

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

MARY CATHERINE MULLINEAUX VAN BUSKIRK
(MRS. WILLIAM GEORGE VAN BUSKIRK)

INTERVIEW 431

This is Marea Kafer Foster representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 400. I am interviewing Mary Catherine Mullineaux Van Buskirk (Mrs. William George Van Buskirk), interview number 431. The interview is being conducted on Monday the 26th of April 1993. We are in Kitty's home at 1408 Rhem Avenue in New Bern.

MAREA K. FOSTER: Okay. That was a mouthful, Kitty, wasn't it? Now, Kitty, give me your full name again just for the record so they'll know that you know your name.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Mary Catherine Mullineaux Van Buskirk.

MAREA FOSTER: And your birthdate.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Birthdate is January 22, 1926.

MAREA FOSTER: And you were born in New Bern.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Right.

MAREA FOSTER: And your mama.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: My mama is Mary Bray Mullineaux.

MAREA FOSTER: Mary Van Delia.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Mary Van Delia, right, Mullineaux.

MAREA FOSTER: Exactly! Your daddy's full name.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Joseph Byrne Mullineaux.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay. And where was Big Joe born?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Big Joe was born in Frederick, Maryland.

MAREA FOSTER: And I know Miss Mary was born in New Bern.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, mama was born in New Bern.

MAREA FOSTER: And you have one brother.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: One brother, Pat.

MAREA FOSTER: And his full name.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Joseph Byrne, Jr.

MAREA FOSTER: And how did he get the nickname Pat?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: God only knows.

MAREA FOSTER: And how did you get the nickname Kitty?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Well, I think, Marea, it was my Uncle Ed, who I called "Punk", "Uncle Punk", who was my daddy's brother. And evidently from the time I was born I was a little on the wild side and Uncle Punk said she's a wildcat and Kitty came from the wildcat.

MAREA FOSTER: How 'bout that. (laughter) I thought maybe it came from Catherine.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No.

MAREA FOSTER: I've never heard that before.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: That's how it started.

MAREA FOSTER: Kitty, when you were born, where were Miss Mary and Big Joe living?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: In the Judge Gaston house on the corner of New and Craven. They had the side that you entered on New Street.

It was two floors. Had the downstairs and then the bedrooms upstairs and a nice big screened-in porch upstairs where we used to sleep in the summer time.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh! So you remember that house?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh yeah. Well, we lived there a couple of times. We lived there when I was born and then we moved down to East Front Street next to the Claypoole's. Senator and Mrs. Simmons, were

on the corner and then the house where we were. And I think mama and daddy rented that house from Helen Margaret Duffy's daddy, Bryan Duffy.

Then the Attmore's lived next door. Then we stayed there, I don't know how long, Marea, I guess I was eight or so and then we moved back up on New Street and didn't stay there long and then we came out to Ghent. I think I was about ten when we came to Ghent.

MAREA FOSTER: Uh huh. Well, Kitty, who were your playmates downtown?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Helen Bowman was my very best friend; and Johnny Green, we played together a lot; and Helen Margaret Duffy; and Virginia Jacobs. I can't remember, Rea. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: Don't feel bad. I couldn't remember my playmates either.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: But, Helen Bowman and I, from the time I can ever remember, and Johnny Green, they were my playmates.

MAREA FOSTER: Real buddies. You told me before we started the interview about a little incidence that happened when you lived on East Front Street and I was surprised. And anyway, if you don't mind telling it again. No names of course.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I hope I can tell it delicately, Rea, I don't know. Of course you hear about it all the time now, but back when I was seven years old, what was that in '32?

MAREA FOSTER: '33

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: You know, things like that didn't happen. Helen Bowman and I were over at the rivershore. We lived on East Front.

Helen was spending the day with me. We always spent the day over across on the rivershore because we'd go down there and worry Mr. Justice. He didn't want children down at "his" end of the rivershore.

Bo would tag along cause she would do about anything I wanted to do.

But anyway, we were over there one day and this man was sitting on the wall, you know, where you sit down there. Bo and I walked by and he said, something, I don't know, I don't remember what he said, and we both looked at him and we kept walking. In fact we walked a little faster. We got up a little further and Bo said, "Kitty, that man exposed himself!" So anyway, we went home and I told mama and mama called daddy at work and daddy came home, and boy he was furious! He wanted me to tell him what had happened and I wouldn't tell him. So he called Harwood Bowman, Bo's father, and Harwood came from the bank. Bo told her daddy. Daddy called the sheriff, Berry, and daddy told him what had happened and he said, "I've got my gun loaded", and Sheriff Berry said, "Joe, sit tight til I get there." So he came. The sheriff knew who the man was. The funny part about it was that I had played with one of his daughters at, you know, times. Daddy said, "Well, I'm gonna shoot him," and Sheriff Berry said, "No, you're not." He said, "I'm gonna go see him". And then later he saw him and the Sheriff called daddy and told him, he said, "Joe, I told him that if he is ever at the rivershore again he'll be arrested." So that was indecent exposure.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, Kitty, that was really quite a traumatic thing for a young person eight years old.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh my Lord! Bo and I about had a fit! We

were really shook up about it. I was more shook when it happened than Bo was, but Bo, remembered it. It took her a long time to get over that.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, I'm sure things like that went on.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: But nobody knew it.

MAREA FOSTER: But nobody talked about it. It wasn't publicized like it is today, and maybe just as much did. But that's a terrible traumatic thing to happen to a young person.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Well, Bo and I didn't know what was going on.

MAREA FOSTER: I know, but it's still a traumatic thing.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. Right.

MAREA FOSTER: So, nothing's changed in the world, has it?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: It's gotten a little worse I think.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, yeah, I think so. Well, Kitty, when you were living downtown, you started school at St. Paul's Catholic School.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: So tell me all about that.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: We were living on New Street right across the street. I was five years old in September when we started school.

I would have been six in January. Pat started to school at the Catholic school and for some reason or other I went to school with him that day on the first day. Mother Pauline, who was the Superintendent, said, "Kitty, why don't you go in with Sister St. Helen in the first grade", and I said, okay. And, incidentally, Mother Pauline was the only one that called me Kitty. All the rest of the Nuns called me

Mary Catherine, which I didn't like too much. But I went and sat in in the first grade and I kind of liked it. The next day I went back to school again. Well, back in those days, Rea, you know you could go, lord, I walked all over downtown New Bern.

MAREA FOSTER: That's right.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Mother never knew where I was. She knew I was okay cause I'd be at the Hawk's or somewhere around. Oh, I'd been going two or three days and Mother Pauline called mother and said, "Mary, why don't you start Kitty in the first grade, she's been going for three or four days", and mama said, "Delighted!" I think she was glad, well, now, 'I'll know where that kid is.' So I started to school at five which was a big mistake, because after I knew I was going to school I hated it and never liked it after that. You know, I was going because I didn't have to, but then when I had to go, that was another story.

