

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

CLIFFORD SWAIN

INTERVIEW 914

This is Dorothy Richardson representing Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 900. I am interviewing Mr. Clifford Swain, interview number 914. This interview is being conducted on February 19, 1993. We are at Craven Community College, New Bern, North Carolina.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Mr. Swain, we're gonna start with your personal history; where you were born, your parents and siblings, and that kind of thing.

MR. SWAIN: I was born in Washington, North Carolina, August 6, 1946. I grew up there and went to high school there, and from there went to East Carolina University. That's where I met my wife to be. My brother who is five and a half years older than I am, his name is Linwood Swain, Jr., known as "Buddy" Swain, was already in New Bern teaching. My wife to be, the girl that I was sure was gonna be my wife, was from New Bern. I was offered a job. At that time, being a male and an elementary school teacher in the middle school area was a very good job market. You could pretty much go wherever you wanted to go. This was in '68. So I was offered a job in the Pitt County School system, and then I was offered a job here. It was New Bern City Schools then.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Excuse me. Who was your wife?

MR. SWAIN: My wife was Billie Utley. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Utley.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Excuse me. Was she a twin?

MR. SWAIN: Yes she was.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I had her in Brownies.

MR. SWAIN: Did you? (laughter) Well, her mother, Thelma Utley was a retired educator here in Craven County in the old New Bern city system.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Who was your father?

MR. SWAIN: My father was Linwood Swain, known as "Bud" Swain. That was his nickname. He was a salesman. He was raised pretty much in the Beaufort County area. His family, I think, was from Martin County, the Swain family. But he was a salesman. He went through the eighth grade in school. The family was tenant farmers and there was thirteen children in the family. It was a tough up-bringing during those times, Depression times. But anyway, he did real well as a salesman. Mother was educated. She was a nurse. Graduated from Taylor Hospital nursing training program over in Washington. She worked as a professional all her life. Those were my parents. Mother encouraged us to continue on in school because of her educational background. My brother got his undergraduate degree from Carolina and his graduate degree from Duke. Both of my degrees were from East Carolina. My undergraduate degree was in elementary education and my graduate degree was in counsellor education. I came here in 1968 to follow my wife to be, and my brother was already here so I had a place to stay, and that's where it started. Been here ever since.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Your brother, what position did he hold?

MR. SWAIN: He was a science teacher at New Bern High School and did that up until about four or five years ago. Then he became an instructor here at the college in the freshman biology sequence that

we teach out here. He's doing that now.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How long did you teach in the city school?

MR. SWAIN: From '68, I taught seventh and eighth grade at Central School. I had a split that I taught. Al Hardison was my principal over at old Central School, which no longer exist anymore. Those condominiums are over there now. I had a lot of good memories from that facility across from the Masonic Theater.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You used to teach with Miss Carter, Mrs. Willis.

MR. SWAIN: Yes, sure did, and Miss Walker.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Eula Mae.

MR. SWAIN: Yeah, Eula Mae Walker.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I went to college with Eula Mae.

MR. SWAIN: Is she still living?

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Oh yes, in Oriental.

MR. SWAIN: I knew she was in Oriental. I'm glad to hear that. I think of her quite often. She's a delightful lady.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: She's a smart lady.

MR. SWAIN: Very smart. I was one of the few men over there in that school, and this in '68 and '70 was in the early integration days, and it was a very tough time. Being a male, many times I got called on anytime there was trouble. The problem is, I was not always as brave as I looked. If anybody can survive those times, can survive just about anything cause those were some real tough times. But there were a lot of nice people and we got through it somehow. Education

survived during all that. But I started out at Central School.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did you have any outstanding students back then, white and black?

MR. SWAIN: Yes. As a matter of fact right here I keep a photo album that I kept. There's a 1969. We took these pictures, and the idea was that in the year 2000 all these students were gonna get together with me again, and so I've kept this all these years. But several that stick out in my mind. Jim Jones, who was a student of mine in the seventh grade, is now a test pilot and went through Annapolis.

Quite a gifted student. Don Carlisle who was a student in that same group stands out in my mind. In the tenth grade he committed suicide, but his memory is still strong in my heart. It really was, I believe, an accidental type suicide. He had some rough teenage years and there was a gun available, and I'm not sure how much he meant to do it or if it was an accident, but he was one of those special kids that I taught then. Snooky Hill, Roland Hill, a very gifted musician, I taught him. Diane Meadows, who went on to physical therapy, very gifted.

I'd have to go through and thumb to remember them all, but quite a few. Rex Willis, Jr., I loved Rex.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: His mother was a wonderful teacher.

MR. SWAIN: Well, he was a fine student.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I mean his grandmother, excuse me.

MR. SWAIN: Well, he's an attorney now you know. I'm proud of all these folks that I taught. Bill Ward who is an attorney here now. My secretary out here I didn't teach, but she was in school out there

about the same time. There's a lot of real neat folks though. The neatest thing I had happen to me is that as an elementary school teacher I taught that seventh and eighth grade group. I did it for a couple of years, and then I became a counsellor when H. J. McDonald opened its doors in the early seventies as a middle school counselor for half a day. They had some federal money and they let me do it cause I was starting to work on my master's degree in counselling. Then I went to New Bern High as a high school counselor. So a lot of these kids, I followed them. I went right with them. Then I came out here as a college counselor and then director of counselling, then dean of students, and then the position that I'm in now as a vice-president for Student Services Position.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: May I ask you, the community college concept was new to many of us. I imagine it took some thinking on your part to make the decision to come from a relatively secure system into one that was just forming and growing and a challenge. Tell me how you felt about that.

MR. SWAIN: That is an excellent question and a very intuitive question because that's exactly how I felt. In fact, I toyed with the idea of coming out here prior to coming and didn't come for the very reason you're talking about. I was an elementary school teacher.

This was during the Viet Nam era, Viet Nam war. While I'd like to think I'm a very patriot person, I wasn't excited about going to Viet Nam and I had a deferment as a result of being an elementary school teacher which made it even more attractive on top of the fact that

I enjoyed it, which was a rare commodity for a male in education. But it's an exciting age to work with. That sixth, seventh, and eighth grade age, they don't know whether they're kids or becoming adults, and it really is thrilling to work with. And because I wanted to be a counselor, that seemed to me to be a pivotable time in the formation of an individual. So I was excited about studying the psychology of an individual developing. That sounds more aloof than it was, but I was interested in seeing the development. Then as I worked with people as teenagers, it made it a lot easier to understand a lot of things. But to answer your question, after doing that as a high school counselor, the next step was this open door philosophy at the community college fit very hand in glove with this student centered philosophy of being a guidance counselor. So, most colleges were very restrictive on admissions. Then here was this animal over here that said, "Bring me your tired, your weak, your humble, your poor, and we'll take them as far as they can go", and it just kind of turned me on. It also was kind of a challenge too to see if I could survive in that environment, cause you didn't have a tenure. I gave up tenure when I came here. You go by year to year contract. I thought, "if I'm good enough I can make it, and if I'm not good enough", I wanted to see if I was as good as I thought I was, so I came.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How many students were here then? Were you in this location when you came?

MR. SWAIN: Yes. They had just moved here. I came here in January 15, 1975 and they had not been here long. The move had taken place

several months earlier as I remember. Well, no, it had been a year earlier because they moved down here I think the same time that H. J. McDonald opened. I think the two of them were being built about the same time. But they hadn't been here very long. I came out here for virtually the same money. The other thing that made it attractive is that this was twelve months and by then I had married and had a little baby. You were unemployed for three months during the summer.

A lot of people, this doesn't have anything necessarily to do with the book, but a lot of people tend to think that teachers have vacations in the summer. I always looked at it as unemployment and I'm telling you it was awful. This was an opportunity to work in the summer too.

Now the time was different because the public schools I worked typically from about seventy-thirty to about three-thirty or four in the afternoon, and out here you work eight to five, and that took an adjustment to get used to. That last hour in the day was hard to take down. But I came out here in January of '75. It was an adjustment.

It was kind of shaky. But one of the things that I found was that that mission statement of the community college and the mission statement of my chosen field in counselling were so compatible that I was right at home. I also found that human beings of all ages have the same basic needs and wants, and it was neat to discover that. I don't know what I thought people needed and wanted out of life, but I seem to categorize that certain ages had a different situation. While their environment was different, their basic need to be treated with respect and to be treated with love and dignity are exactly the

same no matter what age. It was nice to be able to help some of the students that I'd known ever since they were in the sixth grade to come over here and adjust as adults, and I'm still doing that. They come in even now. You know, they're in and out of here all their adult life and it's a whole bunch of them that I call my babies that I knew when they were children. As a matter of fact, I just wrote a letter of recommendation for one that I put in the box in there, and one of the paragraphs was that I'd known her since she was in middle school.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: And that means so much!

MR. SWAIN: It means a lot to me. I don't know how much it means to them, but it does mean a lot to me.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: When you first came, how was the college? What was it offering at the time?

MR. SWAIN: Well, it was just beginning to stand on its own as a college transfer, to have a college transfer program. They were just changing the name from Craven Technical Institute to Craven Community College. In fact I came before they changed the sign out front. The holes are still there from the letters that said Technical Institute and they took them down and put Community College. I remember when they did that. We did have a cooperative program with East Carolina University and taught college transfer through them. So it wasn't a great change.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How did that come about? Did that have to come directly from the state?

MR. SWAIN: No. East Carolina even now, as we do in some cases,

has satellite programs. When they see a need out in the community, we had a contract with them that they would come here and teach college transfer courses. They kind of just used our facilities and we worked with them.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: They furnish their own teachers?

MR. SWAIN: They hired their own staff, but we cooperated with them to do that.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Well, that says something about how far the college had gone for them to want to use your facilities.

MR. SWAIN: I think they would have gone wherever the need was.

In some cases the people that taught for them were also teaching for us, or they would allow us to hire someone and teach a course and they had some kind of deal that they could reimburse it. I don't remember the details of it cause I wasn't involved in it. It was a win/win for them, for us, for our people. Like North Carolina State right now has doctoral courses that are being over in Kinston and around.

They just take it to the people. So we already had the college transfer type stuff here, so it was easy enough for us as we met the accreditation standards to become a two year community college offering college transferable courses to four year schools. I didn't have anything to do with that. That was taking place when I got here.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: What was your role?

MR. SWAIN: I was an admissions counselor. I had worked here a summer before as a recruiter. They hired me, the college did, one summer to go out and talk to students about coming to school here,

the benefits of coming here. So I was familiar with how they operated.

And also as a high school counselor, all the colleges in the area I worked with in setting my students up to talk to them and that kind of thing. So when I came out here, I went to work as a college counselor and my job was to talk to people when they came in about the opportunities available here, whether they could transfer or not, help them get registered, and also to start offering some counselling services. While I think Craven Community College wanted to offer some before, and there were some fine people here in counselling before, I think I was just more determined about....that's not fair to say.

There were some good counselling things going on here. I just had a real interest in doing that; in getting some group stuff going and accenting personal counselling and academic counselling.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: That's what I was gonna ask. Was it more oriented toward academic counselling or personal help?

MR. SWAIN: Well, I'll tell you the truth. They had such a load on the limited staff, they didn't have a lot of time to do a lot, and we just slowly started making headway in doing more of those kinds of things. There were some wonderful people here. Frances Reesman was here as a registrar. She had a counselling background and she was outstanding. Some of the other folks, I don't remember their names, have come and gone. But at that, she was the premier person that I remember. She kind of took me under her wing and helped groom me for this new environment. But the college setting was different. She was a registrar in the registrar type position and had all the

mechanical headaches of how to register students. This is pre-computer days. It's quite a detail task. But she was very helpful to me.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did you teach any classes?

MR. SWAIN: No mam.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You weren't required to teach any classes?

MR. SWAIN: No.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: And you still stayed busy.

MR. SWAIN: All the time, because my role was to recruit. And by recruiting that meant going to all the high schools and making sure they were aware of what the programs were out here, and whatever media coverage you could get by hook or crook, cause there was no money to buy any media coverage. So you had public service announcements on a class starting or whatever. Everything from whether or not to buy pens with the college name on it or whether to put a billboard up, and working with almost zero dollars, and get the word out about the opportunities available here.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You, of course, had the students that might run into problems financially and you'd hear about them probably before anybody else. Did you have that?

MR. SWAIN: Yes. If they came in, we had to help them get squared away with financial aid. We had a part-time financial aid director at that time. It was all new ground. Everything was new. While the universities had been doing this stuff for years, they'd been doing it with an elite core of people. People that they had hand picked and selected students. And we were doing it with virtually anybody

and everybody who walked in. There was a lot of things that just had to happen before we could learn how to do things. We had to learn how to handle a financial aid program so that students could benefit from it and the college could benefit from it and it not be taken advantage of. It took us a while to zero in on regulating what academic success you had to have in order to continue in financial aid. Veterans benefits were a big thing at that time cause the Viet Nam war was dumping folks out into the world of work. And with all their unique needs, somebody had to understand about veterans benefits. All of these are federally regulated programs that you're audited on and you can get in a lot of trouble on if you don't do right. So we're learning as we go and trying to stay on top of it, and it's amazing what a good job we did do to be honest with you, with as much change that came down the pike at that time.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: As sort of a medium between the community, getting your students, did you get a lot of help in the community? Did you feel that the community understood what ya'll were trying to do?

MR. SWAIN: Certain sectors of the community did. People who were in similar fields of work or folks who were referring students to us, knew the benefits that we had going for us. One of the most difficult things that I've been involved in, and I pretty much ever since 1975 have been one of the main ones here at this college responsible for promoting the institution, for getting information out about the institution. Now I have a staff that does it for me,

but in the early days I did it, in terms of writing articles or doing the ads myself or whatever. They're still even today, after years and years and years and thousands and thousands of students, I'll still run into someone today who will say, I didn't know you had a nursing program out there, or I didn't know you had a college transfer program out there. In the early days it was really difficult because the image of the college was, and I think it was characteristic of all community colleges, was that really it was absolutely the last place that you went. If you could not go anywhere else, you went there. Thank God that there was a last place to go, but, it was absolutely the last place to go. And more than once at a party or a social gathering, someone would say to me, "You know, if my daughter doesn't straighten up, I'm gonna send her out there to see you." I think they thought it was a compliment. But when you take a lot of pride in what's going on and knowing that we had to meet the same accreditation standards of other schools and the same accrediting agencies accredit us that accredits East Carolina University; still, I understand that kind of thinking. I really do. I guess the only way that you could feel a little bit of an affront that I feel when I hear that would be to be in this role and to have invest so much of your time in this area.

So I guess in a nutshell what I'm trying to say is, I understand that type of thinking. But I guess we felt, and still do feel, that this is such an important mission. We take a lot of pride in being the one to do it when nobody else can for a student. While the general feeling of the public sometimes is, "if you can't go anywhere else,

you go there", the other way that we look at it is that "we're here to help those who may not be able to go anywhere else as well as those who can go." We have a bunch of them go through here. One young man I'm thinking of that I probably shouldn't mention his name without his permission, is working on the, or did work on the space shuttle as an engineer. He came here and went to school with us, and could have gone anywhere, but his mother was ill and in a nursing home and he didn't have the money and he came here. He got his education. He went on to NC State and he went on and on. Many, many times our students when they're written up in the paper, they write them up as the last school they attended and that they're a graduate of a four year school, and we don't always get the credit. I don't say that being bitter. I say that with a lot of pride because we're very proud of the Brad Sneedens and the David McFaydens and the Tyler Harris'.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Did Tyler finish?

MR. SWAIN: Yes. He came to school here.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: His brother was your wife's age. Bobby and Dorothy.

MR. SWAIN: Uh huh. So, we have a lot of folks come through here. This is a humbling type work too because while we don't carry the image of being the NC State that I went to or the UNC Chapel Hill that somebody went to, there isn't a lawyer in this town that hasn't been here for in-service training that we offer through continuing ed. There isn't an accountant who hasn't probably been over here to do some type of training that we offer as a part of our educational package. Not only do we offer curriculum courses towards

four year degrees and two year degrees and technical degrees, we offer a lot of continuing education for people already in fields of work and we're their support educational office here. They don't usually go buy a sticker from the bookstore and put it on the back of their car, but we probably do as much for this community in terms of updating and uptraining on skills as, well, we do more than anybody in that regard. Even teacher certification. When teachers need renewal credits, we do it out here.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I didn't realize you had that.

MR. SWAIN: Sure. We do it through continuing education. Along with all the firemen in the area that get certified, get certified through here. All the emergency medical technicians, through here. The policemen, all the policeman training, all the basic law enforcement training, is all through here.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I sort of think you need to advertise.

MR. SWAIN: Well, you see, now you're saying to me the same thing that I said earlier about that. We do that. We talk about it all the time. We have a little half hour television show that last year played 156 times and we talk about it. We talk about these things all the time and there are articles in the paper. But let's face it, it's not a murder, it's not a rape, it's not the most fascinating information in the world unless you happen to be captivated and sitting in the presence of someone as flamboyant as Clifford Swain telling you about it. (laughter) Unless you're in need of that service, it doesn't spring out at you. Many times we do have just the reaction

that you had from the public, is that they say, well, you should tell someone. Well, we do talk about it all the time, but unless you're a captivated audience, it's just not the most interesting news in the world with everything else that's going on. (laughter)

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I guess with my background, I know how much good it has done. So I've always been interested and I was sick about the bond issue when that didn't pass.

MR. SWAIN: We were too.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I think it was the time and how it was presented with the other. But, hopefully, that can be. I think Mr. Hunt, whether you like him or not, I have a feeling that he stressed community college and hopefully that's going to come on down. In the News and Observer yesterday there was one of the articles about the community colleges and training was an investment. And in the Sun Journal, that column that O'Conner had down at the bottom of this picture, he mentioned community colleges in overall programs for the state. So, hopefully.

MR. SWAIN: Well, Gov. Bob Scott, former Governor Bob Scott, as president, has done a wonderful job for the community college selling what we do. But our society right now is in such a turmoil of trust and understanding and people not really being able to believe and have confidence in everything they see and hear. Also there's a feeling right now of "I've got to take care of myself first and then everything else can come second. And if you're gonna give me a choice of whether to pay my taxes for something else or I get to keep it, I'm gonna keep

it because I've had it taken away from me so much." That type of thinking, I think, doesn't help either. We had a lot of wonderful people, this is a very unusual bond referendum in that a lot of folks said, "Hey, I think the college is great. I think ya'll are doing great." In fact, that was the premier thought through the whole thing. It's just people ended up saying, "I think it's wonderful. I just don't want to spend my money on anything else right now." That's true in health care. It's true in so many things. I don't know that we can jump that hurdle right now anyway.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Well, I pledge to do my part. Let it be known.

MR. SWAIN: Well, thank you.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Just listening to ya'll and your dedication...

MR. SWAIN: I tell you where God has blessed me is that I've sat in this building right here and I've seen lives changed over and over and over again. I remember a lady who came to see me who had some real mental illness, had attempted suicide several times, had attempted to kill her children, kill herself, and came to us as kind of almost as an out-patient from one of the mental health agencies in the area.

As she got her strength back and watched her build herself up, got back with her family right, got the success she needed under her belt as our instructors lovingly helped her through. That's something I think that's a lot of times under-rated, is the one on one attention that our instructors give students. I know that everybody that works

out here isn't perfect, but there are an awful lot of people who really do care or they wouldn't be working out here for some of the low wages that they work for. They have changed lives and made people productive citizens again. Some of those folks even come back and go to work for us and start helping others. A lot of real touching scenarios that take place. If everybody could see what I've seen, then it'd be easy for them to be committed and dedicated.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I've said that. I've had good friends who couldn't hide their prejudice and they would say how can you feel the way you do? Well, I've had the opportunity because I have been exposed, they haven't.

MR. SWAIN: Yeah, exposure makes a difference. I tell you, I'm the one who has benefitted. I mean, it has been a blessing to me.

In fact, I wonder how I could have been so lucky to do something that I get paid for; to have good bosses like Thurmond Brock, Steve Redd, that really are good people who really do care. There are so many people who don't have that in their life. I get up in the morning and I'm, ninety-nine percent of the time, excited about coming here, happy to be involved in it, feel like I'm a worthwhile person and get paid for it too. I'm a lucky, lucky person.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I think we're lucky.

MR. SWAIN: There are folks who might argue that with you.
(laughter)

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: No. I have a child your age, Dorothy. Your generation have been, I think maligned, about your tendency to be me,

and to hear you expressing these views...

MR. SWAIN: Well, that is a "me, me" type mentality cause I'm benefitting. (laughter) But see, that other "me, me" mentality, you don't ever get happy with that. This is peaceful feeling.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Your instructors here, I'm really not clear about this, your teachers here, do they belong to the state retirement, do they get the medical benefits?

MR. SWAIN: Yes. We're state employees, but we don't fall under the same category as public school employees do, the teachers with their tenure and all of that.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You don't have tenure.

MR. SWAIN: Do not. It's a year by year contract.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: For everyone?

MR. SWAIN: For everyone, that's right. The board approves your contract every year. You get hired again every year. I mean, in this day and time, most people are aware that if you're doing a good job, you really don't have to worry. It's not quite like government positions that are at the pleasure of the governor that you can just say good-bye to anytime. There is a feeling of security out here.

It's like a family. I have observed over all the years that I've been here that people are given every opportunity that have problems.

I have never seen anyone mistreated or not have a chance to right whatever might be objectionable by their supervisor.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I didn't remember to ask Dr. Redd, who is on your board now?

MR. SWAIN: Well, our board is made up of representatives from three different groups of political folks. The county commissioners appoint four, the school board appoints four, and the governor appoints four. So that's twelve people and they are appointed through those areas. They represent a broad cross section of the folks in Craven County.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Do you know who's on it now?

MR. SWAIN: Yes. I don't know that I can name you all twelve, but I'll try. Linwood Brown is our chairman right now, Kathleen Orringer is our vice-chairman, Ed Miller who is a retired industrialist, Jane Stubbs, a business lady here in town, Jane Ashford, Doug Nelson, Bill Edder, Sidney French, Roger Bell.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: They are county commissioners aren't they?

MR. SWAIN: Well, they also happen to be county commissioners, but Roger Bell and Sidney French also serve on this board.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: They were appointed by their board?

MR. SWAIN: Roger Bell was appointed I believe by the school board, and Sidney French, I'm not sure who appointed him. I believe that was school board appointment too.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: And they can be both county commissioners and...

MR. SWAIN: They can be. They just have limited slots they can serve. Joe Elliott from Havelock also serves on our board, Donald Heath from Jasper.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: So, you're geographically...

MR. SWAIN: Right. Will Thomas who is an administrative person with Carolina Tell and Tell, and I believe that about wraps it up. I think that's most of them.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: How often do they meet?

MR. SWAIN: Once a quarter by plan, and more often as needed. And, of course, their committees meet all the time, the different committees.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: They have standing committees that function.

MR. SWAIN: Right.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I wasn't clear about that. Mr. Swain, where do you see the college going now? How do you see it for the future?

MR. SWAIN: Well, I've given you earlier some information about how the college was perceived in the early and days and how it may still be perceived by some. That image, because of economics and because of more understanding, more people being aware of and more folks taking advantage of the services out here, that image is changing everyday. More and more people are saying, "The smart thing is for my son, daughter to go out there for a couple of years." For one thing, while it isn't cheap anymore, even to come here, it's cheaper than the universities. About a third of what it would cost to go to a university.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Excuse me. In view of the legislature being asked to consider raising tuition at the state universities, do you think you might be asked to do the same?

MR. SWAIN: They've done it every time with us, so I'm sure they

will. When I came to work here, tuition was less than thirty dollars a quarter. Now it's two hundred dollars a quarter. So for a year now, you're looking at six hundred plus books which are just as much as tuition. A book is a hundred bucks almost. So, you're looking at \$1,000 - \$1,500 to go to school out here while you're living at home. If you go to a university, you're looking at three to four, five thousand, somewhere in there and whatever living expenses that may be involved. Every time there is an increase in tuition, I see us getting it too. I think that what you will see is that it will still be cheaper here. This is the viable form right after high school education for the future. There's no question about it. In states like California and Florida who have a very large community college system, in some cases it's unheard of to go anywhere other than to the community colleges. It's just the most logical way to go. You go there. It's a little less expensive. You get your first two years out of the way, and then you go on to the university. The universities have warmed up to this very nicely too. Initially, I think there might have been some threat of competition, but they understand we're taking people they wouldn't take sometimes, as well as taking people who could go there. If they survive two years with us, then they're absolutely gonna survive with them. Our survival rate, once they leave us and go to a university, is much higher than their own survival rate of students there.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I didn't realize that.

MR. SWAIN: We are a very attractive feeding ground for these

four year schools, so we've become real partners. This has become a very, very attractive way for the universities to have solid students as juniors and seniors; as well as, the world is changing and the old idea of a four years liberal arts degree being just what you need to be able to make it in life is gone and the technical skills and the technical expertise now is paramount. A lot of people are getting highly skilled technical training with us and then going to the university and getting complimentary courses for two years and getting a specialized technical degree, a Bachelor's of Technology. That is becoming very attractive in the world of work and marketing and manufacturing and those fields, with more and more automotive stuff coming down the line. Without a skill, I mean, you got to have something to sell in order for somebody to give you any money.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: But you know, Mr. Swain, I firmly believe that students need that basic two years, a-b, you know, that background in a general education. I think it makes them bigger people. Not just technology all the way.

MR. SWAIN: Well, there is a lot of that stirred in with it, because without that basic education, you can't do the math. See, that's the new awareness.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I am talking about romance languages, history, literature and art. I mean, I like to have them exposed to that as well as the technical end of it, ideally.

MR. SWAIN: Yes, ideally. You're point is well taken. The problem is nobody's hiring folks who have just that anymore. You have to have

the other. Hopefully, they come back and pick some of that stuff up later. And there are some people that just don't have the propensity towards that.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Yes.

MR. SWAIN: Anyway, I see the future as being here. I can remember when I had the title Dean of Students. I almost remember being kind of hesitant to even tell anybody that that was my title because you kind of didn't really think of anybody as being a dean out here. Now, we've got a ton of deans out here, and generally they are looked at with a lot of respect in the community as they move about because they have become real experts in certain fields. So there is a different image that's taking place now.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: There was something I forgot to ask Dr. Redd. Your library facilities, do you have a good library?

MR. SWAIN: We have an excellent library. It is designed to support our curriculums, but it has a lot more in it than just that. It certainly is not in any competition with the local public library, except in the supporting of our curriculums. It has a lot more of the technical support. It's a pretty good library in addition to what its special function is and it's open to the public. Anybody can use it.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: I didn't know that.

MR. SWAIN: Yeah.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: But I wondered if students would have to motor over to Greenville to get access.

MR. SWAIN: To do research or whatever. No, got it right here.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: The funds for that come out of your general fund I reckon.

MR. SWAIN: Yeah. It's all part of the services that we have to offer in order to be an accredited school.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Can you think of anything else you would like to tell us about the community college?

MR. SWAIN: Well, I don't know exactly what your folks that are doing this want, whether they just want some historical stuff on the college or what. I feel like I've been more giving you just my own personal feelings.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: That's what we wanted.

MR. SWAIN: I don't know if that's what you're after or not.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You see the college as a vital part of Craven County and the state.

MR. SWAIN: If you were to cut it out, if you were to push a button right now and take away everything that it has done for this, not what I've done, but what the college has done for Craven County, there would be such a hole, such a void in everything from law enforcement and fire training and the support services for local businesses and industries.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Nursing.

MR. SWAIN: Nursing. It would have such a dramatic impact on the economy of this area, it would be unbelievable. But that's not to say there aren't other agencies that have the same kind of impact; social services, health department, whatever. But there is no question

that it is one of the most vital in this area. The thing that is kind of a turn on for me is that it is a pro-active agency.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Not reactive.

MR. SWAIN: Not reactive. If you get people educated and you get them trained and you get them earning a living, then they quit being a burden to other people, they get pride and self esteem, they become contributors, they become members of churches and organizations, and they come back and they want to be alumnus and helpers of others. They become people who lift up. If you took everybody that's been to school here and you took their two hands and used them as kind of a bridge, it could hold up a lot in this county.

If you didn't have that, then you would have an incredible need for reactive agencies, which I very much support. I'm glad we have reactive agencies. But if I can teach you how to keep from getting the flu and how to keep from getting a cold and how to take care of yourself, how to keep from getting into trouble, how to support yourself, then I've eliminated the need for a lot of reactive funding that is really a terrible burden on society.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Well, you sold me.

MR. SWAIN: Well, come on out. (laughter) I'll sign you right up. What we need for you to do is be out here teaching.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: But I'm sold on it. I agree with what you say. And I hadn't thought about it, in the future this will be even more, and nationwide.

MR. SWAIN: Absolutely.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: You won't just immediately think about, "I've got to go away or send my child away to get this education."

MR. SWAIN: And not just your child. I met a young lady the other day who quit school because she got pregnant. She's in her twenties now, got a two year old child. The idea of her picking and going to Carolina is impossible, I mean, next to impossible. She's not going to be able to do that. So, is she locked in for the rest of her life to aid to single parent family? Is she locked in the rest of her life to working as a retailer in a store for minimum wage? Or does she, as I explained to her, have the opportunity to come out here while her mom or somebody keeps the child, apply for financial aid, and go to college and get two years of college, and then drive over to East Carolina, get her four year degree and be a registered nurse with a four year degree or to be a school teacher. That's the person that it's really making an impact on in addition to my son who's fresh out of high school and this is a good place for him to come.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: Oh, I'm so glad.

MR. SWAIN: So those people that couldn't go; the housewife who got married early, or didn't think she wanted to go to college, wasn't ready to go. I'll never forget we had one lady who came to see me years ago. If I told you her name you'd know her because her family owns a business by this name. It's a very predominant New Bern name.

She came to see me and she said (and if she reads this books she'll know, if this story's in it, who it is) she said, "I never got a high school diploma. Nobody knows it. My husband doesn't know it. I went

off to school. They thought I graduated. I didn't. I've just kind of bluffed my way through and I want to get that." So she came out here, got her GED, got her adult high school diploma, which is awarded jointly to the Craven County schools and us, went on and took college courses. And if my memory serves me correct, got her four year degree.

But she would have never been able to do that. We had a sixty-five year old man who came to see me one day and he said, "I never learned to read and I've always wanted to", very articulate, and we taught him how to read.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: He had compensated.

MR. SWAIN: He lived a lie all his life. It's amazing the people like that that the college has had an impact on. It is a ministry and it is one that I've been real proud to be a part of.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: And I'm glad you are.

MR. SWAIN: Well, thank you.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: And I thank you for talking with us.

MR. SWAIN: It was an honor to talk with you. Bless your heart.

END OF INTERVIEW