

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

ARLESTUS ATTMORE

INTERVIEW 206

This is Dorothy H. Bryan representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 200. I am interviewing Arlestus Attmore, interview number 206. This interview is being conducted on February 3, 1993. We are at the home of Arlestus Attmore, 2719 Moore Avenue, Pembroke.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Mr. Attmore, would you please give me your full name?

MR. ATTMORE: My name is Arlestus Attmore.

DOROTHY BRYAN: When and where were you born?

MR. ATTMORE: I was born in the city of New Bern February 2, 1925 at 22 Biddle Street.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Biddle Street is in the Duffyfield area, right?

MR. ATTMORE: It is in the Duffyfield area.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Who were your parents?

MR. ATTMORE: My parents were George and Mamie Dawson Attmore.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What about brothers and sisters? Did you have brothers and sisters?

MR. ATTMORE: I had three brothers, one who is dead now. The names of my brothers are George Attmore, Jr. who is deceased, Haywood Barnes Attmore, and Walter Garrison Attmore. I had a sister but I do not remember her because I was quite young when she died. I believe I was three years old when she died. Her name was Thelma Lucille Attmore.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Where did you stand in the line of children? Were you the youngest?

MR. ATTMORE: I was number nine of the ten that my mother had. I had a baby sister to die during childbirth, so that left me being the youngest member of the family.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Would you give us the name now of your spouse and the children that the two of you had?

MR. ATTMORE: I am married to Geraldine Marie Harris Attmore. The names of my children are Ronald Arlestus Attmore, Metoff Attmore, and Cynthia Arlene Attmore.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What about the neighborhood that you have lived in most of your life? Where have you lived the longest period of time?

MR. ATTMORE: The longest period of time that I lived in was on Second Avenue, 720 Second Avenue. I lived there for a period of about fourteen or sixteen years.

DOROTHY BRYAN: You did live on Main Street at one time, is that correct?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes I did live on Main Street.

DOROTHY BRYAN: You were probably an adult.

MR. ATTMORE: I was an adult at that time. But during my early childhood I lived on Second Avenue.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Do you have any vivid memories of the local neighborhood in which you lived the longest period of your life on Second Avenue?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes, they are quite vivid. Most of the adults in the neighborhood worked. However, there were some who stayed at home, and those who stayed at home looked after the children who were in

the neighborhood.

DOROTHY BRYAN: So that goes back to an old concept "everybody's children."

MR. ATTMORE: Yes. As for the games we played and playmates, my playmates were James Vines, Hubert Vines, Robert Shepherd, Freddie Grice, Howard Henderson, Robert Lee Martin. There were a few others from around the block.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What were some of the games you played as a child?

MR. ATTMORE: We played baseball. We played with marbles, and we played war games with homemade toys you might say. We made our own toys.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Were you good at marbles and baseball?

MR. ATTMORE: Well, I did very well in baseball, but at marbles I believe my niece Thelma was better.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Aside from the games you played, what other things did you do for amusement as a child?

MR. ATTMORE: Well, as for home entertainment, mostly we listened to the radio, the different programs on the radio such as The Lone Ranger, The Shadow, and other stories like that.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Did you ever go swimming for amusement?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes I did.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Where did you swim?

MR. ATTMORE: In the Neuse River. I learned to swim. My brothers taught me to swim. My oldest brother, George, had a rowboat and he used to carry us out, get in the middle of the river and they would

throw me overboard until I learned to swim. Of course my mother didn't know anything about it until my grandfather told her about it.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Did she stop you or did you continue?

MR. ATTMORE: Well, she tried to stop us but we continued. The way in which she found out that we were really going in swimming she would observe the color of our eyes. We would stay in the water so long until we would get the pink eye. And of course with the skin, the way in which our skin was arranged after we would get out we would be what we called water sogged. She would whip us about it with the hairbrush but that didn't stop us.

DOROTHY BRYAN: I heard my husband refer to the skin test too. But now you said they would row you out in a boat?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes, a rowboat.

DOROTHY BRYAN: But they would just drop you off.

MR. ATTMORE: They would throw me overboard.

DOROTHY BRYAN: And you would have to swim, sink, or whatever.

MR. ATTMORE: Yes. They would see that I was sinking, they would jump over and get me, and they kept right on until I learned to swim. That is the manner in which I learned to swim.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What schools did you attend as a youngster?

MR. ATTMORE: As a youngster, first of all I attended the Catholic school and thereafter, after the first grade, I was transferred to New Bern City Schools.

DOROTHY BRYAN: That being West Street?

MR. ATTMORE: That being West Street.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Would you describe West Street, the physical buildings at the time you attended?

MR. ATTMORE: At the time that I attended West Street we had the main building which housed the principal's office, Mr. J. T. Barber, and all of grades down through the seventh grade. And of course we had another building which was a one-story building which housed the students of the high school. We also had a tin building which housed the fifth grade. Mrs. Ruth B. Houston taught in the tin building, and also Mrs. Carrie Fisher taught in another part of that tin building which was the Home Economics department.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Were the buildings all brick? You already said one was a tin building. There was just that one tin building aside from the other buildings?

MR. ATTMORE: There was also another building across the campus, however, I don't believe it was used as a classroom. It was used as a meeting place for the scouts.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What about the furnishings, your desk and this type of thing?

MR. ATTMORE: The desks were bolted to the floor. They had ink wells, part wood and part cast iron.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Do you remember any of your teachers?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes, I remember quite a few of them. First grade, Mrs. Gladys Redding; our second grade, Miss Catherine Martin; third grade, Miss Jennings; fourth grade, Miss Willie Cordon; fifth grade, Mrs. Ruth B. Houston; sixth grade, Mrs. O'Hara and Miss Stein combined;

and the seventh grade, Mr. Percy Jenkins. Those were my teachers in the elementary school.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What about high school? It probably would be more difficult to remember them, but were there any that made a lasting impression on you in high school?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes. Professor Frederick R. Danyus who taught me math, Mr. Robert Boley who taught me science and chemistry, Miss Callie Roach who taught me English, and also Mrs. Laretta Smith who taught me English also. That's all that I can remember now. I had a Miss DeVon, one of the late teachers that came to teach in our system. She also taught me English.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What about extra-curricular activities? Did you take part in any? What were some that they had at that time?

MR. ATTMORE: Well, some of the extra-curricular activities would be, well, so far as sports was concerned, football. We did not have an organized basketball team but we had an organized football team. I played on the football team for four years. I made captain of the team my junior and senior year. Mr. Robert Boley was my coach during my junior and senior year. My freshman and sophomore year was Mr. Frederick Danyus and Mr. Wallace Booker.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Was there anything else outstanding that you remember about your years as a student at West Street?

MR. ATTMORE: Well, yes. Every Monday morning we would assemble in the auditorium and we would receive talks from our Principal, Mr. J. T. Barber. He would tell us of the things that we were doing wrong

and give us praise on the things that were being done right by us.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Do you think this helped the students?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes it did. It really did. We're finding that the students were quite different from the students of today. They did not create as many disciplinary problems in the classroom as they do today. Maybe because of the fact that the family was a closer knit, was closely knitted, then as it is now. One could do something wrong in the classroom, the teacher was allowed to spank him. Sometimes the teacher would spank the individual, send a note home for his parents and he would get another spanking at home. And with the teachers and the parents working hand in hand no one got too far out of line.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Was there anything else about your years at school that you would like to comment on right now?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes. I played in the band. I played in the first organized band.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Who had the band at that time?

MR. ATTMORE: Mr. Percy Jenkins. We played in the band. There were twenty-two members in that band. Of course with the war years coming in, Mr. Jenkins had to go to service. He was drafted in the Navy. Of course while he was away we had a new band director, Mr. Mizell. He was a product of the Johnson C. Smith University. He came and took over the band while Mr. Jenkins was gone.

DOROTHY BRYAN: You finished high school in what year Mr. Attmore?

MR. ATTMORE: '45.

DOROTHY BRYAN: From that graduation did you go to the service

or did you go away to college?

MR. ATTMORE: I went to college one year, thereafter I went to the Marine Corps.

DOROTHY BRYAN: How long were you there?

MR. ATTMORE: I was in the Marine Corps exactly three years.

DOROTHY BRYAN: I don't want to get to that topic yet. That's the one you have checked, but I want to come back. When did you return to college and finish up your work?

MR. ATTMORE: I returned to college in 1952. I spent my freshman year at Johnson C. Smith. While there I played football. Of course after I got out of service I transferred to Shaw University to be closer to my parents and also to members of my family, for I was married at that time.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What was your major?

MR. ATTMORE: My major was social studies.

DOROTHY BRYAN: I'd like to move on to some of the other topics before we continue with school. I want to come back and talk about your experience as a teacher and a principal, but first I'd like to cover some of these other topics that you wanted to speak on. One was your time in the service. Would you comment on that a little bit more please?

MR. ATTMORE: I was inducted in the service October 2, 1946. I was stationed at Camp LeJeune for the entire period of three years. However, we were placed aboard ship three months out of the year, the naval ship, three months out of the year. We would rotate. I

was in one of those companies that rotated. I was in the 2nd Marine Division. After breaking boot camp I went to the 3rd Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion. My commanding officer was Capt. Charles Knuckles.

My Sgt. Major was Sgt. Major Cecil B. Moore who became one of the outstanding lawyers of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I was placed on a 40mm, the gun that was called a "pom pom." My gun captain was Corporal James Grant who continued to stay in service and he came out as Sgt. Major.

DOROTHY BRYAN: The Marine Corps was segregated at the time.

MR. ATTMORE: Yeah, at the time that I went in it was segregated. Because the first and the second and third AAAR, Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, was composed of white troops and the third was composed of black troops. Then after they took the guns away, then they sent me to the 2nd Medium Depot Company which was a supply company.

We handled ammo, all sorts of supplies, and what have you. My company commander then was First Lieutenant Ned Emmons. We did not have any black officers at that time.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Being in the service, then, you were not too much bothered by the inconvenience of those of us who were civilians, such as the rationing. You didn't experience any of that naturally.

MR. ATTMORE: No we didn't have anything like that because everything was plentiful. Butter was rationed as I understand. Meats were rationed, and gasoline was rationed, and whole lots of things were rationed.

DOROTHY BRYAN: I'm sure you've heard your mother speak about

these things and those of us who were here.

MR. ATTMORE: Yes.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Another topic that you chose to speak on briefly was the streetcars. What do you remember about the streetcars in New Bern?

MR. ATTMORE: Streetcars were operating before I remember them in the operation. The only thing I remembered about the streetcars, that they were parked up near Rhem Street in back of the old water works, that is, the building that we called the water works was called the building that our electricity was produced. They had steam generators and they turned the turbines in order to generate the electricity for the city. The foreman was Mr. Brinson. The firemen were Mr. Tom Moore. I remember Mr. Tom Moore. Let's see, there were several others that I do know but I just don't remember right now. I just don't recall. Oh yeah, Mr. Bunting, and also his son. Of course there were more than cause they worked around the clock twenty-four hours.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Do you remember any interesting people as you grew up in New Bern?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes. I would say Rev. R. I Johnson was one. He was one of the leading black people in the community. Of course our doctors; Dr. William Mann, Dr. Mumford, and Dr. Martin. I remember those people. And of course Mr. J. T. Barber who was our principal. I think he was principal for about forty-five years before he retired. But those were some of the outstanding people. Also Mr. I. P. Hatch

who was the undertaker at that time who always had something to say. He was quite an interesting man.

DOROTHY BRYAN: On the other side of the coin, do you remember any people as you grew up that were termed "characters" that were not necessarily an inspiration but they were interesting in other ways. I can remember one or two myself. To give you an example, there was a person they used to call "Happy." Do you remember him or anyone like him?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes I remember Happy and Shovel Joe.

DOROTHY BRYAN: A story I heard you tell last week about a person you know, the person was an interesting person I think because of what he did. Do you remember when Fred Latham came to take your picture?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes.

DOROTHY BRYAN: And you mentioned his father. He may mention that himself but would you tell that story to us again please.

MR. ATTMORE: Yes. I remember Fred Latham's father, Doc Latham. He had a boat. The boat was in the boathouse right at the foot of James City bridge on the New Bern side. Of course everyday, every single day of the year, Dr. Latham would go swimming. Whether he took the boat out or not he would take a dip. No matter how cold it was he would swim. Nine times out of ten you would see him with a mouth full of tobacco. He chewed "Brown Mule" tobacco.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Okay, now I think you said you knew him because you shined his shoes.

MR. ATTMORE: Yes. He used to come to the barbershop and I shined

his shoes for five cents.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What was the name of the barber shop and where was it located?

MR. ATTMORE: The name of the barber shop was The People's Barber Shop and it was located on Middle Street downtown area.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Do you remember the names of any of your other customers?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes. Dr. Moore who was the veterinarian. I remember Mr. (George) Fuller who ran the music shop. Mr. Abe Coplon who ran the apparel store. Also Mr. (Louis) Howard who ran another apparel store, and Mr. (Harry) Lipman who was also in the same business. Mr. Holland, a very interesting character. He didn't do anything. He was a professional gambler. He didn't do anything but walk up and down Middle Street with a stack of fifty cent pieces in his hand and he would play with them all day. He would go up to the Elks club. He was a member of the Elks club. Mr. Holland, the last time that I talked with him, he had not been in an automobile in say about eighteen or nineteen years. He had not left the city limits of New Bern.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Do you recall his first name?

MR. ATTMORE: John Holland.

DOROTHY BRYAN: One other topic that you wanted to speak on and that was under politics, the sub-topic was bootlegging.

MR. ATTMORE: Well, we know that prohibition was on. I find that the people who seem to be more successful in earning a living were those who were engaged in bootlegging. I think about the most famous

area in which corn whiskey, we would say, was produced was the Harlow area. Patrolmen did not have the radios on their automobiles then.

They would have to catch the bootleggers. They would have to outrun them, and of course they caused some of the bootleggers to start souping up their automobiles to outrun the lawmen. One of the main things that they used to do to their cars was put heavy loading springs on them, so that when they would take out the back seat and load the car down it would look like a normal car. Some became smart enough to add extra tanks on their car and that is where they would pour in the whiskey into the tank. When they would get to their destination then they would turn a spigot and it would come out.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Anything else about bootlegging?

MR. ATTMORE: (laughter) Well, there were those who were caught. They sent them away for a year and a day, and of course they would come back and do the same thing and continue to do the same thing until they were caught again. I do not wish to call names, but there was one young man who had been sentenced so much until every time he was sent up they would automatically give him his job at the library in Raleigh.

DOROTHY BRYAN: All right, let's move on to your career as a teacher. What year did you start and where did you begin your teaching career Mr. Attmore?

MR. ATTMORE: I began my teaching career here in the city of New Bern and the year was 1955, the fall of 1955. I started at J. T. Barber High School. I was also assistant football coach and

baseball coach, head baseball coach at the high school. I taught history. That was the first year. I taught history, I taught band, and I taught math my very first year.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Was that the first year for the high school?

MR. ATTMORE: It was the very first year for J. T. Barber High School. Prior to that it was a junior high. That was in '55. And of course the year '56, that's when it became the high school.

DOROTHY BRYAN: This schedule lasted for you for about how long were you an actual teacher before you went into administration?

MR. ATTMORE: I was a classroom teacher for fifteen years before I went into the administrative part.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Which did you prefer?

MR. ATTMORE: Really and truly I preferred being in the classroom because there I was able to take care of my own problems, but when I became assistant principal I had to take care of all of those problems that others could not take care of. That made it quite difficult, especially dealing with many individuals and many different personalities and what have you.

DOROTHY BRYAN: When did you actually become an assistant principal? Was that with your move to New Bern High?

MR. ATTMORE: Move to New Bern High in the year of 1970.

DOROTHY BRYAN: All right then. So that meant that you were in the midst of the integration process.

MR. ATTMORE: Yes I was.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What was the attitude of the students over there?

MR. ATTMORE: Well, being thrown together like that it was something new for everyone, especially the students. There was animosity that existed among the students. The whites were against the black and the blacks were against the whites. The situation was not a pretty one.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What about the teacher relationships of blacks and whites?

MR. ATTMORE: Sort of cool. They just put up with each other and that was it.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What were some of the most flagrant discipline problems that you experienced over there in the midst of integration?

MR. ATTMORE: Well, one thing the riot. I believe the manner in which it came about, the black students wanted to put on a special program for Martin Luther King's Day. The principal, who was Mr. H. P. Honeycutt, Sr., did not think it was necessary or he was not aware of the significance of such a program, so he didn't do anything about it. He wouldn't let Mrs. Jones put the program on. The white students came up with the idea, well, if the blacks are going to have a program for Dr. Martin Luther King then we'll have one for General Robert E. Lee. On the day of the riot, prior to the riot, we were assembled in the auditorium and some white students came in with the Confederate flag, and that is when it started.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Okay. Was this problem a long lingering problem? How did you solve it?

MR. ATTMORE: Well, the manner in which we went about in solving

the problem that particular day, we asked Mr. Honeycutt to call over to J. T. Barber and have Mr. Fields to send Mr. William Guion over to help to control the crowd, especially the blacks, and we did. I also advised him to let them go home so that there would be a cooling period. Of course during the process of the riot there were several or more students that were hurt, and there were several that were hospitalized. But my advice was for Mr. Honeycutt to let the students go home. He called the superintendent, then Mr. MacDonald, and Mr. MacDonald gave him permission to let them go home. Mr. MacDonald also called a special meeting with the members of the school board, the principal and the assistant principal. Of course during that time I don't believe that Mr. Honeycutt considered me as a member of the staff, because he made a statement that he had called members of his staff together in which he excluded me.

DOROTHY BRYAN: You were not at the meeting?

MR. ATTMORE: I was at the meeting with the school board.

DOROTHY BRYAN: But not at the meeting with the staff?

MR. ATTMORE: Not at the meeting with the staff.

DOROTHY BRYAN: And you were the one who had suggested that they do these things.

MR. ATTMORE: Yes.

DOROTHY BRYAN: I would like to come back a minute and find out what position was Mr. William Guion in at the time you called him?

MR. ATTMORE: Mr. William Guion was monitor over to J. T. Barber. He's a former student of mine. He was a monitor.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Okay. Was the program ever held?

MR. ATTMORE: No, the program was never held.

DOROTHY BRYAN: This must have been around January. Now for the rest of that year, how did things go as far as discipline?

MR. ATTMORE: Different fights or sporadic fights in the hallways, especially during the class periods when classes weren't in. Those students that were walking the halls, they would get into fights.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Did this carry over into the following year?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes it did. It did not heal itself. It carried over into the following year. As a result of this riot being carried over into the following year, they had Mr. Honeycutt to resign and they asked Mr. Fields to come over and be principal of the high school.

DOROTHY BRYAN: And he was there for the remainder?

MR. ATTMORE: Yeah, he was there for the remainder until he retired. He was there for a period of ten years.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Somewhere along the line did they not set up an interracial council of students, or do you recall?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes they did.

DOROTHY BRYAN: How helpful was this?

MR. ATTMORE: It was quite helpful. I would say it was quite helpful because of the fact that the blacks and white who were involved, they began to see eye to eye, they began to agree on certain things. That helped to straighten out the situation. Of course when Mr. Fields came over, we worked out of my office and I pointed out to him those people who were responsible for starting the trouble. We called them

in and we had a talk with them and he told them that they could not remain in school if they would continue to carry on as they had been carrying on in the past. As time passed on all of the teachers began to care for Mr. Fields and they tried very hard. The students cared for him because they pointed him out as being a very fair man. He was one who would listen to them. He believed in giving everybody a hearing. I think that was about eighty-five percent of it.

DOROTHY BRYAN: That was going to be my next question, but you have answered it. You're saying that he brought calm to a very uneasy situation.

MR. ATTMORE: Yes he did. I would even go further to say that Mr. Fields was the man that saved New Bern.

DOROTHY BRYAN: He was at the right place at the right time.

MR. ATTMORE: He was at the right place at the right time.

DOROTHY BRYAN: And it's my understanding that he did not really want to accept that position.

MR. ATTMORE: No, no. He really did not want to come over as principal but they sort of persuaded him. They talked with him and they kept after him to come over and finally he gave in and he decided to come over. With Mr. Fields going over to the high school, that sort of smoothed things out.

DOROTHY BRYAN: In all of this upheaval that was caused by integration, can you think of the advantages of integrating? What were the advantages?

MR. ATTMORE: There were advantages and disadvantages. Of course

our students were exposed to a better curriculum. More courses were offered at New Bern Senior High School than at J. T. Barber. Just coming out of the classroom there was something that I observed. I was given the job of accounting for all of the textbooks which were to be issued to the students. I noticed that every time a new shipment of books would come in, we had teacher's manuals for them. But at J. T. Barber, our teachers never received any teacher's manuals. All of the new books would come in, what few we did get, and then some of them would be new ones and some would be rebound books or reconditioned books. We would get them. New desks for us, they would give us the ones from New Bern High School and bring them over to J. T. Barber and take the new desks that were slated to be placed into the J. T. Barber school and carry them over to the white school. That's the way it was done until Mr. Fields stopped that.

That is the way things were done. Speaking of disadvantages, when we became integrated, I really believe that our black boys and girls lost a lot, because I remember the honor system that we had at J. T. Barber. Each time they would have the program we could expect at least 10, 12, 15 students to be inducted. But when we became integrated, if we could only get one or two to be looked upon as honor students, that is from one or two blacks, we were doing very well. I think more or less that our boys and girls sort of lost sight of what they were suppose to be doing there.

DOROTHY BRYAN: You feel that they in other words had lost interest in trying to make the Honor Society and you think this is the reason

we did not have as many.

MR. ATTMORE: Yes.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Which brings me back to another question that I would like to hear you comment on a little bit more. The question that I have for you is what was the relationship between white students/black teachers, black students/white teachers?

MR. ATTMORE: In the beginning the relationship was not good. It seems to me for black students to do just the slightest thing in a classroom they were ready to bring them to the office to be disciplined, no matter how small the incident. Or they would place them in the halls without their desk. When I would see them on the hall I would ask them why were they out on the halls, did they have a pass, and they would tell me that they had been put out of their classrooms. I would take them carry them to the classroom and tell the teacher to teach them, take them back into the classroom and teach them.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What about extra curricular activities? Were students, the ones that transferred to New Bern High, black students, fairly active?

MR. ATTMORE: Our black students were very active in football, basketball, track, wrestling. None ever made the golf team due to the fact that they claimed that they did not have a handicap. To keep all the students on the golf team white they would practice at the Country Club in which blacks were not allowed to be on the greens out there. They were engaged in all the sporting activities but golf.

Very few on the baseball teams because they were careful to have all whites on the Babe Ruth teams and wouldn't allow the blacks to play on the Babe Ruth teams.

DOROTHY BRYAN: How much improvement did you see in race relations by the time you had left New Bern High?

MR. ATTMORE: Comparing the race relationship from the beginning when I first went there down to the year that I was about to leave, it had improved greatly due to the fact that we had reached a point where we did not have any racial upheavals we might say. The athletes especially who participated on the various teams, they had created a very good relationship with each other. In classrooms, both black and white teachers had a change in attitude towards the students and things were beginning to come around.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Do you think students had changed their attitudes too toward their teachers whether white or black?

MR. ATTMORE: In this day and time I believe that things are a little bit worse so far as black ones are concerned.

DOROTHY BRYAN: You said you thought black and white teachers had changed their attitude toward the students. Do you think the students were more receptive to having to be taught by a person of an opposite race?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes they were more receptive.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Okay. When did you retire Mr. Attmore?

MR. ATTMORE: I retired in 1981, the 29th of June.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Which ended how many years?

MR. ATTMORE: Which ended twenty-six years in the system.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Were you involved in any other major change other than integration during your teaching career? Had the county and city merged?

MR. ATTMORE: They were in the process of merging the last year that I worked. I retired prior to the year that the city and county were suppose to merge.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Is there anything else that you'd like to say about the schools or your career as a teacher/administrator?

MR. ATTMORE: Well, as a classroom teacher, I really enjoyed it. I looked forward to the day of going into the classroom and teaching our boys and girls. Of course as for the administrative part of it, just like I said before, there were always problems. Some of us are not self-disciplined and therefore we do not wish to take care of our own problems, so therefore they were dumped in my lap. We had to go through a process of trying to find solutions in order to take care of their problems.

DOROTHY BRYAN: In other words, as a teacher, as you said before, you had only your own problems, as an administrator you had everybody's problems, teachers and students alike.

MR. ATTMORE: Everybody's problems, teachers and students alike. Because often times our teachers had problems with students and students had problems.

DOROTHY BRYAN: I saved one item for last and that's church. What has church meant to you and will you tell us where you attend

church?

MR. ATTMORE: Well, I attend First Missionary Baptist Church of 819 Cypress Street of the city. I have been there for quite some time.

My mother carried me there when I was a baby in her arms. Over the years First Baptist has been a great pillar of strength to me. Because really and truly I really believe in the Lord. He's done so many wonderful things for me and He's still doing them. He's responsible for making the man of me that I am and I thank Him for it every day.

I pray each morning and night for the members of my church family that we walk in harmony and in peace and that we continue to do so.

DOROTHY BRYAN: How has the church changed over your lifetime? Have you seen any changes in the church?

MR. ATTMORE: I have seen quite a bit of changes in the church, especially physical changes in the building. I vividly remember the pot bellied stoves, Mr. Dan Reynolds playing the pipe organ in which air had to be pumped into the bellows.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Excuse me, did you ever pump those pipes?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes I did.

DOROTHY BRYAN: My husband has done it and he's not even a member.

MR. ATTMORE: Yes I did. I used to pump air into the bellows so that Mr. Reynolds could play the pipe organ. Of course there were people that were outstanding members of the church; your mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Scott, Deacon Bryant who was chairman of the deacon board, Deacon Clark, Deacon Satchel. Our neighbors, the Summners, they were there, the Davenports were there, the Taylors were there.

Let's see, Bessie Jordan Newkirk was there, whom I believe is the one who holds the oldest membership of our church. I think she's been there a little bit longer continuous membership of our church. And lots of people that have gone on.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What were some of the activities that you took part in as a child at First Baptist?

MR. ATTMORE: As a child, Sunday School whenever my mother would permit my brother to bring me over for Sunday School. If not, I had to go to Star of Zion for Sunday School. My very first Sunday School teacher was Mrs. Mary Smyers who was a member of Star of Zion Missionary Baptist Church. All of the children of the neighborhood, First, Second, and Third Avenue area, or if they belonged to Clinton Chapel or St. Peter's or First Baptist or what have you, the parents would always see to it that they attended Sunday School. That is if they did not get back to their churches, they would see that they attended Sunday School at Star of Zion Missionary Baptist Church which seemed to be the centrally located church in the neighborhood and we were taught by Mrs. Mary Smyers. As I understand she was an old school teacher for a long time.

DOROTHY BRYAN: What about your involvement as an adult? How have you been involved?

MR. ATTMORE: Well, as an adult I've served on the trustee board. From the trustee board, right now I'm serving as chairman deacon. I'm the church clerk. I'm in various other capacities right now but those are the main ones.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Do you have any information on how First Baptist responded to the fire of 1922? We know that St. Cyprian's basement was turned into a hospital. Do you know anything about First Baptist, how it was used?

MR. ATTMORE: No more than what my mother told me and that's very vague.

DOROTHY BRYAN: I understand that they were housed there, people did stay, I've heard Mrs. Cherry mention this. But of course you were not born at that time.

MR. ATTMORE: No.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Has church life in general changed much as far as you can tell?

MR. ATTMORE: Yes it has changed. Because as a youngster, as for an example, I used to see my mother sitting on the pew with other members of the church, of course that was during the Depression years, and they would share money to put in church. They would sit there and they would share money to put in church. I do believe that during those times the members of the church were more closely knitted than they are now. When they said, "Let us", everyone would join in. Of course you have different facets now, you know, to the church program.

Maybe you have a group over here that did not wish to work with this group over there and what have you. But that's the difference.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Is there anything else that you would like to talk about concerning your church, the church as an institution?

MR. ATTMORE: I would say that the church itself is one of the

leading institutions especially for the black people because they had no other place to turn to. When problems would arise, they had no other place to turn to. The church was there. I remember all of the churches of the city, members used to belong to the "Pound Society."

When an individual would get sick, not only the members of your church but all the members of the neighborhood churches, Mt. Calvary, Star of Zion, Guilfield, First Baptist, St. John's, St. Peter's, all of them, Clinton Chapel, they would come together and these meetings would take place and they would give the sick reports and then they would provide food or what have you for those who were ill. This organization was called the Pound Society. I also remember we used to have the citywide revival. Rev. Garrett used to head the citywide revival along with other leading ministers of the community. There would be hundreds and hundreds of people, young as well as old, going to the moaners bench. You could hear them praying and singing and preaching up into the wee hours of the morning. You could hear them almost all over town. They had a glorious time. Each one, each person that was converted was baptized and they had the opportunity to choose the church in which they wanted to join.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Where did they have the revival services for that many people? Was there a church in New Bern that could accommodate that many?

MR. ATTMORE: I think St. John's was the biggest church. They would go there or either to Little Rock. They would always try to pick a church that would accommodate the crowd. And they always had

large crowds at these revivals.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Is there anything else that you'd like to talk about, Mr. Attmore, that we did not cover?

MR. ATTMORE: I think that's it.

DOROTHY BRYAN: Well, I'd like to thank you again for letting me come in. I certainly do appreciate it.

MR. ATTMORE: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW