seen it in print since. And my dad was Edgar Leroy Parker. My grandfather was John Randolph Parker, Jr., and he ran a grocery store and wholesale operation there at the corner of Hancock and Broad Street. In fact, I learned something since I've been home on this trip. I have found a picture of that store with my grandfather standing in front of it. And this is something that, the source, maybe something that might be helpful

to you. This picture is in the library, photographic library in Wilson Library at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. And it's a source of a lot of the pictures that are used in that book The History of New Bern.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: By John Green?

J. R. PARKER: By John Green, yes, yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Do you think that's in John Green's book.

J. R. PARKER: I know it is.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: We'll look at it there then.

J. R. PARKER: I ordered three copies of the pictures about a month or so ago intending to give my two brothers one apiece and keep one for myself, and I was hoping to show that to you, but I don't know what happened unless they shut everything down up there during Christmas.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I have John Green's book and I'll look it up when I get back.

J. R. PARKER: It's in there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Now your grandfather ran this store. Was it a grocery store.

J. R. PARKER: Grocery store.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Which corner was it in?

J. R. PARKER: The location would be the southeast corner across the street from the telephone switch center. I am not sure it is still there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes. Yes.

J. R. PARKER: It's across Hancock Street from there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I know exactly where this is. Do you have brothers and sisters?

J. R. PARKER: I have two brothers?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What are their names?

J. R. PARKER: Charles is the younger one, and Edgar is the middle one, and Charles lives in New Bern, and Edgar lives in Austin, Texas.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Now, let's talk about your brother Charles for just a minute. In the 1950's, did he not have an oyster bar in New Bern.

J. R. PARKER: Yes. He and my mother opened a fried chicken restaurant in the home that we lived in and grew up in. They converted that to a restaurant, and at the same time Charles opened up an oyster bar in that same home. And this was really started in the late forties, after World War II, after we all got home from service. And I don't know how long it was in business, but as my mother's health failed, they sooner or later got out of it. I'd say not later than the early sixties.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well I remember it as a very fine place to go and have great oysters.

J. R. PARKER: Yeah, I expect you do. Yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What's Charles doing now?

J. R. PARKER: He's retired. He was a postal employee in Dover and had a rural mail route for, I don't know how many years. Must be, oh, I'd say, '85 somewhere along there, 1985.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And your other brother in Austin, is name is?

J. R. PARKER: Edgar.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did he stay in New Bern for awhile or?

J. R. PARKER: He came home from World War II and got out of service, and stayed around for a couple of years anyway, as I remember, and then went back on active duty. He pulled a tour in Korea, was injured, and he stayed in the service until, oh, until early 60's and he retired from the military. And I really can't tell you why he chose Austin. His wife was from Oklahoma, and Austin's a pretty nice city to live in.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What did your father do?

J. R. PARKER: My dad was a postal employee. He was superintendent of the post office when he retired, the main post office in New Bern, and he retired to my grandparent's home which was right next door to the St. Luke's Hospital. The old St. Luke.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes. That was sometime ago. That, none of your family lives in that house now.

J. R. PARKER: Oh, no, no. When he died, his widow, his second wife had the privilege of the house until her death, at which time it was deeded over to one of my nephews who has since sold the property.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: J. R. when you grew up as a boy out there, this was farm land, it is certainly different now, but what was it like to be a boy in that area. What did you do? Who were your buddies out there?

J. R. PARKER: Well, I had a ball to start with. I really enjoyed living out there. My friends were, the ones that I ran with mostly, James Reagan, who has since died, Lemuel Daniels and his brother Paul. They moved about our senior year in high school to Raleigh and I lost touch with them. And a man, boy, named Aloise Gaskins. They were my closest friends.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Is that L-o-i-s, how do you spell?

J. R. PARKER: A-l-o-i-s-e. I think it is. I'm not real sure. You don't see that around very often.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did you play right in your area?

J. R. PARKER: Oh yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did you have horses? Did you ride? What did you do out there to have fun?

J. R. PARKER: Well, we roamed the woods a great deal. Way back in there across the road from where General Wholesale is now is where the Daniels family lived, and behind there, between there and the river, were two big enormous fields that had been abandoned, hadn't recovered by forest at that time. There was a bunch of wild goats back in there. And we used to spend most of our Saturdays and Sundays chasing them, having fun with those goats. Never caught one. We never got butted by one, but that was one of the things we did, for a long time, years. Then we used to go up and snoop around Mr. Stevenson's brick yard, the kilns where he made bricks.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Was it in active operation then?

J. R. PARKER: Oh yes. And, of course, in those days everything

was hand labor from the time they molded the bricks by machine. From that point on they were handled by hand. Air aged (dried). Put in the kiln by hand cars. Placed in the kiln. Removed in the same fashion and put in the box cars. That sort of thing. And we always got a chance, if we went up there during the week in the afternoons, of riding on the clay cars coming in from the pits where ever they had the excavator.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Was the brick yard close to where General Wholesale is located now?

J. R. PARKER: Uh huh. Yes. The brick yard itself was on the other side of the railroad that General Wholesale backs up against, and the clay pits were even further back. I'm talking about from Neuse Road now and across that railroad.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: So the clay came from right there?

J. R. PARKER: Uh huh. In fact, that operation went on from the time I can remember until well into college. Somewhere along there I lost track of it.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I guess those pits are still there.

J. R. PARKER: Well, they weren't all that deep, Joe. I would say not more than six feet deep, at the most. Just more or less like strip mining.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And the bricks, once they were made, would be put on railroad cars would they or?

J. R. PARKER: Railroad cars or as time went on they put 'em on trucks, but at the very beginning most of them were hauled out of there

by the train. It was terribly heavy stuff, you know.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where did they go?

J. R. PARKER: Mostly in this area, as I have been told, because they were in competition with, I can't remember the name of the brick yard in Kinston, but there was one there and then gradually most of them moved, or consolidated, or folded in favor of the ones up around Sanford. These bricks were more or less what you call pavers. I didn't know that in those days, but they didn't have holes in them.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: How do you spell that?

J. R. PARKER: P-a-v-e-r. Just like the ones used on the road. I didn't know the difference between that and any other brick until I started building that house over there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes. Ok.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Now the woods extended all the way from there to the Trent Road?

J. R. PARKER: More or less, yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: So there wasn't anything back there then except forest?

J. R. PARKER: No. No. Well, about the time we were born, you could still see the outline of a race track that was back there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: A horse race track?

J. R. PARKER: Uh huh.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: That's why it's called Race Track Road out there?

J. R. PARKER: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where was that in relation to the Stevenson Brick place?

J. R. PARKER: If you took off from Neuse Road and went down the road that leads to General Wholesale's ready-mix plant, I know when we were kids that was an undeveloped country road, all the way through there to Trent Road. Whether it goes through there all the way now or not, I don't know. But, you would go down that road a half a mile or so, and then it would be to the west. And you could tell where the pine forest was. It was sort of an oval shaped operation, but there were no buildings or anything in evidence. I don't know whatever happened to it, whether it was all burned down or what.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yeah, you never saw any active racing there?

J. R. PARKER: No, that was all before I was born.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: J. R. where did you go to school? Where did you go to your first schooling?

J. R. PARKER: New Bern. I went to the New Bern school system all the way through school.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You didn't go to Riverside School?

J. R. PARKER: Oh, I went to Riverside. I was in the first first grade class at Riverside, if I remember correctly, and then I was transferred to Central to the second and third grades. You and I were in the third grade together.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where was the Riverside School located?

J. R. PARKER: I can't remember the name of the street. It's

between what used to be North Pasteur and National Avenue. What is the name of that street. And, between A and B streets, I think. It's still there--the building.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: How did you get to school at Riverside?

J. R. PARKER: My parents took me to school the first year I believe. Somewhere along there we started having school buses. Most of 'em were World War II surplus chassis with a factory added cab or body on it.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, World War II was long after this though wasn't it?

J. R. PARKER: Oh, heck yeah. This was 1922.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: When you first went to Riverside, your parents took you?

J. R. PARKER: The best I remember.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yeah, yeah. Too far to walk.

J. R. PARKER: Well, a many a time I walked back and forth home from Central School simply because I wanted to and I always liked to walk up the railroad tracks. I don't know why.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You just stayed at Riverside one year then as far as you know.

J. R. PARKER: Yes. Uh huh.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: But the school lasted longer than that. I mean, there were six grades there.

J. R. PARKER: There were six grades.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: How did they happen to send you to Central.

J. R. PARKER: I don't know. Then I went to Ghent; my fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. Miss Eleanor Marshall was my last teacher out there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: So you were at Central just for the second and third grades then.

J. R. PARKER: For some reason or another, yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Maybe you didn't like it down there.

J. R. PARKER: I didn't know enough difference whether I liked it or not. I liked both Miss Berrys. Do you remember when Miss Berry taught us the third grade?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes, Ruth Berry.

J. R. PARKER: Ruth Berry and then her, wasn't it her sister that taught the other, second or third grade?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I'm not sure. Miss Lizzie Hancock, she taught us in second grade.

J. R. PARKER: Molly Hancock?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Molly Heath.

J. R. PARKER: Molly Heath was the first grade teacher. I missed her.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yeah, and Lizzie Hancock was in the second grade. Ok. Ok. I think so. Then you went to the Ghent School. Tell me about Eleanor Marshall. What sort of person was she?

J. R. PARKER: She was a disciplinarian. She didn't take a lot of foolishness, and I'm fortunate that I experienced her teachings. I learned a great deal from her. A lot of respect for that lady.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: She was one of your grade teachers. Is that right?

J. R. PARKER: Yes. She was the most impressionable teacher that I had for a long time. Then we got into high school and I think all of our teachers there were first class. I had nothing but respect, coming from a little town like this, for our teachers and having the quality high school education we had. I believe we were fortunate.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What grade did Miss Marshall teach?

J. R. PARKER: Sixth.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Sixth. Who were some of your buddies in school at Ghent?

J. R. PARKER: Kid Jennette. James Reagan. One of the Parrott boys, can't remember his first name. And there were two brothers from Rhems. I can't remember their names now. One of them was Ben, Simmons, Ben Simmons? Was there a family of Simmons at Rhems?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I'm not sure.

J. R. PARKER: They were farmers, a farm family.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I think so. I think there was one boy out there named F. M. Simmons, but I'm not sure.

J. R. PARKER: I think that's right.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: He was killed in World War II.

J. R. PARKER: He was the older of the two boys, if I remember correctly.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I've been meaning to look this up, because

that name is so distinctive, and my brother and grandfather were both F. M. Simmons. Well, you used to walk to Ghent School?

J. R. PARKER: No, by this time we had school buses and I had my first bicycle.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Then you went down to...

J. R. PARKER: Central.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Central after that for the rest of your...

J. R. PARKER: High school.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: High school.

J. R. PARKER: Public school.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And you said you liked to walk down there sometimes, did you or were you taking buses all the time.

J. R. PARKER: Most of the time there were buses.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: How did you make out in New Bern in those last years before college? Did you have a good time?

J. R. PARKER: Had a very good time.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You remember any of your teachers?

J. R. PARKER: I think I remember all of 'em. Mrs., Miss Andrews, I guess it was.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: She taught the...

J. R. PARKER: She taught first year algebra, she was a homeroom teacher in the eighth grade.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Ola? Ola Andrews?

J. R. PARKER: Was it Ola? I don't know.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Maybe that's her sister in Chapel Hill,

but I remember Miss Andrews. Yes, Ola was in Chapel Hill.

J. R. PARKER: And Coach Alston was our seventh grade civics teacher. Miss Blackwell was another home room teacher that I dearly loved.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Ruth Blackwell.

J. R. PARKER: She was our math teacher the last three years and Miss Andrews taught math too. Mr. Raper.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Raper.

J. R. PARKER: Raper, taught us physics and chemistry and general science, no he didn't teach us general science. Who was it, Miss Roberts?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Laura Roberts?

J. R. PARKER: Laura Roberts.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Taught Latin.

J. R. PARKER: Yes, I remember that. I also remember her advising me if I didn't intend to use that very much when I left school, why didn't I take something else, which I did. I'm glad I did. Let's see. Mr. Raper was my homeroom teacher in my senior year. I can't remember the name of my French teacher. I think it was Barbour. There was the Barbour Boat Works family. And we had a lady teacher from along the old Morehead Road, Moore, Mrs. Moore. Miss Moore.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Mary Moore.

J. R. PARKER: Mary Moore. Now what did she teach, I forgot now?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: She was the librarian also as I remember.

J. R. PARKER: That's right

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: The school librarian.

J. R. PARKER: That's right, I forgot. That's right, she was, yeah. They're about the only ones that I can remember.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I remember she was a very attractive lady.

J. R. PARKER: Very nice looking lady. Yes. I really look back on those days with a lot of gratitude. Particularly when I stop and observe what's going on today. I think that, there we were in a class in 1934, in high school, in the depths of the depression, and the number of graduates from high school that went on to higher education I thought was quite remarkable. And I think most of us, everybody were as well prepared as you would find across the state.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: J. R., did you engage in athletics in high school?

J. R. PARKER: Yeah, I played high school football for three years.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did you have a pretty good team?

J. R. PARKER: Oh, yes. We, I don't think we lost but about two games. We beat Wilmington for the first time in fifteen years or some crazy thing like that, but we had a spontaneous game with Raleigh.

And they came down here. The only game I remember that we ever played on a Saturday, and we beat them. We beat Tarboro that year Tom Burnette was in the same class that we were and I very well remember him in high school.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Great Carolina football player.

J. R. PARKER: He certainly was. Yep. I didn't play baseball, didn't even attempt to play basketball because all the practices were

held at night and the games were at night and I lived in the country and I had to help my dad do the farming anyway. Really it was a little sideline dairy operation, but I just didn't feel like I should take too much more time on my own and now I look back on it, I probably made another mistake or so. DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: How do you remember the school green in those days?

J. R. PARKER: The school green?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Uh huh. The buildings and all?

J. R. PARKER: Vividly.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Would you tell me what you remember about them 'cause they're all different now.

J. R. PARKER: Now are you talking about Central School system.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Central School system.

J. R. PARKER: Well, the first two or three grades were in a newer building than the Academy Building which it was adjacent to. It was between the Academy Building and the big home on the corner of New and Metcalf Streets. I can't remember the names of the people who lived there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Used to be the Jones house.

J. R. PARKER: Jones house.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: So this was a building that's west, due west, of the academy building. That housed the first and second grades. Is that right?

J. R. PARKER: I think the third too. I think there were two group classes in each grade. And then the academy, I don't remember

ever referring to it when we were in school as the academy, but it was in fairly poor repair when we were in school. The best I remember there were four class rooms in there, two downstairs, two upstairs. Then I think the next oldest building was where the bell tower was and where Mr. Smith's office, the superintendent, was.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: That's where Bob Stallings converted this into apartments. Yes, across from the Masonic Theater.

J. R. PARKER: That was, this is all speculation. I think the oldest building was the academy. The next oldest building was the one with the bell tower. And then the next one was the one that I referred to a moment ago being the first, second grade building which is no longer there. I rode by there the other day, and it's gone. And then the back end of the high school building was next. I don't know where it fitted in there exactly, but the front of the high school building, the one that had the tall columns on it, was fairly new. I honestly don't know whether it's still there or not. Have no idea. Between the high school building and Johnson Street was a two class wooden building. I took General Science there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: No, that's gone. There's a house there now.

J. R. PARKER: Is there? Well, the part that had the tall columns faced Hancock. That was the latest addition and that occurred (was built) about the time we were in the sixth or seventh grade, if I remember correctly. It was a four classroom addition. I have a big picture of our high school senior class in front of the building.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: It was the Moses Griffin Building. Now that building was due north of the bell building. It was right next to the bell building with it's side on Johnson Street and facing Hancock Street. Right across from the Masonic Theater. Do you remember somewhere behind that building or behind that building and the bell building, there was a house where the school system maintenance man lived.

J. R. PARKER: Oh, yes. Mr. Fillingame

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Mr. Fillingame. How do you spell that name, Fillingame.

J. R. PARKER: F-i-l-l-i-n-g-a-m-e?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: He was the maintenance man for the schools.

J. R. PARKER: And the custodian supervisor for the whole school system.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And he and his family lived there.

J. R. PARKER: The whole New Bern school system. They lived in that little house.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: That was right behind those buildings, adjacent to the boiler system for heat and toolshops. Ok, and then you remember across the street, across Johnson Street from the Moses Griffin building was the Pepsi Cola factory. Can you visualize that place now.

J. R. PARKER: Oh, sure. Oh, yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: How do you remember that building?

J. R. PARKER: Big for its day. Brick, and it had a, I call it

a Salley port where you could drive through, a team of horses drove through, on the west end of the building round in the back where they would back their wagons up to load up bottled Pepsis and, of course, by the time we came along that was being carried on by delivery trucks.

Those great big old solid rubber mounted trucks, seems like they were Macks. Enormous things. They may have been surplus from World War I. I don't know, but it was an impressive building. My guess is that it must have been about three stories high.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes, I think that's right. J. R.

J. R. PARKER: I, excuse me a minute.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You go ahead.

J. R. PARKER: My father and mother lived about two doors from there for a short period of time when I was real young. I barely remember it. There's a little house next to the Pepsi Cola plant, and then there was a house next to that. We lived there. (My parents lived in your present home as roomers of the Bells. This was only a short spell right after getting married.)

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Which street is this on?

J. R. PARKER: That's on Johnson Street. And that was really early on. I don't remember that at all, because the first I remember about where I lived was on Neuse Road.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: The little house you're talking about at one time was owned by my Grandfather Simmons.

J. R. PARKER: I didn't realize that.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And his father lived there for awhile just

about in 1900.

J. R. PARKER: Is that little house still there?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes, and it's been renovated and it's a beautiful house. It's just a great house. Now after you finished high school, where'd you go?

J. R. PARKER: I went to Erskine for two years.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Erskine College?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Uh huh, in Due West, South Carolina, and then I transferred to Carolina, Chapel Hill.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Now where did West Point come in?

J. R. PARKER: When I got out of Carolina, I went to West Point in 1938.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: So you went to Erskine two years, then Carolina for two years, graduated from Carolina in the class of 1938?

J. R. PARKER: No, I didn't graduate.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, you finished in the class of '38. The same class I was in. We were there together. And then to West Point. How long were you at West Point?

J. R. PARKER: For a year. I flunked out.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, no big deal there. You're not the only one.

J. R. PARKER: Well, I'll tell you something. When I came home after flunking out, my mother counseled me and during that time she said, "Son, don't you ever forget, everything happens for the best."

My class at West Point lost more men during World War II than any

class that's ever gone through West Point, including the Civil War.

So in a way, that may have spared me. I don't know.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Do you have an idea what percentage loss that was?

J. R. PARKER: It was in the twenties, twenty some percent. I used to remember it. I read it in a an alumni review. Oh, ten years or so ago.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes, that class would have finished in '42.

J. R. PARKER: '42.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And that was a bad time.

J. R. PARKER: Right in to it. I lost both my room mates. I lost an awful lot of real close friends that I knew while I was there, and the first Army-Navy game after World War II when everybody was getting out of service, this was in 1946, we went to a company cocktail party at the Benjamin Franklin Hotel. And we had never met one of my West Point room mate's wife, but we had corresponded with her and my room mate until he was killed and we kept track of her afterwards.

We invited her to come and go as our guest to the Army-Navy game in Philadelphia and to this party afterwards. And when we got there and saw the condition of a large number of the people, Betty Jane broke down, Louise took her off somewhere, to a rest room or somewhere and talked with her for awhile. But during that time, she told Louise that she was glad that her husband went the way he did after she saw so many of them there that weren't whole anymore. They were, lost

an arm, or a leg, or blind, or scarred, and those sorts of things, and it really tore her up. And it affected all of us the same way.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: J. R., you and I saw each other in Philadelphia one time during your year at West Point. We just happened to run in to each other.

J. R. PARKER: No, that was after World War II. You were in med school, Jefferson? And wasn't it Wannamaker's where we met?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes.

J. R. PARKER: Was it. We ran into each, of all places. Yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I seem to remember you being in uniform, but I guess I'm wrong about that.

J. R. PARKER: Well, now if you ever went to an Army-Navy game there in '38, we might have seen each other.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I did. I went to a lot of them.

J. R. PARKER: Did you? Well, it could be. But I remember us bumping into each other in the department store.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes, ok. What happened after you left West Point?

J. R. PARKER: I went to work!

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Tell me about your business career and Louise and some of the places you went to before finally settling down.

J. R. PARKER: Well, I was in the Engineering School at Carolina which ended with our class. It was part of the consolidation of the university system, and I think the reason I didn't go back to school when I flunked out of West Point was because Carolina didn't have the

Engineering School anymore, and I lacked about, best I remember, twenty hours or so. That and the disappointment of flunking out at West Point, so it wasn't long after that I went to work at the Central Engineering Company in Monck's Corner, South Carolina. They were building that Cooper River hydro-electric project and recreational area. I stayed there until it was finished and Louise and I got married just about the time I went to work for Carbide and Carbon in South Charleston, West Virginia. We got married in '40, and '41 I had the opportunity to go to work for a construction company which I really liked more than just doing home office engineering project, engineering work.

I went to work for H. K. Ferguson Co. in Cincinnati and from there to Dallas, Texas, where we finished off a Proctor and Gamble Soap plant and that's where we were located when World War II, December 7, rolled around. And I wanted to go in service. Charles, my youngest brother, well: both Edgar and Charles were already in service, and I wanted to go in service and my company talked me out of it for awhile and then I stayed with them until I did go in service in '43. And I went back to work for them when the war was over.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You went in the Army?

J. R. PARKER: It was in those days, the Army Air Corps they called it, the Air Force, now.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did you fly?

J. R. PARKER: Yeah, I flew B24's, B29's and B32's..

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: As a pilot or...

J. R. PARKER: Uh huh. Pilot. I never got overseas. It was

one of those fortunate incidences where I got caught in a special program that never got off the ground, but it delayed my going into combat for about eight months. By that time the war was almost over so they kept us here. But I had to stay in service when I got out.

I had to stay affiliated. I had to stay in the reserve, because the group we were in was SAC, which I didn't know anything about at the time, Strategic Air Command. So we, I, stayed in the reserve until I was retired. One of the fortunate things that occurred to me.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You were not pulled in to the Korean War?

J. R. PARKER: No. That's a long, long story and I don't know yet how I avoided it, but I did.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: So after you got out of the service you went back to work for the same company and then where did you go. What happened after that?

J. R. PARKER: We stayed, I stayed with Ferguson until '50, '51 I guess. I had already taken a job with Fluor Corporation.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: With what?

J. R. PARKER: With Fluor.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: How do you spell that?

J. R. PARKER: The Fluor, F-l-u-o-r, the Fluor Corporation in East Los Angeles. The day that I accepted a job with them, I got home that night and had a notice to report for active duty. So I advised Fluor what the situation was and told them I'd better hold off. Never heard anything from the Air Force after week-end active duty for reclassification.. So a year went by and then I went to work for Fluor

right in the middle of the Korean War. And I stayed with them 'til I retired.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: This affiliation took you over many parts of the world, didn't it?

J. R. PARKER: A lot of places. A whole lot of places. Louise and I have been in. We've never been below the equator, but we've been a lot of places above it.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where are some of these places?

J. R. PARKER: Well, the jungles of Mexico. The island of Sardinia which is, it was in those days, pretty bad living.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Sardinia?

J. R. PARKER: Sardinia. In the Mediterranean. We lived in Holland and Belgium, Germany, Iran, Japan, Pakistan. All the good places.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And you finally retired to the state of Washington. Why did you pick Washington?

J. R. PARKER: You don't want to know that!

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, you've got a hunting lodge up near the border, I think.

J. R. PARKER: No, we had, but that's not the reason that we retired in Washington. The reason we ended up there is because we chose to leave North Carolina. I could not handle the intangible tax. It's the simplest way I can put it. We were building a house right over there, on the river next to Seafare Camp. I told Louise, I just can't handle it. We're going to have to do something. We had been going

through Washington for a number of years from L.A. to our fishing cabin in British Columbia. So we knew a little bit about Washington state, and that's really the reason we chose to go back out there and look, and we ended up in Washington and love it.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, it's a beautiful place alright.

J. R. PARKER: We haven't regretted it at all.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: But your love for North Carolina brings you back down this way

J. R. PARKER: Every year. If I can.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: A couple of months every year, and that's fine. Well, along the way you have remained a very staunch alumnus of the university at Chapel Hill and have been a great benefactor for that university.

J. R. PARKER: Wish I could do more.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, I think you've certainly done your share. Well, now that we've gotten you back down this way again, let me just ask you some things about New Bern again as you remember them.

When you grew up, J. R., what do you remember about the relationship between the blacks and the whites, the colored people and the whites.

Was it a good relationship?

J. R. PARKER: I was exposed to the blacks all of my growing up years. We had colored help at the little dairy that my dad ran. All the farmers around where we lived had colored help. I think I can honestly say I had a healthy respect for the blacks, but I'm also aware that we didn't socialize. We kept our distance if that makes any sense.

But I really didn't have any hard/ill feelings towards them. I don't remember any. I knew there was a distinction.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did you have any friends among the young blacks when you grew up?

J. R. PARKER: Uh huh. Oh yeah. I had black playmates when I was young, before I really got school age.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Alright, J. R., we were talking about friendship with young blacks when you were a boy.

J. R. PARKER: I remember, in those days, I think, most of us had a wash woman. We took our clothes to a wash woman, we called them.

In this case she was a black, and the best I remember her name was Ginny. And she had two children about my age and she was used a lot of times as a baby sitter too, lived right in our home. She brought her children with her on a number of occasions. We played together and as far as I could tell, it was just like playing with anybody else.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Your parents had no problem with that?

J. R. PARKER: Not to my knowledge. No.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Do you remember much about downtown New Bern, how it was in those days?

J. R. PARKER: I think so.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What, tell me about it. Was it a quiet place? What was downtown New Bern like?

J. R. PARKER: Well, I don't know that I can answer that. It was quiet. We didn't have any of the rowdiness or fear that we may have today. Saturday night was always a big night, of course. All

the farmers came to town, the girls, and we usually walked the streets up and down Middle Street watching people. I thought it was a respectable town.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: There were businesses all over downtown?

J. R. PARKER: Uh huh.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Of course, that was the only place where businesses were located.

J. R. PARKER: That's right. I think the furthest from downtown that there was any business going on would be what we used to call Five Points where the Days Inn is now. Another block or two and you were out in the country. And National Avenue, for example, I don't remember any stores on that street.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Mamie Sadler?

J. R. PARKER: Mamie Sadler on North Pasteur and A Street. I think that's A Street. That was about the last grocery store going out that way and there were a couple over in Bridgeton. And I don't remember any stores except an old service station in James City.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Do you remember any particular places downtown or any particular stores or drug stores?

J. R. PARKER: Oh, yeah. Hill's Clothing Store. I always wanted to buy my clothes there. I used to know Mr. Hill before he died.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: At that time it was on

J. R. PARKER: Middle Street

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Middle Street

J. R. PARKER: Almost across from what was, I don't know whether

they call it McLellan's now or not. I don't believe it was as far down Middle Street as the Baptist church across the street from it.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I think you're right. Yeah. It's about the third business from the corner.

J. R. PARKER: And Bradham Drug Store there, of course. And, Kings Drug Store in Elks Temple. Gaskins.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Gaskins Drug Store.

J. R. PARKER: Wordy Gaskins' father. Yeah. And then as we gradually worked our way up toward high school, I think most of us hung out around Clark's Drug Store on the corner of Middle and Broad.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You mentioned Bradham's Pharmacy. Do you remember anything about that on the corner of Middle and Pollock?

J. R. PARKER: Yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What was that place like. I don't have very good memories of it in those days. This is where Mr. Bradham and his Pepsi Cola got going.

J. R. PARKER: Right. He and the older Taylor whose son married my Aunt Lila Taylor, that lived there on East Front Street. They were involved as I understand it in the development of the syrup, the manufacturing of it at the outset. The drug store to me was, very similar to the others that we hung out in but not as roomy as Gaskikn's, Clark's. Each one of them had booths and a marble counter where they made their sodas, and a drug store operation in the back. They were all pretty much alike. We used to sit in the drug store in the booths and sit there for hours paying for it by purchasing a Coke Cola or

milk shake. Why we didn't get run out, I don't know. There wasn't much else to do.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What about movie theaters? What movie theaters did you go to?

J. R. PARKER: What were they called? Kehoe.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: The Kehoe.

J. R. PARKER: On Pollock Street

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: That's the Athens. It's also called the Show Shop, but it was the old Athens Theater.

J. R. PARKER: That's right. That's right. And they lived on the corner of Craven and Broad Street.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Who? Who lived on it?

J. R. PARKER: The Kehoes'.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: The Kehoes'. Ok. On the corner of Craven

...

J. R. PARKER: And Broad.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Mr. Tom Kehoe.

J. R. PARKER: Craven and Broad. Diagonally across the corner from the court house. Do you remember where Major Willis had his undertaking place of work?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes, that's on the north east corner of Craven and Broad.

J. R. PARKER: North east corner. Right. Right.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And Mr. Kehoe's house was on the south east corner.

J. R. PARKER: It would be on the south east corner. And then, of course, the Masonic Theater.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What were those theaters like? What kind of movies do you remember there?

J. R. PARKER: Well, the one in, Athens, and I honestly don't remember it being called Athens, but it could very well be. I always referred to it by the family that ran it. The thing that I remember distinctly about that theater, there were three, maybe there were only two movies that I don't ever intend to forget. One was Ben Hur, and the Three Kings. Is that right, Three Kings? But, and this was in the silent movie days, and all of the sound effects were done manually behind the screen.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: By local people?

J. R. PARKER: By local people, volunteers, and my dad was one of 'em. Now whether he was involved in the two of them, I'm not real sure. But I remember he was involved in one of them, because in those days my dad became quite religious for awhile and we weren't really supposed to go to the movies, but we did. My mother arranged for us to go to our usual fifteen cent Saturday afternoon matinees, that sort of thing. But those two movies have always stuck in my mind.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What sort of sound effects did your father work on?

J. R. PARKER: Well, I can remember when they had the chariot race scenes, those sorts of things, and you were sitting out there in front of the screen. It sounded just like chariots riding down the

street and all the noise and the horns blowing; What he was doing back there, I have no idea.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where did you all go to church?

J. R. PARKER: Methodist, Centenary Methodist.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did the church then play a big role in you all's lives?

J. R. PARKER: Oh, yes. Oh yeah. We went to Sunday services faithfully. We went to prayer meetings on Wednesdays more often than not, but not as faithfully as we went on Sunday, to Sunday school and church.. The kids went to, I've forgotten how to pronounce that.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Epworth League.

J. R. PARKER: Epworth League on Sunday nights. We were involved in the Hi-Y program, also.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: The Epworth League was a young people's league. It met on Sunday night. I belonged to that too. I was an Episcopalian, but I belonged to the Methodist Epworth League.

J. R. PARKER: I remember that. Yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yeah, I remember that too. That was a lot of fun.

J. R. PARKER: I think we did better than they're doing today. I mean, about activities in that direction.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: The Methodist church was a pretty important church to, I guess, to a lot of people in those days.

J. R. PARKER: Yes, yeah. That and the Episcopal and the Presbyterian churches. Although, I think the Baptist was just as

active.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And the Catholics.

J. R. PARKER: Yes!

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: They were very active.

J. R. PARKER: They had a school you remember, a parochial school there on New Street.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I gather from all this that you might think that the church has played a major role in the life of New Bern in those days.

J. R. PARKER: Oh, certainly. Oh, sure. Absolutely.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: J. R., when you were growing up in New Bern, do you remember much about the industries of New Bern, what sort of things were going on to keep the town solvent?

J. R. PARKER: To me the obvious thing was Rowland Lumber Company. I still remember Rowland Lumber Company owning its own railroads tied in to the, what did we call it, the Norfolk & Southern; anyway, both the Atlantic Coast Line and the Norfolk & Southern railroads were the ones that ended up ultimately delivering logs to the mill. But that mill was from A Street all the way out to Jack Smith Creek, just about.

And everything, what would be north of Pasteur was all Rowland Lumber Company. It was a big operation. That along with the others, Pine Lumber Company. Would you like a cup of coffee or anything?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: No, thank you. I'm fine.

J. R. PARKER: Pine Lumber Company, and the old cotton oil operation there. I've forgotten now what they called that. That plus

the boat building operation, the Barbour Boat Works. We didn't have as many tobacco warehouses as they had say in Kinston or Greenville, but we had a couple I remember. A couple, we used to use them more for dances than selling tobacco, I believe. There around where George Street changes to National Avenue. Somewhere along in there where those streets crossed the railroad tracks.. I don't think there was a great deal more. There was a cotton gin here. I think that was involved with the cotton seed oil operation.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Was New Bern a big tobacco town?

J. R. PARKER: I don't think it was a tobacco town. I wouldn't put it in the same class with Greenville or Kinston, or, certainly Wilson, those towns.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You remember dances at the tobacco warehouse.

J. R. PARKER: Oh, yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You remember the names of those warehouses?

J. R. PARKER: No.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: How were these dances handled in the tobacco warehouse, was the whole warehouse used for a dance, or certain parts of it?

J. R. PARKER: Certain parts of it, mainly controlled by the lights. They were so big. I didn't go to all that many dances there, but I don't remember ever going to a dance and it was so full that they used the whole warehouse.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Do you recall whether the area was

decorated?

J. R. PARKER: No, not the ones that I went to. Something for the band to sit on higher than the rest was the stage, operation, the floor swept off, and that was about it.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Who played?

J. R. PARKER: I don't remember that.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You don't. What do you remember about medicine in New Bern in those days? What was it like?

J. R. PARKER: Of course, the one I remember most of all was A & O, the cough medicine, cough syrup, cold medicine, whatever they called it. It was manufactured by Mr. Anderson and Mr. Odum.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Joe, Mr. Joe Anderson.

J. R. PARKER: Joe Anderson

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: A & O Cough Syrup?

J. R. PARKER: A & O Cough Syrup. Oh yeah!

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: That came out of Anderson's Drug Store.

J. R. PARKER: That's right, yeah. I remember that.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You remember doctors in those days?

J. R. PARKER: Sure. Dr. Raymond Pollock was our family doctor. And, of course, I remember your dad and Dr. Jones, and Dr. Ralph Daniels to whom I was related by marriage. He married my aunt.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Dr. Latham?

J. R. PARKER: Dr. Latham. Dr. Wadsworth. Dr. Gibbs, of course. Dr. Hand, and Dr. Parker, the dentists.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did the physicians make house calls then?

J. R. PARKER: Oh, yeah, sure.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: How did the people in those days feel about their doctor. Was there a close relationship?

J. R. PARKER: I think it was a very close relationship. I honestly believe that in those days doctors were more a pillar of the community than they are today. They were held in higher esteem. I think that one reason for those observations is closer, more personal contact than you experience today. Well, now we have, just as a reference, we have at home a very good internist that we think an awful lot of, but even so, I don't think I would ever get as close to him or feel as close to him as I did to our doctors when we were in New Bern. I don't know whether that answered your question or not.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did people have any insurance in those days to cover medical expenses?

J. R. PARKER: Not to my knowledge.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You remember what doctors used to charge for a house call?

J. R. PARKER: A dollar, couple of dollars.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Ok. Did the trolley cars run out to your place?

J. R. PARKER: Uh uh. I do not think so. I don't remember, I don't remember a street car going west of Five Points, and I'm not real sure of that. I know that if you start off in Ghent it went down Spencer Avenue. It seemed to me like it ran along side of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroads until it got to Askew's corner - McCarthy's Store

- where the big fish pond/fountain was. You remember, there used to be a big fish pond with a fountain there. It would be Pollock and Queen, Pollock and Queen, yeah, and then it went down Pollock Street.

It seemed to me like it turned at Elks Temple and went, what would be, that would be south on Middle Street and then down South Front Street to Craven and back up Craven to the end of Johnson, and I think it turned around there, but somehow or other I vaguely remember it being in New Street to a stop in Frog Pond.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: No, I don't think it came down New Street. It crossed New Street at Craven, but I don't believe it was up on New Street.

J. R. PARKER: Well, now, didn't it go out Griffin to where National Avenue started, there at the railroad track?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I'm not sure, J. R.

J. R. PARKER: I'm trying to think. Broad Street was involved in it somehow, but I can't remember.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Let me ask what you remember about the old bridge at the foot of Johnson Street crossing the Neuse River.

J. R. PARKER: I know when it tore up in September of 1933.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: That was during the hurricane of '33. You remember that hurricane pretty well. What do you remember about it?

J. R. PARKER: It was very destructive.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You were living out at your old home place then?

J. R. PARKER: Uh huh. I remember water being in, water was as high as Craven Street, and the best I remember, it was a little beyond that. It wasn't to Middle Street, but it was, seemed to me like it was beyond Craven Street. Anyway, Dr. Daniels' home, which was on East Front Street, I remember that the first floor was flooded up to right underneath the ceiling.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where was his home on East Front Street?

J. R. PARKER: You know where those condominiums are now. They used to be Effird.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: The River Walk Condominiums.

J. R. PARKER: Ok. His home was a brick home just about midway that block, between Pollock and Broad, next door to the Rawls, facing the river. You remember that big wooden home there. I think it was where the Pamlico Farmer's Home was, and then Mr. West who ran the bus company. His home was right next door to Dr. Daniels on the south side.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: So they faced the river?

J. R. PARKER: Yeah. Almost directly across the street from Billy Dawson.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes. And the water was up to his ceiling

J. R. PARKER: Right under the ceiling. Yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Billy almost got electrocuted that night going from our house to his home. He had to swim across the Broad Street intersection, the water was so deep, and the next morning live wires were all over the ground there. If you'd walked across it, it

would have probably electrocuted you.

J. R. PARKER: Well, I knew a man, a milk man, being electrocuted almost in front of our house during that storm. Mr. Pate. He was a man from, what did they call that area up on the Washington Fork, going toward Street's Ferry. I guess it was called Spring Garden.

Anyway, his milk truck touched one of the downed power lines and he felt it. He didn't realize what it was when he stepped out of his truck onto the ground, and it killed him. We were in Sunday school and church at the time. When we got home, dad told us about it. Said don't go out there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I may have seen him in the small emergency room at St. Luke's after that. He was dead, but I think I saw him. But the bridge was demolished, destroyed.

J. R. PARKER: Destroyed. Yeah, and they had just rebuilt it. Wooden bridge.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: It was a wooden bridge.

J. R. PARKER: Uh huh. The best I recall it was a wooden structure and then they put an inch or so of asphalt and gravel on it to give it some stability, and safer gripping surface, otherwise it would be so slippery.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: How did folks get across the river after that?

J. R. PARKER: A man made make shift ferry there for awhile, and seemed to me like they put some planks on the railroad bridge and used that for awhile. I remember that we played Kinston, there, in football

the afternoon of the storm that night. And when we came home, we got word that the bridge was out, phones were all out. Everything was out. And the thing I remember about getting across the river was, the next Friday we played Roanoke Rapids or Elizabeth City in football, and we had to go out across Street's Ferry and come home on Street's Ferry. How long it took to replace the bridge, I don't really know. It had to be months.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Do you remember the fire of 1922?

J. R. PARKER: Oh, yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Tell me about it.

J. R. PARKER: It was across George Street from Cedar Grove Cemetery, that area from Queen Street on back out almost to the country side. It just burned out, and the next thing we knew, it was tent city.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Do you remember seeing the fire?

J. R. PARKER: Uh huh, oh yeah. Real scared just like all the rest of the kids.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You were about five or six then.

J. R. PARKER: I'd be six years old. And my dad was in the volunteer brigade that erected tents and established or set up cots and a kitchen, those sorts of things. I can remember that and as a reward, he was given a service pistol which as far as I know is still in the family.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: A service pistol?

J. R. PARKER: Uh huh. A colt.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I guess in those days everybody pitched

in to help out.

J. R. PARKER: Everybody.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What did you do about swimming. Did you go swimming much when you were growing up?

J. R. PARKER: Uh huh.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where did you go?

J. R. PARKER: Most anywhere. When we were, growing up, high school age, anyway, we used to go swimming in the little creek behind where Hatteras Boat Works is now located, back of the Shriver Nursery, seems like it was Shriver Farm. The Shriver that ran the florist.

In fact, James Reagan and his brother and I tried to help a little colored boy that drowned in that creek one day and we weren't there at the time, but we went down there to go swimming one afternoon and all of his kin folks and other kids were trying to get him out of the water and save him. I remember that. But later on, of course, we always went to Atlantic Beach whenever we got a chance or to the country club to swim in the Trent River.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: How did you get to Atlantic Beach?

J. R. PARKER: Used to go down to Morehead by car and ride a boat over to the beach.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did you drive to Morehead or take a train or what?

J. R. PARKER: At the very beginning we took the train when I was a kid. Oh yeah. I can remember going to Harlowe on Sundays to my grandparents for Sunday dinner, by taking a train from New Bern

to Havelock where my dad had arranged to rent a horse and buggy. And we took off down that dirt road to Harlowe just in time to have dinner and then get right up from the table and get back in that buggy and ride back and catch the afternoon train coming back from Morehead going back to New Bern. Yeah. But at first we rode the train down to Morehead.

The same train that we earlier had taken to Havelock. There was no paved road all the way to Morehead. The paved road going towards Morehead ended about, and it was brick, the best I recall, where Allen Pattens' farm was, along there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: That's not very far out from New Bern.

J. R. PARKER: That's not very far. Well, on Neuse Road where we lived it ended two hundred yards or so closer to New Bern than where we lived. And from then on to Jasper it was a one lane brick road.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: When you would get to Morehead, how would you have to cross to Atlantic Beach?

J. R. PARKER: We went down to one of the piers that offered boat taxi service, is what it really amounted to, and it would haul you across there for a fee. And they had a pier stuck out there in one of those deep water spots, probably two feet deep, that sort of place.

And when you got ready to go home, you came back and you picked out one and climbed aboard. When it got filled, away it chugged and you'd go back to Morehead, dragging bottom at times.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And you'd just walk across the sand dunes to the ocean and go swimming.

J. R. PARKER: Well, they had the bath houses there. I don't

remember a casino, dance hall like existed in the early 30's. I don't know whether it's still there or not. You remember when we were in high school they had big name bands there, but when we went over there as kids, the best I remember it was just a place where you went in and rented a locker to change clothes and take a shower afterwards.

A cold water shower, I can remember those. I don't believe there were any homes over there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yeah, I remember those bath houses too. That was an all day trip to Morehead in those days.

J. R. PARKER: That's right. Yeah. Yeah. Then we used to swim out at the country club.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yeah, I was going to ask you about that. What was it like swimming out there. Was that a good place to go?

J. R. PARKER: Yeah. By this time we were in high school and I can remember one time we were going to swim across the river and back. Alma Hall was in that gang, and Ben Hurst, and myself, Henry Smith, and Frances Roberts, and I've forgotten now who the rest of them were. Anyway, we started out to swim across the river. We got tired, and I was the only one that could stand on the bottom with my nose above the water and they all climbed on me and almost drown me.

I still remember that, and we never made it. We turned around and went back.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, I'm surprised you could reach bottom out there.

J. R. PARKER: Well, that's all I was able to do, and I was really

surprised. I didn't have any idea it was that shallow.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: When you swam out where Hatteras Yachts now exist in the creek, that water's pretty clean out there. Did you swim down stream any in the New Bern area?

J. R. PARKER: Yes. You remember where Kennel's Beach is up here? It's about four or five miles up the river. It's where Mrs. Parson, the Parson family, had a summer camp.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Incidentally, Carlton Parson is in New Bern.

J. R. PARKER: I heard yesterday that his wife has an art show.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Tonight.

J. R. PARKER: Tonight?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Tonight, yes, and there's a reception at seven o'clock. We're going to go to that, at the library.

J. R. PARKER: At the library. Well, we are going to the State-Carolina big screen basketball game at the Sheraton. You going?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: No, we're not going to go. We thought about it, but we decided not to.

J. R. PARKER: Well, friends of ours, right down the road here, invited us to go.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, Kennel's Beach is about four miles from here on the way to New Bern. Is that right?

J. R. PARKER: Uh huh. Are you familiar with the back roads between here and New Bern?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Not really.

J. R. PARKER: I think that's the one that is called River Road,

but it's the old crooked road. It follows the river back on to Reelsboro. Somewhere along there, you turn off and go to, they now call it Kennel's Beach, but there were three or four summer cabins there. Thomas Lee and Lila Taylor, my aunt and uncle, they had a place along there. We used to go to Bridgeton, across the river, every afternoon just about. My dad took us after work. He would pile us in the car and we'd go across the bridge and go to a little beach that was there about where the condominiums or apartments are now. They are closer to the railroad bridge than they are to the highway bridge. It was about right in there?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Was that Shady Beach?

J. R. PARKER: Shady Beach, yeah!

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: That was a good place to swim.

J. R. PARKER: Uh huh, and it was clean.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did you do much sailing?

J. R. PARKER: No.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Scouts, were you a scout?

J. R. PARKER: Yeah, I was in the eighth troop, troop eight.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Troop eight. Where was that, in Riverside?

J. R. PARKER: No. We held our meetings at Willis' Mortuary.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Who was the scout master? It wasn't Mr. Potter. Wasn't C. Green.

J. R. PARKER: I think it was Mr. Gossard.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Mr. Gossard, yes.

J. R. PARKER: I remember he was the one that gave me most of

my exams. I wasn't very good at scouting. I had the biggest problem with learning to tie knots because I was left handed. Still am. And he'd shake his head at me, trying to figure out how to explain to this kid how you could do it right handed. And I never learned to do it right handed.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: J. R., what do you remember about the depression in New Bern?

J. R. PARKER: Not to the extent that a lot of people did for the simple reason that my dad was a postal employee. He wasn't making much money, but he was better off than a lot of the other people who were really having problems. We always managed to have something to eat, clothes, a warm home, and living on a farm like we did, as small as it may have been, we had all the vegetables year round that we needed, and mother and dad put up canned vegetables as fast as we could do it in the summer time for the coming winter. That sort of thing. Killed hogs. Didn't have very much spending money, but we improvised.

We still had a wonderful time growing up. Things that we used to do, I can't really be too specific because I don't remember anything specific except when I had my Model-T Ford strip down. I had one of those.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Let me ask you one more thing and then I think we will close this. How has New Bern changed?

J. R. PARKER: Fundamentally, I don't think it's changed all that much. I really don't. I mean the atmosphere, oh sure, I think the character has changed, but I think under the whole thing, it's pretty

much like it used to be. You see more stores, the malls, nicer streets. People, obviously are much better off, more affluent than they were when we were kids. There weren't very many wealthy people in New Bern when we were growing up, as I recall, and those that were, were involved in the lumber business.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Is New Bern looking pretty good?

J. R. PARKER: I think its a very nice area. The whole place. I really appreciate what this historical boom has done to the restoration. I appreciate these things now a great deal more than I did when I was a kid. Didn't know enough I guess.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: J. R., I think this was an excellent conversation we've had. Before I shut it down, is there anything else that you'd like to speak to about New Bern and memories of New Bern.

J. R. PARKER: No, I can probably think of something, but I won't take up that much of your time.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, let me thank you for spending this time with me.

J. R. PARKER: I've enjoyed it.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: It's been fun talking to you and it's going to be very important to our Memories Program and for the Program, I thank you very much for doing this.

J. R. PARKER: My pleasure.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: It's really been great, and I've had a good time. Thanks a lot.

END OF INTERVIEW