MAREA FOSTER: It wasn't fun anymore.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, and I hated every day that I ever went to school.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, tell me, what was the school like? It was in the convent.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. The Nuns lived upstairs. The school was downstairs. The building is still there now. They had a basement where we would eat our breakfast or our lunch. And of course, if you were a real good Catholic you went to church every morning. Sometimes you'd carry an egg sandwich, for your breakfast cause you couldn't

eat before you went to communion. We'd eat breakfast down in this basement. The restrooms were down there and I always remember they were spooky, I mean super spooky, cause they were so dark. On the first floor you walked into a room. There was no foyer or anything.

There was just a big room and the steps were over to the left. Straight ahead was a big room that was the first, second, and third grades.

MAREA FOSTER: First, second, and third. I was in there too.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And then across the hall was Mother Pauline's room, fourth and fifth. That was a small room that was on the front.

Then in back of that was Sister Marie Imelda's, seventh. Wait a minute, Marea, fourth and fifth and then sixth and seventh, and eighth and ninth was over back in back of the first, second, and third. They added the eighth and ninth later. But then, there were eleven grades in school and you had to go the last two years at public school. Of course I never got that far cause we left New Bern. But I was looking forward to going to public school.

MAREA FOSTER: So there were nine grades in the Catholic school?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. Then, yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: I only remember the one room that I was in for the first grade. Then what did you do about lunch? You mentioned eating breakfast or lunch in the basement.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: About everybody went home for lunch. I went to my Grandma's Bray's because she had a boarding house, rooming and boarding house, the Gray Moss Inn down on Pollock Street. So I always went to lunch at Grandma Bray's. Most everybody went home.

MAREA FOSTER: Like we did in public school.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, cause everybody lived close enough. I think some people brought their lunch. I don't remember. But it seems to me like that everybody was gone at lunch time. You know, you went in all different directions.

MAREA FOSTER: Right. Well, now, Kitty, when you were living out here, out in Ghent, in fact in the house next to the house we're in now, did Big Joe take you to school each morning?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No, cause daddy went to work real early.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, then how did you get to school?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I rode my bicycle.

MAREA FOSTER: 'Cause at that time there weren't any city buses, isn't that right.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Uh uh. I rode my bicycle and rode down Queen Street, and used to catch hell from mama and daddy cause I rode down Queen Street cause I'd hit the railroad tracks wrong and fall and get hurt. (laughter) So then they finally persuaded me to go down Pollock and then turn up Middle.

MAREA FOSTER: And there was not that much traffic.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No. Good Lord, no, there was no traffic. Then there was a crazy woman that lived on Queen Street right by that little cemetery that is still there.

MAREA FOSTER: Right.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And she used to sit in the window. I'd always stop and talk to her and she was crazy as a tick. Do ya'll remember

her?

MAREA FOSTER: I don't. Do you remember her name, Kitty?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I have no idea what her name was. She lived with a brother.

MAREA FOSTER: This cemetery that faces Queen Street would have been right behind Mr. McCarthy's house.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Right. Yeah. Do you remember her?

MAREA FOSTER: I don't remember her but I remember the McCarthy house and the fish pond.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh, lord, yeah, the fish pond! Sure.

MAREA FOSTER: It was wonderful. Well, Kitty, what time did school start?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: School started at nine. Mass was at eight.

MAREA FOSTER: And you had to go each morning?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No you didn't have to, but if you went the Nuns really liked you a lot better. (laughter) I would go every day in October, Marea, because that was St. Teresa's month. I thought that if I went to church every day, maybe something good would happen, I'd be better or something. So I used to go and that's how Sister Marie Imelda and I got to be such good friends, cause she thought that was so nice that I would get up and ride my bicycle all the way to mass at nine o'clock and have a scrambled egg sandwich. By the time, I got around eating it, it was all soggy and oh God, how in the world I ever did it I don't know, but it was always good. And then I'd stop at Kafer Bakery...

MAREA FOSTER: On Middle Street.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, if I had managed to get a nickel or dime or something from mama or daddy and get, what do you call them?

MAREA FOSTER: A cinnamon bun?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: A cinnamon bun.

MAREA FOSTER: Kitty, do you remember what that bakery looked like?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah!

MAREA FOSTER: Please tell me cause I have no idea.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Well, now, as I remember it, Rea, there was a liquor store on the corner.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, you're talking about the one on Broad Street.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, that's the one. What are you talking about?

MAREA FOSTER: Well, I was wondering if you could remember the one on Middle Street.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No, I don't remember that.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, okay, on Broad Street. Okay.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: On Broad Street is what I remember.

MAREA FOSTER: I can remember that one too.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh, God, yeah, and the round bread that your daddy used to bring home every day at lunch.

MAREA FOSTER: I know it. It was so good. Well, Kitty, at school did ya'll have to wear uniforms?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No, we didn't wear uniforms. You wore dresses

below the knee. You couldn't wear shorts, when the weather got hot. You couldn't wear slacks. Course girls really didn't wear slacks then. Your dress had to be below your knee and your sleeve had to be below your elbow. That was Father Monsignor Irwin that had that rule.

MAREA FOSTER: Why? I mean...

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: 'Cause women were not supposed to be exposed. And your collar had to be up like this.

MAREA FOSTER: Had to be buttoned at the neck.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Buttoned at the neck. 'Cause he would run people out of church on Sunday, visitors or people passing through. He would say, "You are not dressed decently to be in church." And of course it would hurt their feelings and they'd leave.

MAREA FOSTER: This would be with an open neck shirt or blouse.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: An open neck shirt or short sleeves.

MAREA FOSTER: He had that much power.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Authority, sure.

MAREA FOSTER: Authority I should say.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And another thing about the school, Marea. I wouldn't give anything in the world for the years that I had in that school. Now, at age 67, I wouldn't. Then, I didn't like it worth a darn, cause there were too many demands, but that was good for a lot of children. Every other year we would have a play that Mother Pauline would put on. It would be a big deal and they'd have it at the theater.

MAREA FOSTER: At the Masonic Theater.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: At the Masonic Theater. I mean, everybody in New Bern went to the plays cause they were so good. There was one Nun, Sister Serafine, who I did not get along with at all, and she made me be a daisy in one of the plays. (laughter) They had a daisy ring and Catherine Hatem sang the songs. Catherine Hatem and Derda, Agnes Shapou Derda, they both had nice voices and they sang. Then there were five or six girls that formed a daisy chain. Sister Serafine made me be a daisy and I'll never forget that. I had to be sent to the chapel because I didn't come to practice. That was another thing at Catholic school. The Nuns lived up stairs. Each Nun had her own bedroom. They had a beautiful little chapel where the blessed sacrament was there all the time.

MAREA FOSTER: Upstairs?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. And they had a seven o'clock mass there every morning, and Monsignor, would come over for that. If you disobeyed at school, then you were sent up to the chapel to pray a little bit and ask God to forgive you for whatever you had done. I used to love to be sent to the chapel because I knew I'd have fifteen minutes and I could go up to the third floor and go through all the trunks, old trunks, that the Nuns had

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) Oh! You were terrible!

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And that's when I found out that Nuns went swimming, because there were bathing suits. They were wool and they had sleeves and they came down low and little rubber shoes that they

wore.

MAREA FOSTER: And the sleeves came below the elbow.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, and they were high neck like this and they were wool and they were black. I was up there and I didn't gage my time too good and Abigail Connolly, who later became a Nun, and she was a super good girl, and Mother Pauline sent her up to get me out of the chapel and Abigail couldn't find me and got me on the third floor. I said, "Abigail, my Lord, these Sisters go swimming!" Well, we got interested and the next thing we knew Mother Pauline was up there. And I said, "Mother Pauline, I didn't know you all went swimming", and she said, "Well, of course, we go swimming. We're normal. We're human. We're just like everybody else." (interruption)

She said, "Well, of course, Kitty, we get hot and when we go back up to", where was it? Where did they go? Somewhere that they went back to the Mother House, Maryknoll, somewhere.

MAREA FOSTER: Is that New York?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: It might be. They would go back to the Mother House every summer, and what they did I don't know. But she said, "We would go to the shore and we would go swimming."

MAREA FOSTER: But they did not, that you know of, go swimming in New Bern?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh Lord! Good gosh no! That was when they'd go back for the summer.

MAREA FOSTER: Kitty, can you describe a Nun's habit for me at that time, cause some of the people in the future listening to this

will have no idea how they used to dress.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. They were black, navy blue, real deep, deep, navy blue, almost black. It was long to the floor. Very full, like a moo-moo, Hawaiian moo-moo. The sleeves were very long, way below the finger tips and then they were brought back up over, help me, Rea.

MAREA FOSTER: They were folded back for a big cuff.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. And it hung down like this and they were pinned with a big black hat pin. Then they had a white, starched, what do you call it? Like the men used to wear, the collars...

MAREA FOSTER: The celluloid cuffs and collars.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Cuffs, yeah, cuff underneath that. And you saw the white cuff and then this big thing hung down. Course it was a high neck and then they had this same...

MAREA FOSTER: Celluloid, white...

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Celluloid, white bib that was, oh what, maybe twelve inches. Below their bosoms.

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah, below the bosom, uh huh.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Then they were cinched at the waist with a rope-type belt that had a crucifix on the end of it and that hung down the front of the skirt.

MAREA FOSTER: Right.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Then the head cover was this celluloid. There was a little piece, this was not celluloid, this was linen, white linen, that came across their forehead.

MAREA FOSTER: Like a band.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. And it covered their forehead and it tied in the back, because I saw Mother Pauline take hers off one day and that's when I found out their hair was cut short like mine is now.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, okay, so the Nuns did not shave...

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No, her hair was short.

MAREA FOSTER: They just cut it short.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. They had that white linen thing around their forehead and then a white celluloid thing like a hood, Marea, like a bonnet.

MAREA FOSTER: That came from one ear up and across the head down to the other ear.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Right. You could see the tip ends of their ears. Remember?

MAREA FOSTER: Um huh.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: How you could just see the tips of their ears. But you could see kind of through the back there. Then they had a navy, no, black veil that was, it was a little heavier than chiffon. It was that texture, but a little heavier. That was placed over the celluloid hood-type thing and then that was pinned at the top with a big black hat pin.

MAREA FOSTER: Now, Kitty, this white celluloid piece just framed the face.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yes.

MAREA FOSTER: And it was so stiff it stayed there. And you're

saying when they put the veil on and pinned it with a hat pin that anchored the celluloid piece...

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Right, to their head.

MAREA FOSTER: To their veil, to the head.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: So they had to have some hair.

MAREA FOSTER: They certainly did.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: They couldn't be bald. They did have hair cause I saw Mother Pauline's. She said they all had it. She said some had curly hair and some have straight hair like you.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, you know, we've all wondered these things. We did in our age. People listening to this don't know because things are so different. Kitty, do you know what type stockings the Nuns wore?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: They wore black cotton stockings and black shoes like my grandmama wore that laced up. Old ladies shoes.

MAREA FOSTER: And had a heel about an inch or inch and a half. Maybe three-quarter or an inch.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: I have seen the Nuns walking and they'll put their arms...

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh yeah. They used to put their arms through...

MAREA FOSTER: Through their sleeves.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Right. I wonder what they did? (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: I don't know. (laughter) Now, in their gown, were there...

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: There were pockets. They were big, super big pockets. Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: That's very interesting. Now Monsignor Irwin lived in, do you call it a Rectory?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, it was a Rectory.

MAREA FOSTER: And he lived there, which is on the corner of New Street and Middle.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: He lived there by himself.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. He rarely ever had an assistant. That was in later years. 'Cause he did everything himself. He wanted it that way really. He was such a good, good, good man, but he was so strict. Every Thursday afternoon he had a children's service, and, God, everybody hated it. Nobody liked to go, but you had to go. We had Benediction first.

MAREA FOSTER: Now, what is that?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Benediction is a beautiful ceremony that the Catholic church doesn't have very often anymore. It's just a blessing more or less. There was always incense, and of course the kids loved that. Then Father Irwin would have a talk to the children. This was at three o'clock. Well, he'd had a nap, see, and the kids had been in school all day and we were ready to go home. We were tired. He had the sermon and then you had to go to confession cause you had to go to communion and church on Friday morning. That was the one day that the children were required, the Catholic kids, were required to

go and that made sure that you went once a week.

MAREA FOSTER: He would do his sermon.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: He would do his sermons. And, whoever the altar boy was would pick up a chair, shaped like a captains chair, and put it up on the altar and that old guy would sit down and talk to us for an hour, an hour and a half. Everybody tried to go to sleep but the Nuns were sitting there. The boys on the right, the girls on the left.

MAREA FOSTER: I remember that now that you've said that.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Boy, they would watch you like a hawk, and if they saw your head going down, the Nun would be in the back and she'd punch the girl in front of her and then she would punch the girl in front of her until she got to whoever was nodding. Then you'd look around and boy that Nun would give you a look that would knock you out!

MAREA FOSTER: Now, Kitty, you said, a boy would place a captains chair on the altar.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: On the altar, yeah. He got dispensation from the Bishop to do that cause he was so fat. He couldn't stand up that long and he got dispensation from the Bishop.

MAREA FOSTER: Now, when we're talking about an altar, we're talking...

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: The altar that is in that little church right now.

MAREA FOSTER: It's just hard for me to believe.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Well, the altar was, the old altar where it isn't facing the people. Now it is.

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And then the boys would go to confession first. The boys always did everything first. The boys would go to confession and then the girls would go to confession. I was always the last person to go to confession. I mean, I know why. I don't know. I ain't gonna say that.

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) 'Cause you were the "worstest."

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: But anyway, I was always the last person to go to confession. I can remember going in and saying, "Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been one week since my last confession." And Father Irwin would say, "What have you done this week, Kitty?" (laughter) And, a lot of times I'd have to make up stuff because I wanted it good. But, you know, you never really did anything bad. You'd tell a lie or talk back to your mama or your daddy. I think that was being disrespectful to my parents.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, he saved you til last cause you probably had the best story.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I would get home about six-thirty and mama would be mad as hell. One day she said, "This is ridiculous!" So she went to Father Irwin and she said, "Father Irwin, I don't think this is right that you keep these children this late as tired as they are when they get out of school. You've had a nap. You're refreshed and everything, and I think you should cut your message down."

MAREA FOSTER: Did he?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: But of course he never did. Oh no, Lord, no! Uh uh. He had us, boy. And we'd have spelling bees, Rea, and you ain't gonna believe this. We would have a spelling bee every Friday and I always won the spelling bee!

MAREA FOSTER: I don't believe it! (laughter)

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I did!

MAREA FOSTER: That's wonderful, Kitty!

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I always won the spelling bees. Your prize was a holy card. Do you remember the holy cards?

MAREA FOSTER: Uh huh.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: That was your prize. And I've got a stack of holy cards that big because I spelled so good.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, that's wonderful!

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I can't spell anymore. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: Neither can I. (laughter) Well, Kitty, do you remember if Big Joe and Miss Mary had to pay school fees?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No. I don't know how they got along. I guess the Bishop supported the school. Marea, they would have, I think once, maybe twice a year, a special collection for the school, but nobody paid tuition. And of course, the Nuns never received any pay. Father Monsignor gave them money for their little personal items. I remember that my mama was a convert. She got interested when Pat, my brother, was taking instructions and mother became a Catholic then, and of course is a pillar of the church. Always has been.

MAREA FOSTER: That's right. You know, I thought she converted before she and Big Joe were married.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No, Lord, no. They were married out on the farm because you couldn't get married in the church if you weren't Catholic. That was when somebody stepped on the cat's tail, when mama got married. But anyway, that was funny.

MAREA FOSTER: (Talks to Fred about taking pictures) But go ahead, when Miss Mary was taking instruction with Pat.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, with Pat and she got interested.

MAREA FOSTER: And she would do things for the Nuns.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Right. She would go around and collect food, can goods, and would go to the stores. What was the...

MAREA FOSTER: The A&P?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No. The wholesale place. Lucas.

MAREA FOSTER: There was Lucas and Lewis Wholesale and Maxwell's and several of them.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. The Lucas, they were Catholic.

MAREA FOSTER: Right. Joe Lucas and his wife was Ann.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Right. Right. And Jip had the grocery store, Jip Lucas.

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah. Um huh.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And mother would go around and collect food, can goods and everything for the Nuns when their money would give out, say, a week before Father would give them money. All the Lebanese were wonderful to the Nuns! A lot of the Lebanese people had stores.

They weren't called Lebanese then. We called them Syrians, but it's changed. I don't know why, but anyway.

MAREA FOSTER: They all came from Lebanon.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. And wonderful, super, terrific people.

MAREA FOSTER: That's right.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Good golly, day!

MAREA FOSTER: Kitty, talking about this grocery, there was a phone in the convent.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: Did the nuns order their groceries do you know, or did they go shopping?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: They went shopping. Mother would take them. Different people would take them. But a Nun would never leave the convent by herself. She always had to have a companion. Somebody had to be with her. I used to go with them all the time, cause, you know, they could get to me in a hurry. And I liked that. I enjoyed that. We'd go down to Kress' and we'd go to the grocery store. There was an A&P right next to Kress'. And then there was, oh, lived across the street from you that died...

MAREA FOSTER: Mr. Everhart's Meat Market.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No, no, no. Oh, Marea.

MAREA FOSTER: Ronald Ipock.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Ipock. Ronald Ipock had a store on Broad Street. Remember that?

MAREA FOSTER: Yes, I certainly do.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And we used to go there. But we walked everywhere. And you know, we played! Oh boy, we played! Kids nowadays have to be entertained.

MAREA FOSTER: They certainly do.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: We were never entertained. I don't ever remember my mama and daddy entertaining me. They'd say, "Go outside and play."

MAREA FOSTER: That's right, we did. Kitty, when you were in school, did ya'll have recess?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, boy, we had recess. I remember when we got a water fountain in the backyard. The backyard was all dirt.

MAREA FOSTER: Uh huh. I remember that.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: You know, there wasn't a bit of grass. Helen Bowman's house backyard came into the school backyard.

MAREA FOSTER: Now, she lived on Johnson Street.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: She lived on Johnson.

MAREA FOSTER: Next to Fred.

FRED LATHAM: About two doors down.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Two doors down.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, okay.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Bo and I would usually go over to her house at recess and get a cracker or something, whatever Pearlie would give us. I remember if you wanted a drink of water you had to get it out of the spigot, the regular old spigot. Father Irwin put a water fountain out in that backyard and I can remember, my Lord, the water bill went

up so high that he told us he was gonna have it turned off because we'd get out there and play with it, and squirt each other with it.

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) Well, did the Nuns play with you?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No, they didn't play with you. There was always a Nun that was kind of keeping an eye on you. But the big people in the eighth and ninth grade, they were more or less monitoring us. They were all good, most of them. I don't remember any I didn't like.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, Kitty, I know that you weren't living here when you would have gone to public school, but did you ever hear any of the students, boys and girls from the Catholic school, say what it was like to go into public school? Did they have a hard time? Did they fit in?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. They fitted in fine. I do know that the teachers said that the children that came out of Catholic school were more prepared...were what?

MAREA FOSTER: Better prepared.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Better prepared than the kids that were in public school.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, you had strict discipline there.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Well, you had small classes, Marea. You leaned cause you were scared not to learn. The Nuns, I don't want to give the impression that the Nuns were mean, were not mean, they were, what's the word?

MAREA FOSTER: Strict.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Strict, but they were not mean.

MAREA FOSTER: Right.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I was never struck by a Nun, and if anybody in New Bern needed to be it was me. They would call mother and tell mother, that I needed to be disciplined, but the Nuns never, ever hit anybody.

MAREA FOSTER: A very nice, good, memory experience.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh, Lord, yeah! Yeah, very good.

MAREA FOSTER: Is there anything else you can tell me about the Catholic school? Anything you think we might have forgotten? One thing I wanted to ask you, did you all...

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh! We had processions. Oh! Let me tell you this. Yeah. Every morning when you got to school you could play in the yard, if you were early. But of course everybody was in church.

Then when you came out of church, and if you came to school at quarter of nine, you couldn't play in the yard you had to go in to church and wait until church was over and then you lined up; boys first, girls next, and went in a procession over to the school. Sometimes we would go between the rectory and the church. If the weather was real nice we would go up to New Street and down New Street. Then we would go down the little walk which was right in back of Monsignor Irwin's house.

You always were with your grade group. Fourth and fifth went off to the right and the first, second, and third went straight ahead.

You had your own little routine that you did every morning. Then when you went out to recess, you didn't run out, you stood up and got

in line and walked out, and then after you got out in the yard, you know, you could break off.

MAREA FOSTER: And play.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. But the discipline was wonderful. And that's what kids need now, is discipline.

MAREA FOSTER: I agree with you on that. At this time you're going to St. Paul's there was also a black Catholic school, St. Joseph's.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. Right.

MAREA FOSTER: Was there any interaction between those two schools?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No, no. None at all, Marea. I knew some black kids that went to Catholic school but there was never any interaction between the schools at all.

MAREA FOSTER: Something I want to ask you. I did not interview Mary Munford. She did attend St. Joseph's. Were the Nuns at St. Joseph's white or black?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, white. They were the same Order.

MAREA FOSTER: Same Order.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Uh huh. Sisters of the Immaculate Heart.

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah, that's what she said.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yep, they were all white. I don't ever remember seeing a black Nun. I'm sure there are some, but I don't ever remember seeing one.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, I'm sure there are.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I mean, I don't remember seeing one after I was grown.

MAREA FOSTER: I don't think I ever did. There probably are.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Let me tell you a cute story, if I can.

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: My daughter Susan was about two years old and Van was stationed out at El Toro, California. Mama and daddy had come out to see us. We had gone to, I've forgotten the name of it, something World, anyway, it was a great, humongous aquarium.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh yeah.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: We had gotten out of the car. Barney was in school, so it was just mother and daddy and Susan and I. Susan was a darling, cute little 'ole gal. We were walking and these two Nuns were walking in front of us. Susan said, "Look, Nanny, there are the Holy Ghost girls." (laughter) And of course the Nuns turned around and started laughing. I loved that though.

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) Oh, I think that's cute! The Holy Ghost girls.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: The Holy Ghost girls. And Susan went to Catholic school for one year in New Bern, but then they had a new school, the school that was built next to the church. She was there in the first grade. Then we left when Barney, I think, was, first, second, third, fourth, Barney was in the fifth, sixth.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, by the time you left school, I don't mean finished school, it was war years and Big Joe was in the Army, and

so you all moved around different posts, didn't you?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: And you followed him as long as you could.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: And then you came back to New Bern.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. When daddy went overseas, mother and I came back to New Bern.

MAREA FOSTER: And by then you were out of school.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay. And so what did you do then, Kitty?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I worked for Boody Hawk. Had a job, made about \$17 a week selling records. And of course records were big deals back then. It was Hawk Radio and Appliance Company on Middle Street. I sold records and met a lot of Marines.

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I've always said that if it hadn't been for the Marine Corps, all my age group would have been old maids, cause all the guys, you know, had left.

MAREA FOSTER: That's right.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I met a lot of Marines working. And back then, Rea, everybody was nice. You'd meet somebody and they'd ask you for a date and you'd date them.

MAREA FOSTER: That's right.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Well, I mean... I don't know what I'm trying to say, but anyway...

MAREA FOSTER: You trusted everyone.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh yeah. Yeah. And there was no date rape or anything like that. Things were just so much different.

MAREA FOSTER: What was New Bern like during the war years, Kitty? I mean, other than the Marines. Do you remember rationing and all that?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, I remember cigarettes were hard to get and I smoked Chesterfields cause daddy smoked them and I could kind of sneak them from him. But then we could usually get cigarettes at a drug store, Clark's Drug Store. And of course, it's no secret, they were black market we called them. But you could get them.

MAREA FOSTER: Did you have to have coupons for cigarettes, Kitty?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No, didn't have to have coupons for cigarettes. You had to have coupons for shoes and sugar and meat and gasoline and tires and an awful lot of things, but, no, you didn't have to have coupons for cigarettes. New Bern was sad, Marea, because all the men were gone. But my mama being the kind of person she was, which an awful lot of people in New Bern did, opened their homes to the Marines. It was just mother and I over there and that big house, so mother had Marine couples that would come in. If they had any money and could pay a couple of bucks a week, okay, if not, that was all right. And she fed them. And made an awful lot of good friends that way. There were a lot of people that did that.

MAREA FOSTER: A lot of people that did that.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: A lot of people. That had room, you know,

whose family were not big.

MAREA FOSTER: Right. I remember Miss Mary always having Marines for dinner. I should say as dinner guests on Sunday when you'd come back from mass. I remember that.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh yeah. Right, right, right. Always. Father Monsignor Irwin did get an assistant while the war was going on because there were more people going to church and he could only say two masses and they had to have three, so they had to have somebody else come in and say that third mass. They were usually young men. And I think at one time there was a Chaplain from Cherry Point that would come up here.

MAREA FOSTER: And help out.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: (cough) I don't know why I'm so hoarse.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, cause we've been talking a lot. Kitty, do you remember black-out curtains?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Um huh! Yeah, right over next door we had black-out curtains. Oh, and I remember down at the post office, you know the big steeple at the top of the post office?

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah, the cupola up there.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. They had volunteers that would go up and look for enemy airplanes.

MAREA FOSTER: Did you do that?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah!! Helen Bowman and I did. We didn't know what in the world we were doing, but it was fun to climb up that ladder into that steeple. We didn't know one airplane from the next

airplane, but we never saw any. Dot Lee Taylor did it and Helen Johnson and Bo and Virginia Jacobs and Betty Bunting. Oh God, there were a lot of us that did it.

MAREA FOSTER: Yes.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And we'd ride our bicycles down there. If we had the duty, as they called it, we'd have to stay down there until midnight, then an adult would take over. We'd get on our bicycles, Marea, at twelve o'clock, this is in the summer, and ride our bicycles up Pollock Street back out to Rhem Avenue.

MAREA FOSTER: And it was perfectly safe.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Sure! Sure. I mean, that was a given. You just did it. You never worried about anything.

MAREA FOSTER: I know it. Did you ever hear anything about submarines off the coast?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh yeah. Gosh, yeah. I think off Morehead, Rea. Isn't that awful, I can't remember.

MAREA FOSTER: I remember something about it. But those years are very vague for me 'cause I was growing up. Kitty, what about Christmas celebrations? During the war years do you remember any parades and things for Christmas?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No, uh uh.

MAREA FOSTER: I didn't either.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Mama started the first Catholic USO in New Bern and had it in a little house that was demolished that was right next door to the church. It was a darling little house. The Bowman's

lived there at one time. But mama and Annie Shields started, mama started it, Annie took all the credit, but my mother started it, and had a USO. I can remember going down there and help painting and doing and everything. Mother was down there constantly. It kept her occupied. I remember there would always be a Christmas party. There'd be something at Thanksgiving, and the 4th of July there was always something. You know, the troop trains used to go through New Bern then just one street over.

MAREA FOSTER: Yes.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: That was always sad, but fun, because you'd wave to the Marines as they'd go by on the train.

MAREA FOSTER: Yes.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And they had, of course I'm sure everybody's talked about the prisoners, the German prisoners that they had.

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah. So you remember that.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And the German prisoners, when they'd see the young girls, we were what, 16, 17 years old, they'd whistle and we'd get super mad. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) Kitty, were the prisoners allowed to work downtown, do you know, do you remember?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Rea, I don't know where they worked. I know they worked. I can't say that I remember seeing them working anywhere.

I remember seeing them on trucks going down, it was at the corner of East Front and South Front Street. I remember seeing them there because we used to go to Union Point a lot and that would be where

I would see the prisoners on these trucks. They would whistle and wave at us and we'd turn our heads. And they were kids! Gosh, they weren't any older than we were.

MAREA FOSTER: And homesick to boot.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Sure.

MAREA FOSTER: But, still at that time, they were German prisoners.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: They were Germans, right.

MAREA FOSTER: Kitty, after the war, you were still working for Booty, isn't that right?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: And this is when you met Van.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, that's when I met Van. Met Van on the golf course at the Country Club. He was going up number 2 fairway, I was coming down number 5 and we were both in the woods and that's where we met. He was with Jimmy and B. K. Bryan. Anyway, I thought he was just super cute. B. K. called me and asked me if I would date him that night and I said, "I'm going to the show with Ernie Bender but I'll call Ernie and tell him I can't go." 'Cause we were buddies.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, nothing serious.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No.

COLONEL VAN BUSKIRK: She always had buddies. Never had a boyfriend.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: So anyway, that was my first date with Van. We went out to Trent Pines and gave out of gas on the way out there. Van said, "Good Lord, I didn't have this gauged very good. I thought

I'd give out on the way home." (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) Oh gosh. Well, where did ya'll go for dates around here, besides Trent Pines?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Well, Trent Pines, really, and the Country Club. There wasn't too much. All the old folks went out to the Country Club. But Van and I fit in real good with the old folks and we used to love to go out there Saturday night. But Trent Pines, and we'd go to the O Club at Cherry Point. They had a theater. People drank a lot then, which they don't do now at Cherry Point, which is good. Van would leave New Bern, say, at two o'clock in the morning and drive that two lane road to Cherry Point. He said he'd set his automatic pilot and never had any problems. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) Just go.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Followed the white lines. Straddle the white lines. Got right there.

MAREA FOSTER: When were you all married, Kitty?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: We were married in September of '46. Went to New York on our honeymoon and came back. Van was going to China. Do you want to hear this?

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah. He's still in the Marine Corps.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh yeah, was going to China. I couldn't go right then. I had to wait until I could get passage. So I stayed in New Bern with mama and daddy and worked for Boody. No, Van was not going to China, he was going to Hawaii and later they changed his orders. But anyway, he got out to Hawaii. The Marine Corps would

not furnish my transportation. I don't know why, Rea, but anyway they wouldn't. So daddy said, "Well, Honey, I'll pay for you to get over there as a Christmas present." I said, "Well, that's great." So then Van called and he said, "Leroy, I'm going to China and it will be awhile before you can get over." Well, anyway, then China broke off relations with the U.S. I don't know what happened. Van came back and went to somewhere in California. It wasn't Santa Ana, it was up near San Diego, somewhere, Rea. I don't know.

MAREA FOSTER: I don't know what's up there.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I don't know what's there either, I can't remember. But anyway, then we ended up back at Cherry Point. Then we had a nice tour out in Hawaii. It was fun. I liked it.

MAREA FOSTER: Service life is very different, isn't it Kitty?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: It's fun. You're right.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, it's fun. Very interesting.

MAREA FOSTER: It certainly is. Uh huh.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Get to know a lot of people and you work your butts off.

MAREA FOSTER: You certainly do.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: To get your husband to where he wants to be.

MAREA FOSTER: Exactly. And it's really quite an education.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, boy, you know it. And most of this furniture in this room has been to Hong Kong, because when we went to Hawaii, our furniture left Cherry Point and went to Hong Kong.

I was in Hawaii for six months without any furniture. I did have sterling silver flatware.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, you had to have that.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, cause you carried that in your hold luggage.

MAREA FOSTER: You sure did.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And if it hadn't have been for Navy Relief, I don't know what in the world we would have done.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, the service does take care of their own.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Right.

MAREA FOSTER: I mean they really and truly do.

MRS. BUSKIRK: They do.

MAREA FOSTER: It was a wonderful experience. Wouldn't take anything in the world for it and I know you wouldn't either.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No. I enjoyed it. It's changed. Changed so much.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh yeah, I'm sure it has. Well, Kitty, after Van got out of the Marine Corps, then he worked with natural gas in different places.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yep.

MAREA FOSTER: And then finally when he retired you came back to New Bern in 1975.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Came back to New Bern in 1975. Yep.

MAREA FOSTER: And he was a magistrate.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: He was appointed a magistrate. All of his

old buddies of New Bern said, "By God, Buskirk's got the right job. He's underneath the jail." 'Cause that's where the office was, you know, until they built the new buildings. But he loved that and he was very, very good at that too.

MAREA FOSTER: I know he was.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Van wanted to go to law school after he got out of the service, and then I got pregnant and that shot that down. But he'd make a good lawyer.

MAREA FOSTER: Yes, he would have, cause he was a good magistrate.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: He's got a lot of sense, a lot of good common sense, and was very, very good with his magistrate work.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, I'm sure he was. And now he's retired.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I mean, he's super retired now! (laughter) Isn't it funny, men retire but women don't never retire.

MAREA FOSTER: I know it. You still have to cook and clean.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: Kitty, you and Van had two children.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, had a boy, Barney, he died quite suddenly when he was 24 years old. And he was your buddy.

MAREA FOSTER: He certainly was. I just adored him.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And Susan (she'll die) she's 40. She was 40 last September.

MAREA FOSTER: Right.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And she didn't like that too much. She didn't want to be 40.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, life begins at 40.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, it does.

MAREA FOSTER: No, I think it's gonna begin at 60. (laughter)

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Whatever. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah, whatever. Kitty, there have been a lot of changes in New Bern. Tell me about them, what you see. Big changes. Other than the fact that you can't ride your bicycle at midnight.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, you sure can't ride your bicycle. You sure can't.

MAREA FOSTER: How has downtown changed?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I used to love downtown! It was wonderful! Well, even up until, what? When I left New Bern, downtown, it was fun; Belk's and Penney's and the Bootery and all. You could go downtown and get what you wanted. Then when Van and I came back to New Bern in '75, it was like I didn't know New Bern and I didn't like it. And I don't like it any better now than I did then. I loved it when I was growing up, but I don't like New Bern now because there's too many strangers here.

MAREA FOSTER: I agree with you.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And I resent the people that are in New Bern that come here from distances that tell us "what you people need to do." And what those people need to do is to take the same road that they got in here back to where they came from.

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) I agree with you 100 percent. I do, Kitty.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I don't like it cause it's grown and that's because I'm gett'n to be an old lady.

MAREA FOSTER: Kitty, you'll never be old. What you miss is what I miss - the warmth, the caring.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, yeah. The walking downtown and seeing people you know and "How's your mama? How's your grandmama."

MAREA FOSTER: Exactly. And knowing that they're interested in you.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Right. Right. And not being scared to death, Marea!!

MAREA FOSTER: Exactly. It was a very safe place.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Listen, I lock this front door. Van has been busy all morning getting a lock on that screen door back there. I'm scared to be in this house without that door locked.

MAREA FOSTER: Right. I know it.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: When I lived in that house next door, we didn't lock the doors!

MAREA FOSTER: I know it. I know it. It's a different atmosphere and we're growing and everything's changing.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Indeed, and I don't like it. I was definitely born thirty years too soon. And you know that's something else I miss, is not having, "Thirty Years Ago" in the Sun Journal...

MAREA FOSTER: Right, that column.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: But really, when you stop to think about it, I wouldn't know anybody now.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, pretty soon we wouldn't.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I would have twenty years ago, but not now.

MAREA FOSTER: But not now we wouldn't. Not now.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I wouldn't know what was going. But that was a fun article.

MAREA FOSTER: It sure was. New Bern has "gotten on the map." We're becoming known and we're becoming a retirement center.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: Kitty, with saying retirement, but the one thing about it, people coming do not go on the welfare roles, so that's great.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, that's great. That's super.

MAREA FOSTER: And with us getting older, it means more doctors. What's the change in medical care from the time you were growing up til now?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Rea, I remember my doctor was Dr. Patterson. There was Dr. Patterson; there was Dr. Latham; there was, well, Dr. Primrose was so old, I don't remember him doing too much; Dr. Jones; Dr. Wadsworth who delivered both of my children cause I wouldn't go to Cherry Point. I was scared. And Dr. Kafer of course, Red Kafer; Dr. Ashford.

MAREA FOSTER: And then your friend, Ernie Bender's daddy.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh yeah. Dr. Bender was the baby pediatrician. He was a nice guy too. But Dr. Patterson was our doctor and he took out my appendix. I'd had a stomach ache for about two weeks and I thought I had it cause I was eating green pears. I was scared to tell

anybody I had eaten green pears and had the stomach ache. Finally, one Saturday night, Honey Williams, this colored lady that lived up on New Street, was staying with us cause mama and daddy had gone to the Elks Club, which was the big thing.

MAREA FOSTER: Big place to go.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. I told Honey, I said, "Honey, I've been eating green pears and I have got the belly ache." I mean I really had a bad one. She called mother at the Elks Club and mother came home and Honey told mama and she called Dr. Patterson, Dr. Patterson came over, and it ended up it wasn't the green pears it was appendicitis.

I had my appendix taken out on the 3rd of July. I was suppose to have gone down to the beach with Helen Bowman and her family for the 4th of July. I was so mad that I didn't know what to do that I had missed going to the beach cause I had to have my appendix taken out, and daddy bought me a Mickey Mouse wristwatch. The Waldrop kids, what were their names?

MAREA FOSTER: Grayson and...

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Grayson and Carolyn Waldrop across the street shot firecrackers all day long and I was cussing them through the hospital window cause I was on the front.

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) Shame on you.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: That was St. Luke's. But didn't Dr. Patterson, more or less...

MAREA FOSTER: He owned it until the forties, he and Dr. Jones.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: When the Catholics...

MAREA FOSTER: Uh huh. Uh huh. Did he still own it at the time you had your appendix out?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: He would have I think. What was the care like at the hospital, Kitty, do you remember?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh golly, the care was wonderful cause you knew everybody! You knew all the nurses and all the colored people that cleaned up and all the doctors. And they all came to see you and didn't charge you; if they were a doctor, they'd stop in and see you and you didn't get a bill from them.

MAREA FOSTER: You didn't get a consultation bill.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Uh uh.

MAREA FOSTER: Kitty, when you were in the hospital with appendicitis, was the nursing school, nurses training school still in operation?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: So you had student nurses.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. No, now wait a minute. Annie Ragsdale...

MAREA FOSTER: She and mother were in the same class.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: All right, Annie Ragsdale was my nurse. You know you always had a nurse and Annie was my nurse. And I was the first child that she had ever nursed. She said, after she nursed me, she said, "I don't think I'll ever nurse another child."

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) Kitty, you're terrible, I swear!

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: You ask her.

MAREA FOSTER: I will when I see her. You were how old, cause you were born in 1926.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I was seven.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay, mother was married at that point and I was on the way.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: What year was that?

MAREA FOSTER: 1933.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, I was seven.

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah. Well, you must have been a patient, I mean, and a half for Miss Annie to say that cause she's got the patience of Job.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. And all they would give me to eat, Marea, was soda crackers. Not saltines, soda crackers and buttermilk.

MAREA FOSTER: Buttermilk, yew.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, well, I never liked milk and I certainly didn't like soda crackers.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh dear!

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: You know, they didn't feed you, and, lord, they kept you in the hospital for ten days. I got out of the hospital, and my Uncle Punk who I loved so good that nicknamed me Kitty, had what we know now as a cerebral hemorrhage. They didn't know it then.

They took me out of the hospital and put Uncle Punk in the room that I was in. I went up to the Hawks while Uncle Punk, Mama Hawk and Bessie took care of me. Uncle Punk died.

MAREA FOSTER: This was Big Joe's brother, Ed.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, Ed Mullineaux.

MAREA FOSTER: Kitty, do you remember how long you had to stay in the bed at that time before Dr. Patterson would let you get up and walk around?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh golly. Daddy carried me out of the hospital in his arms and carried me over to Mama Hawks and up the stairs and put me in bed.

MAREA FOSTER: So it was bed rest.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I think, as I remember, I could get up and walk to the bathroom then. But that was like ten days. And even more when I had my babies, Marea.

MAREA FOSTER: You didn't get up, I know.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Uh uh. You stayed in the hospital a week to ten days.

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah. It's much better. What about medical care today?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Well, it's all right.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, there's a big change.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yep. Too many pills. I think if we go back to the way it used to be...well, you go to the doctor too much now. You didn't go every time... I don't know. Let's don't get on that.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, it's just changed. The caring part is gone.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: But great strides in medicine.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh yeah. Sure.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, Kitty, I know there are a lot of things,

I'm gonna get home and say why didn't ask you this. I can't even think. I really can't. Oh, I want to ask you about dances. When you were growing up, where did you all go to dance?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: To Union Point to the Woman's Club.

MAREA FOSTER: To the Woman's Club.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. I had my first date, course it wasn't a date, but it was the first time a boy came to pick me up at the house, and of course his daddy drove him. It was Ira Stevens. You remember Ira?

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, I thought it was somebody else that took you to the first date.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No! This was the first dance.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, the first dance.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh, Johnny Green took me everywhere, but this was the first dance, and I was twelve years old. Mr. Stevens came over and picked us up, and daddy was gonna come get us. Somebody would take you and then somebody would pick you up.

MAREA FOSTER: Right.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: This was a Boy Scout dance and it was all of the troops in New Bern. I don't know, there probably weren't but two, but anyway, all the scouts and they were all different.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, there were a lot of scouts.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. I remember Pat, my brother, had a date with Lillian Roberts. She was so cute and still is. You knew everybody. We went to the Woman's Club and there was a dance. My brother was

a super dancer, and taught everybody, after he went to college, came back and taught everybody how to shag. Anyway, there was a dance, I can't remember the name of it, but you'd be in a circle and they would say "Shine Kitty Mullineaux" or "Shine Marea Kafer" and then you would have to do this little dance out to the middle of the circle and then shine back. Everybody liked to do it but it was kind of embarrassing too. I was a little shy out of my element and this was not my element. 'Cause I had on a party dress and patten leather black shoes and white socks with lace on them and that was not what I enjoyed wearing. But that was my first date. We did a lot of stuff at the Woman's Club when we were growing up.

MAREA FOSTER: We did too. Kitty, I know you did a lot of swimming, did your crowd do a lot of sailing?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: No we didn't. Alice Lou Flanner and Ollie Meadows were about the only girls that I know that sailed.

FRED LATHAM: Used my boat.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh, in the Fred Latham's boat. I'll be darned.

FRED LATHAM: She kept it while I was overseas.

MAREA FOSTER: Who? Alice Lou?

FRED LATHAM: Yeah.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Really?! Well, Alice Lou was a very quiet kind of reserved girl. I knew her and I liked her, but we never really had anything in common. But I used to always envy her. I'd see her out in that boat out in the Neuse River and think, "Oh gosh, wouldn't that be fun!" But we went swimming down at Dr. Hand's.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, you did swim there.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Down at the old bridge on Johnson Street.

MAREA FOSTER: And girls were allowed there? I thought that was just for boys.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Oh no. No, that was Crabby's. Crabby's was on Trent River and that was for boys.

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah. But Dr. Hand's was girls and boys?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah! Sure!

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, I didn't know that.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: But Crabby's was boys. I've forgotten what Crabby's name was.

MAREA FOSTER: Albert Crabtree.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Okay. Well, now, I always called him Crabby.

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah, everybody did.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And they had a boys club. I mean, there were a lot, as we used to call them, wharf rats that swam down there.

MAREA FOSTER: Right.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Most of those guys were my friends and I used to go swimming down there. But I wasn't suppose to. The water was real deep and real cold, and what I would do, I would make a charge and I would charge out and run, there were always a bunch of boys, usually my brother and the Poole boys were down there a lot, Ike French, and all boys that I knew, and I would charge out on this dock and jump in before they knew I was there. Then I'd go from there on up to Union Point and get cut by barnacles and...

MAREA FOSTER: Everything else.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Everything else. But I swam at Crabby's.

MAREA FOSTER: You were the first female.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: There were girls as you got bigger. I was 7, 8 years old then. But as you got bigger, you could go with a boy down to Crabby's.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, it's interesting when Fred grew up, Fred did a lot of sailing; Joe Pat's group did a lot of sailing.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, Joe Pat.

MAREA FOSTER: Your group didn't, mine didn't. Well, my group with war years didn't do much of anything.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Alice Lou, I think, was about the only one. Can you remember anyone, about the boys that sailed? I can't.

FRED LATHAM: I don't know. Emma Katie Guion.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah, Emma Katie Guion sailed. Sure she did. Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: Did she have a sailboat?

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Yeah. I'd forgotten that.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, Kitty, is there anything else? As I said, I know good and well I'm gonna get home and I'm gonna chastise myself cause I forgot something. But you've given me absolutely wonderful information, especially on the school.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Rea, I can't think of anything, except, I just wish that New Bern, and I guess everybody wishes that that was raised in New Bern, that New Bern was like it used to be. And times changing.

MAREA FOSTER: Right.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: I can't accept a lot of things.

MAREA FOSTER: It's hard. Kitty, this has just been wonderful for me, because for the record, I grew up next to Kitty.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Next door to me.

MAREA FOSTER: I sure did.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And tagged along.

MAREA FOSTER: And tagged along.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And if I'd part my hair in the middle, you would part your hair in the middle. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) That's the truth. Whatever you did, mother knew I was going to be doing before long. And I got all of your hand-me-down clothes, which was wonderful, and I loved every bit of it.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: And here I am--back on Rhem Avenue.

MAREA FOSTER: Back on Rhem Avenue. And I not too far, just two blocks away.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Right. And I hope I'll see you more now that I don't live downtown in the historical district.

MAREA FOSTER: Right. I can walk over here now.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Well, Fred Latham was my neighbor downtown and I haven't seen him in I don't know how long.

MAREA FOSTER: I know it. Well, this has just been wonderful, Kitty. And so, on behalf of Memories of New Bern, thank you so much for participating in this program.

MRS. VAN BUSKIRK: Well, thank you for asking me.

MAREA FOSTER: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW